

Guidelines for Conducting Research

in Brisbane Catholic Education (The Guidelines)



**Brisbane
Catholic
Education**

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1.0 Introduction

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) supports high-quality research that contributes to improved educational practice, student wellbeing, and system improvement within Catholic education. Research conducted in BCE schools and offices must be ethically sound, educationally beneficial, and consistent with BCE's mission, Catholic ethos, and statutory obligations.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to outline BCE's governance, approval processes, and requirements for conducting research involving BCE schools, staff, students, or data. They are intended to assist Researchers to prepare complete and compliant Research Applications and to ensure that research activities protect participants, minimise burden on schools, and maintain public trust. These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with relevant ethics standards and legislation, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

2.0 Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- **BCE Research Committee:** The BCE committee responsible for reviewing Research Applications and determining outcomes (e.g., approval, conditional approval, provisional approval, or non-approval) in accordance with these Guidelines
- **Research Committee Secretariat:** The administrative contact point supporting the BCE Research Committee and managing enquiries, submissions, correspondence, and governance processes for Research under these Guidelines
- **Blue Card:** A Working with Children Check issued under the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)
- **Capstone Applied Research:** A research project completed as part of a postgraduate course (e.g., a Masters capstone) that is submitted under the Capstone Applied Research Application Form pathway
- **Collaborative research:** Research projects initiated or requested by the BCE office, which involve formal collaboration with BCE or external partners
- **De-identification:** The process of removing or altering personal identifiers so that an individual cannot be reasonably identified from the data, either directly or indirectly
- **Ethics Statement:** A detailed statement submitted by a Researcher who does not have access to an HREC, outlining how the proposed Research will meet recognised ethical standards, including consent processes, privacy and confidentiality protections, risk management strategies, data handling arrangements, and ethical reporting of findings
- **Final Approval:** Permission granted by a school principal or BCE office head for Research to occur at their site. Final Approval is site specific and may be granted or withheld at the discretion of the principal or office head, regardless of BCE approval
- **Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC):** A committee established and operating in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and recognised under the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) framework, with authority to review and approve Research involving human participants
- **Incentive:** Any payment, gift, voucher, prize draw entry, benefit, or other consideration offered to encourage participation in Research
- **Low Risk Research:** Research in which the only foreseeable risk to participants is no more than inconvenience or discomfort, consistent with the definition of low-risk research in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research

- **Parent/Caregiver:** A person with the legal authority to make decisions in relation to the long-term care, welfare, and development of a child
- **Permission to Approach:** Written approval granted by BCE Research Committee authorising a Researcher to approach a school principal or BCE office head to seek site-level participation, subject to any stated conditions
- **Personal Information:** Information or an opinion about an identified or reasonably identifiable individual, whether true or not, and whether recorded in a material form or not.
- **Publication:** Any material intended for public dissemination, including theses, journal articles, reports, conference presentations, webinars, or online content
- **Publicity:** Media releases, public statements, interviews, or other communications to external audiences, including social media
- **Research:** Creative and systematic work undertaken to increase knowledge, including knowledge of education, culture, and society, and to devise new applications of existing knowledge. For the purposes of these Guidelines, Research includes activities involving data collection, analysis, or dissemination that extend beyond routine internal evaluation or quality assurance and are intended for external Publication
- **Research Application Request:** The form used to initiate an application and submit all supporting documentation for review and approval to conduct Research
- **National Application Form:** The cross-jurisdiction research application form hosted by the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) for research proposals that cover more than one jurisdiction or education system
- **Research Advertisement in Schools Application Form:** The form used where a Researcher seeks only to advertise research (e.g., via a school newsletter or noticeboard) without conducting Research in BCE schools or offices
- **Researcher:** A person or organisation seeking to undertake Research in BCE schools or offices, including Research involving BCE staff, students, or data. This includes external researchers, postgraduate students, consultants, and BCE employees conducting Research outside their routine professional duties
- **Student Protection briefing:** A site-based induction provided by a participating school that explains local student protection procedures and expectations for researchers before Research commences on site
- **Student Protection Contact/Officer:** The school nominated staff member responsible for student protection procedures at the site and who may facilitate the Student Protection briefing for Researchers
- **Variation:** A change to an approved Research project (including changes to aims, methodology, participant groups, instruments, personnel, timelines, sites, or data management arrangements) that requires BCE's written approval before implementation
- **Vulnerable Participants:** Individuals or groups who may have reduced capacity to provide informed consent or who may be at increased risk of harm, including but not limited to children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and individuals experiencing disadvantage or dependency.

