

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Step 1: Seeking CEO Sandhurst Approval

The CEO Sandhurst assesses applications to conduct research in Catholic schools to ensure that proposals are in keeping with the mission of Catholic education. The CEO Sandhurst will not approve applications from researchers where:

- a) the content of the research proposal may raise issues contrary to the ethos of the Catholic Church (e.g. sexuality, abortion, contraception, euthanasia);
- b) the potential benefits of the research to Catholic education or the broader community are not demonstrated; or the research is for commercial, journalistic or marketing purposes;
- c) benefits of the research are outweighed by the demands placed on school resources;
- d) required documentation is incomplete or inadequate;
- e) the study method is inappropriate;
- f) the researcher lacks the experience or qualifications to conduct research on:
 - the private affairs of participants e.g. focus on the body, body image, family relations; or
 - negative risk-taking behaviour e.g. under-age drinking, promiscuity, illicit drug-taking, violence, stealing, carrying weapons, suicide;
- g) the research focuses on behaviour outside the experience and age range of the participants;
- h) there is an unacceptable level of risk to the wellbeing of the participants;
- i) additional support is not provided in relation to matters that may be disturbing to participants;
- j) confidentiality and privacy of participants are not adequately protected;
- k) inappropriate inducements are offered to participants or schools.

To seek approval to conduct research in schools from the CEO Sandhurst, researchers must submit **Appendix 2 – Application to Conduct Research in Catholic Schools** and include appropriate documentation.

Any modifications to the research proposal will require submission of an amended application to the CEO Sandhurst.

CEO Sandhurst approval is given on the understanding that any report or summary of the research findings will be made available to the participating schools and the CEO Sandhurst, preferably in an electronic format emailed to cesresearch@ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Step 2: Seeking Ethics Approval

Researchers will need to determine whether they are required to seek approval from an Ethics Committee by identifying which of the following categories 1–4, applies to them.

Category 1. Non school-based researchers

These researchers are typically:

- professional researchers working in an institution with a research function; or
- government departments or Catholic organisations; or
- students carrying out honours and postgraduate degrees; or
- undergraduate students (other than student-teachers engaged in a practicum).

Researchers in Category 1 are required to obtain approval from an Ethics Committee unless they can demonstrate that the nature of the research is not subject to review by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). See **Appendix 3 – CEO Sandhurst Requirements for Ethics Approval of Research Proposals**.

Private consultants or market researchers will generally not be granted approval to conduct research in Catholic schools. Any exception to this would require the researcher to enter into a collaborative arrangement with an institution which has access to an Ethics Committee.

Category 1 researchers may apply for CEO Sandhurst approval while their HREC application is being processed. If all other CEO Sandhurst requirements have been met, provisional approval will be given by the CEO Sandhurst. However the research may not be commenced in a Catholic school until the CEO Sandhurst has received a copy of the notification of HREC approval, together with any modifications sought by the Ethics Committee.

Category 2. School-based researchers: school personnel conducting individual research as part of their studies

These researchers are typically teachers conducting a research project as part of an honours or postgraduate study seeking to involve students from their own classroom, school or other Catholic school.

The same requirements for ethics approval as required for Category 1 researchers apply.

Category 3. School-based researchers: Catholic schools undertaking their own research

This category applies to school personnel who seek to survey students, parents or staff regarding school-initiated projects such as curriculum or policy development, evaluation of programs and pastoral care matters.

Principals have responsibility for determining whether ethics approval is necessary for internal research, based on the nature of the data being collected. Generally, ethics approval should be sought for research where, for example, the data being collected is of a personal or sensitive nature; or individuals would be upset by the questions; or participants could be identified. Principals should refer to **Appendix 3 – CEO Sandhurst Requirements for Ethics Approval of Research Proposals** for further information on the type of research needing the approval of an Ethics Committee.

If ethics approval needs to be obtained, and the project is being undertaken in partnership with an external institution, approval by that institution's Ethics Committee could be sought. Alternatively, the school should contact the CEO Sandhurst Knowledge Management Unit for advice,
Email: rrasmussen@ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Category 4. School-based researchers: student-teachers engaged in research during their practicum

These researchers are typically undergraduate students who as part of their teacher training may seek to conduct small-scale research projects that involve collecting and analysing data from school students.

The same requirements for ethics approval as required for Category 3 researchers apply.

Step 3: Seeking Approval from the School

Once approval for a research proposal is obtained from the CEO SANDHURST and ethics approval has been obtained where applicable, researchers need to contact the principal of the school. **It should be noted that gaining CEO Sandhurst approval in no way commits the principal to allow the research to be conducted in the school.**

In determining whether to accept a research proposal, the principal will consider the potential benefits of the research to the school and to the wider community, weighed up against any disruption and the level of commitment of school resources likely to occur.

The following documentation must be provided by the researcher to assist the principal in deciding whether to allow the research to be conducted in the school:

- a cover letter to the principal inviting participation and providing details about the level of involvement expected of the school;
- a Plain Language Statement (PLS) for the principal describing the research;
- documents to be used in the project e.g. PLS for participants/parents, consent forms etc;
- a copy of the CEO Sandhurst letter of approval which may include conditions placed on the approval;
- a copy of notification of Ethics Committee approval, if applicable;
- a *Working with Children* check, if the researcher is visiting the school.

For further information regarding these procedures email CEO Sandhurst:

Email: cesresearch@ceosand.catholic.edu.au