

Researchers in Catholic Schools and Access to Data on Catholic Schools

Rationale

This policy provides information for individuals or organisations who are seeking:

- i. access to Catholic schools for the purpose of undertaking research; or**
- ii. access to data related to Catholic schools held by the Catholic Education Office Sandhurst (CEOS).**

It is expected that when researchers conduct research in Catholic schools, they do so on the basis that the findings may assist to improve student outcomes and increase school effectiveness. Research in areas beyond the immediate concerns of schools should be conducted only when it can be demonstrated that the findings may have a potential benefit for the participants themselves.

The data held by the CEOS are collected from Catholic schools for accountability requirements of governments and for the purpose of providing leadership and support services to schools. Individuals and organisations seeking access to CEOS data collections will need to demonstrate that release of the data will have potential benefit for students in Catholic schools.

Principles

Capacity building

The CEOS is a learning organisation which values the sharing of knowledge across the education sector in order to encourage creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Adding value

Research findings and access to information should provide a potential contribution to existing knowledge and a balance between short-term and long-term benefits.

Maintaining propriety

In order to protect the welfare and rights of individuals, access to information and exchange of knowledge must conform to legal and ethical requirements. This CEOM policy reflects the obligations on researchers outlined in the *National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) documents: National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)*. The NHMRC statements can be viewed at www.nhmrc.gov.au.

Procedures

A. Seeking access to Catholic schools for the purpose of research

CEOS Approval

All non school-based researchers, and school personnel wanting to conduct research related to their postgraduate studies, need to seek CEOS approval to conduct research in a Catholic school.

Procedures to be followed for obtaining approval from the CEOS and an [application form](#) are appendices to this policy.

Ethics Approval

The NHMRC sets out guidelines for the review of research proposals by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Since research conducted in schools falls within the requirements of the NHMRC, approval from an Ethics Committee is normally required. [Appendix 1 – Procedures for Obtaining Approval to Conduct Research in a Catholic School](#) provides details about the categories of researchers required to seek the approval of an Ethics Committee.

School Approval

As collection of data can be time consuming for schools and may divert attention away from higher priority tasks, the ultimate decision to allow the research to proceed within a particular school rests fully with the principal. [Appendix 1 – Procedures for Obtaining Approval to Conduct Research in a Catholic School](#) provides detail about the information to be provided to schools when seeking their participation.

B. Seeking access to data related to Catholic schools held by the CEOS

Requests for access to data held by the CEOS must be in writing (post, email or fax) and specify what data are being sought and for what purpose.

When considering requests for access to data, the CEOS will comply with confidentiality and privacy requirements and take into account other areas of sensitivity related to Catholic schools, the CEOS and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV).

Generally, access to data is provided to:

- government departments and Catholic agencies for the purpose of accountability and provision of services;
- Catholic schools to assist in their planning and reporting activities;
- people engaged directly in education;
- people undertaking research in education or other areas of community benefit;
- non-profit organisations involved in activities likely to provide a benefit to schools and the wider community.

The CEOS will **not** normally provide data to commercial or marketing organisations, including those offering educational services.

In cases where the data are already publicly available, the person making the request will be referred to their location.

If some or all of the requested data are not available, or where access is denied, the person making the request will be informed.

Data are provided by the CEOS on the condition that it is used only for the purposes stated in the request for access.

All requests for access to data held by the CEOS must be made in writing to the Director by **post**:

post: Director of Catholic Education
Attention: Maureen Cann
Catholic Education Office
PO Box 477
BENDIGO CENTRAL VIC 3552

or **email:** cesresearch@ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Procedures for Obtaining Approval to Conduct Research in a Catholic School

Appendix 2 – Application to Conduct Research in Catholic Schools

Appendix 3 – CEOS Requirements for Ethics Approval of Research Proposals

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