3.0 Scope and Eligibility for Research in BCE Schools

These Guidelines apply to Research conducted in all Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) diocesan (systemic) schools and BCE offices within the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Research involving Religious Institute schools or Catholic schools in other dioceses is outside the scope of these Guidelines and requires approval from the relevant governing authority.

3.1 Applications within scope

A Research Application is required where proposed activities:

- involve BCE schools, BCE offices, BCE staff, students, Parents/Caregivers, or other members of the BCE community; and/or
- involve access to, or use of, non-public BCE data, records, or information; and
- are intended to contribute to knowledge beyond BCE through Publication, Publicity, or external dissemination.

For the purposes of these Guidelines, Research includes qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, evaluative, observational, or intervention-based studies, as well as pilot studies and feasibility studies, where findings are intended for external dissemination.

3.2 Applications outside scope

The following activities are generally outside the scope of these Guidelines and do not normally require a Research Application, provided they are conducted solely for internal purposes and are not intended for external dissemination:

- routine internal evaluation, quality assurance, or performance monitoring undertaken by BCE for operational or improvement purposes
- activities conducted as part of normal teaching, learning, professional development, or school improvement processes, where data are used only internally
- compliance, audit, or reporting activities required by law or BCE policy.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether a proposed activity constitutes Research for the purposes of these Guidelines, Researchers are required to seek advice from the Research Committee Secretariat prior to commencing the activity.

3.3 Who must apply

A Research Application must be submitted where a proposed Research activity falls within the scope of these Guidelines and involves any of the following:

- external Researchers seeking to conduct Research in BCE schools or offices, including university-based researchers, postgraduate students, consultants, and research organisations
- BCE employees undertaking Research outside their routine professional duties, or where the Research is intended for external dissemination, including Publication or Publicity
- postgraduate students or early career researchers who are employed by BCE but conducting Research as part of a higher degree, externally supervised project, or professional research activity

- collaborative research teams involving BCE and one or more external partners, regardless of which organisation is the lead investigator
- external parties conducting Research on behalf of BCE, or using BCE data, where findings are intended for dissemination beyond BCE.

Where Research is conducted by BCE staff solely as part of normal operational, evaluative, or school improvement activities, and is not intended for external dissemination, a Research Application is not normally required, subject to confirmation through preliminary screening.

3.4 Eligibility considerations

In determining whether a Research Application will be supported, BCE will consider factors including:

- alignment with BCE Research Priorities and strategic objectives
- the educational value and relevance of the Research to BCE schools and communities
- the proposed Research design, ethical considerations, and risk profile
- the anticipated burden on schools, staff, students, and Parents/Caregivers; and
- the capacity of participating sites to support the proposed Research.

Research conducted primarily for commercial, marketing, or financial gain, or where the primary benefit does not accrue to BCE schools or the broader Catholic education system, will not be supported.

4.0 BCE Research Priorities

BCE supports Research that contributes meaningfully to improved educational practice, student wellbeing, and system improvement within Catholic education. To ensure that Research conducted in BCE schools delivers clear value and aligns with BCE's mission, Researchers are required to demonstrate alignment with BCE's current Strategic Priorities as part of their Research Application.

Alignment with BCE's Strategic Priorities is a key consideration in determining whether a Research Application will be supported. Research that does not clearly align with these priorities, or that offers limited educational benefit to BCE schools and communities, is unlikely to be approved. This requirement assists BCE to manage research demand on schools and to prioritise projects that address identified system needs.

BCE's Strategic Priorities are informed by its strategic plan and are reviewed periodically. At the time of publication of these Guidelines, the priority areas include:

Improving learning outcomes for our students: Improving student learning and teaching outcomes, with a focus on excellence and equity for every learner.

Innovating for future Catholic schooling: Deepening understanding of the Catholic tradition and how it enriches education.

Strengthening our workforce to support our students: Enhancing organisational capabilities (e.g. leadership, digital innovation, data use) that help schools achieve their mission.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all: Building vibrant and engaging school communities that are safe, inclusive, and actively involve students in their learning, while fostering inclusive and innovative practices that support excellence for all learners, inspired by faith.

Researchers must explicitly identify and explain how their proposed Research aligns with one or more of these priority areas and supports BCE's strategic objectives and Catholic educational mission. This alignment should be clearly articulated in the Research Application and reflected in the research questions, methodology, and intended outcomes.

5.0 Application Submission and Review Process

5.1 Submitting the research application

All applications to conduct research must be made via the [Research Application Request](#).

Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and are reviewed collectively through the scheduled monthly meetings of the BCE Research Committee.

5.2 Acknowledgement of receipt

The Research Committee Secretariat will acknowledge receipt of a Research Application within five business days. Where acknowledgement is not received, Researchers should contact the Secretariat to confirm receipt: ResearchImpact@bne.catholic.edu.au.

5.3 No direct school contact

All proposals must progress through the central BCE review process before schools are approached. Researchers must not contact individual BCE schools, principals, or BCE office sites to seek participation prior to receiving written Permission to Approach (BCE approval).

5.4 Research committee review

The BCE Research Committee is the governing body responsible for reviewing Research Applications. The Committee includes representatives with expertise in research governance, education leadership, student wellbeing, privacy and data management, and Catholic ethos considerations.

Applications are assessed against key criteria, including:

- ethical standards and participant safety
- alignment with BCE's mission and Research Priorities
- educational value and benefit to BCE
- feasibility and minimisation of disruption to schools
- resource implications
- data privacy and integrity.

5.5 Decision and notification

Following review, the Research Committee will determine an outcome and notify the Researcher in writing. Outcomes may include approval, or non-approval. Approval letters outline any conditions and authorise Researchers to approach schools, noting that site-level Final Approval remains required.

5.6 Indicative timelines

Indicative timeframes from submission to decision are approximately two to six weeks, depending on meeting schedules and review requirements. The Research Committee Secretariat is the primary point of contact throughout the process.

6.0 Application Pathways and Approved Stages

BCE applies different application pathways to ensure that research proposals are reviewed in a manner proportionate to their scale, complexity, and level of system involvement. The appropriate pathway is determined through preliminary screening and, where necessary, consultation with the Research Committee Secretariat.

6.1 Application pathways

General Applications

This is the standard pathway for most external research proposals, including those submitted by individual researchers, postgraduate students, and academic staff seeking to conduct research in BCE schools.

Applications under this pathway require submission of a completed BCE Research Application and supporting documentation and are subject to ethical and governance review by the BCE Research Committee. Most research projects conducted in BCE schools will be assessed through this pathway.

National Applications

If the research covers more than one jurisdiction or education system, researchers must use the National Application Form found on the Australian Association for Research in Education website (See Appendix A - Links Index).

Capstone Applied Research

Master's students undertaking Capstone research must submit a Capstone Applied Research Application Form.

Research Advertising in BCE

Where a researcher seeks only to advertise research in a school newsletter or noticeboard and does not intend to conduct research in BCE schools or offices, a Research Advertisement in Schools Application Form is required to be completed online.

Approved Existing Variation

Where a researcher seeks to modify an already approved research project within BCE schools or offices. Any proposed variations, such as changes to methodology, participant groups, timelines, or project scope, must be formally submitted for review and approval. The BCE Research Committee will assess these requests to ensure continued compliance with ethical standards and governance requirements. Approval for variations is necessary before implementing any changes, and research activities must not proceed until confirmation is granted.

Collaborative Research Partnerships

Where a proposed project involves a formal collaboration with BCE, multiple education systems or jurisdictions, or a large-scale or externally funded initiative, Researchers are required to contact the Research Committee Secretariat prior to submitting the Research Application Request. This preliminary discussion assists BCE to determine the appropriate review process and to identify whether additional governance arrangements or agreements may be required.

Following this consultation, such proposals may proceed through the General Research Application pathway or be subject to additional review requirements determined by BCE. Contact with the Secretariat does not imply endorsement or approval of the proposed Research.

6.2 Permission to Approach

Formal BCE Approval constitutes Permission to Approach. Where granted, it authorises the Researcher to approach principals or BCE office heads / Managers to request Final Approval.

6.3 Final Approval

Final Approval is granted by the principal or office head of each participating site. Principals and office heads retain discretion to decline participation regardless of BCE approval. Research must not commence until Final Approval has been obtained. Researchers will be contacted two months after the designated commencement date to confirm which schools have provided final approval for participation in the research project.

7.0 Ethical Research Design and HREC Requirements

All Research conducted in BCE schools or offices must be designed and carried out in accordance with high ethical standards. Research involving human participants is normally required to obtain approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) recognised under the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) framework.

Where HREC approval is required, Researchers must provide evidence of ethics clearance, in the form of an official approval letter, as part of the Research Application.

7.1 Researchers without access to an HREC

Researchers who do not have access to an institutional HREC, including independent consultants or organisations operating outside the higher education sector, are required to submit a comprehensive Ethics Statement as part of the Research Application. The Ethics Statement must demonstrate how the proposed Research will meet recognised ethical standards, including:

- processes for obtaining informed, voluntary, and current consent from participants, using active opt-in consent only
- measures to protect privacy and confidentiality, including secure data handling and de-identification of Personal Information
- identification and management of potential risks to participants, including strategies to minimise harm
- data management arrangements, including secure storage, controlled access, retention, and disposal
- ethical approaches to reporting and dissemination of findings, including appropriate acknowledgement of BCE where relevant.

7.2 Additional ethics frameworks

Where Research is conducted through a market or social research organisation that operates in accordance with the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) Code of Professional Behaviour, separate HREC approval may not be required for low-risk projects. In such cases, demonstrated compliance with the AMSRS Code may be accepted by BCE as an alternative ethics framework. Notwithstanding this, the BCE Research Committee retains discretion to require formal HREC review where a project involves higher levels of risk, including Research that involves highly sensitive Personal Information or vulnerable participant groups.

Some Research activities require additional approvals or compliance with specialist ethical frameworks, including:

- **Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:** must demonstrate adherence to the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, including evidence of cultural respect and appropriate consultation
- **Research involving animals:** requires prior approval from the Queensland School Animal Ethics Committee, with evidence of that approval provided as part of the Research Application.

Researchers who are uncertain about applicable ethics requirements, including whether HREC review is required or whether additional approvals apply, are encouraged to contact the Research Committee Secretariat for guidance prior to submitting a Research Application.

Relevant national ethical frameworks and guidance referred to in this section are listed in Appendix A (Links Index).

8.0 Consent Requirements

Participation in Research must be voluntary and based on written, informed, current, and specific consent. For students under 18 years, consent must be obtained from a Parent/Caregiver, and the student's agreement must also be sought.

Consent forms and participant information sheets must clearly describe participant involvement, risks, confidentiality, withdrawal processes, complaints pathways, and any future use of data.

Passive or opt-out consent processes are not permitted for Research conducted in BCE schools.

9.0 Incentives

Incentives offered to research participants should be carefully considered to ensure they do not unduly influence consent or participation. The purpose of incentives is to recognise participants' time and involvement, not to pressure or coerce individuals into taking part. As such, all incentives must be modest and appropriate for the context, avoiding any risk of compromising voluntary informed consent.

Researchers are encouraged to document the nature and value of incentives within the participant information sheet and consent process, and to seek guidance from the Research Committee if unsure.

10.0 Child Safeguarding Requirements

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) places the highest priority on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. All Research conducted in BCE schools or involving BCE students must be carried out in a manner that upholds child safeguarding obligations and complies with applicable legal and policy requirements.

10.1 Blue Card (Working with Children Check)

All Researchers who will have contact with students are required to hold a valid Queensland Blue Card, or to provide documented evidence of exemption, prior to commencing any Research activities. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that their Blue Card status remains current for the full duration of the approved Research.

10.2 Codes of conduct and student protection procedures

Researchers must comply with notified BCE codes of conduct applicable to them from time to time when carrying out any Research, including those set out in Appendix A (Links Index). Prior to

commencing Research at a school site, Researchers are required to participate in a Student Protection briefing at each participating school. This briefing is typically facilitated by the school's nominated Student Protection Contact or Officer and provides guidance on local procedures for safeguarding students and responding to concerns.

10.3 Duty of care and mandatory reporting

Researchers have an ongoing duty of care to students and other participants. Where, during Research, a participant discloses information that indicates a risk of harm, abuse, neglect, or other safety concerns, Researchers must report this information immediately to the school principal or the school's Student Protection Officer. This obligation overrides any assurances of confidentiality associated with the Research. Participant safety and wellbeing take precedence over research considerations in all circumstances.

Researchers are expected to familiarise themselves with BCE's Student Protection Policy and associated procedures prior to engaging with students and to act in accordance with these requirements at all times.

Reference to relevant legislative frameworks, BCE safeguarding policies, and related guidance are provided in Appendix A (Links Index).

11.0 Privacy, Data Management, and Information Security

All Research conducted in BCE schools or offices must comply with applicable privacy legislation, including the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), and must be designed and implemented in a manner that protects the confidentiality and security of Personal Information. Researchers are required to manage Personal Information lawfully, fairly, and with due care, consistent with BCE's privacy obligations.

Key requirements include the following:

11.1 Privacy governance

Researchers must provide a copy of their organisation's privacy policy or privacy statement as part of the Research Application. This document must describe how Personal Information is collected, used, stored, shared and otherwise managed. BCE will review the policy to assess its consistency with BCE's privacy standards and legal obligations.

11.2 Data storage and location

Personal Information, including information relating to students or staff, must be stored securely on servers located within Australia. Storage or transfer of Personal Information outside Australia is not permitted unless explicitly approved by BCE in writing and supported by appropriate safeguards.

11.3 Confidentiality and de-identification

Researchers must take reasonable steps to ensure that individual participants cannot be identified in any reports, publications, or shared research outputs. This includes de-identifying data, using codes or pseudonyms, and aggregating results so that individuals or very small groups cannot be reasonably identified. Information that could enable identification, including small-cell results or detailed quotations, must be omitted or appropriately anonymised.

11.4 Data access, retention, and disposal

Research Applications must clearly specify how data will be accessed, stored, retained, and ultimately disposed of or de-identified. Access to identifiable data must be restricted to authorised personnel,

and secure disposal or de-identification must occur at the conclusion of the Research or after an approved retention period, in accordance with ethical standards.

11.5 Secondary use of data

Where there is any intention to use Research data for future studies or to share data with third parties, including any third-party digital platform or software provider, this must be clearly disclosed in the Research Application and participant information materials. Participants, or Parents/Caregivers where applicable, must provide explicit consent for any secondary use of data.

Compliance with these privacy and data management requirements is a condition of approval. Any breach of privacy or confidentiality may result in suspension or withdrawal of approval and further action in accordance with BCE policies.

Applicable privacy legislation, BCE privacy governance, and data-breach notification requirements are listed in Appendix A (Links Index).

12.0 Insurance and Indemnity

12.1 Insurance requirements

All Researchers seeking approval to conduct Research in Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) schools or offices must ensure that appropriate and sufficient insurance coverage is in place for the full duration of the approved Research.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing, Researchers are required to hold current public liability insurance that provides coverage for any loss, damage, or injury arising from the conduct of the Research, including activities undertaken on BCE premises or involving BCE students, staff, or other participants.

Evidence of insurance, in the form of a certificate of currency, must be submitted as part of the Research Application. Approval to conduct Research is normally granted only for the period covered by the insurance policy.

12.2 Scope and adequacy of coverage

Insurance coverage must be appropriate to the nature, scale, and risk profile of the proposed Research. Where Research is conducted under the auspices of a university, research institution, or other organisation, the organisation's insurance arrangements may be accepted, provided they adequately cover the Research activities and participants.

Where BCE considers that the level or scope of insurance coverage is insufficient for the proposed Research, BCE may request additional information, require changes to the coverage, or decline approval.

12.3 Ongoing insurance obligations

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that insurance coverage remains current and valid for the entire period during which Research activities are conducted. Where Research timelines are extended or approval conditions are varied, updated evidence of insurance may be required.

Failure to maintain appropriate insurance coverage may result in suspension or withdrawal of approval, in accordance with Section 16.

12.4 Liability

To the extent permitted by law, Researchers are responsible for any loss, damage, or liability arising from the negligent or unlawful conduct of the Research, including negligent or unlawful acts or omissions of the Researcher or their agents, contractors, or collaborators. Nothing in these Guidelines limits BCE's rights in relation to indemnity, liability, or risk management under applicable law or any separate agreement.

13.0 Engagement with Schools and Participants

Following receipt of Formal BCE Approval (Permission to Approach), Researchers may approach BCE schools or offices to seek participation in the approved Research. Engagement with schools and participants must be conducted in a manner that is respectful, transparent, and designed to minimise disruption to teaching, learning, and school operations.

Key requirements include the following:

13.1 Initial contact with schools

For school-based Research, the first point of contact must be the school principal, or the relevant BCE office head where the Research involves a central office. Researchers must provide evidence of BCE approval (Permission to Approach) and a clear summary of the proposed Research, including the nature of participation and any anticipated demands on the school. Principals and office heads retain full discretion to determine whether and when their site will participate. BCE approval authorises Researchers to seek participation but does not guarantee school participation. Final Approval rests with the principal or office head. Researchers will be contacted two months after the designated commencement date to confirm which schools have provided final approval for participation in the research project.

13.2 Scheduling and school operations

Research activities must be planned in consultation with school leadership and scheduled at times that minimise disruption to teaching, learning, and routine school operations. Researchers are required to take account of school calendars, operational priorities, and existing commitments, and to remain flexible in accommodating local circumstances. Research design and timing must not place unreasonable burden on students or staff.

13.3 Communication and consent processes

All communication with potential participants, including students, Parents/Caregivers, and staff, must be professional, clear, and conducted through appropriate school-endorsed channels. Recruitment materials, participant information sheets, and consent forms must be those approved as part of the Research Application. Participation must be voluntary and free from coercion. Active, opt-in consent is required for all Research conducted in BCE schools, and passive or opt-out consent processes are not permitted.

13.4 Language and accessibility

Information provided to schools and participants must be presented in clear, plain language. Where participants or Parents/Caregivers are not proficient in English, reasonable steps must be taken to provide translated materials or interpretation to support informed consent. Where literacy, disability, or other accessibility needs are identified, alternative methods for explaining the Research and documenting consent must be considered.

13.5 Use of recordings, images, and work samples

Where Research involves the collection of audio, visual, photographic, or video material, or the use of student work samples, express written consent must be obtained for these activities. Participant information materials must clearly describe how such material will be collected, used, stored, and shared, and how participant anonymity will be protected. Where recordings or images are intended for publication or presentation beyond data analysis, additional specific consent must be obtained. Covert recording, deception, or use of personal material without consent is not permitted.

13.6 Managing changes and issues

Researchers must notify the Research Committee Secretariat of any significant changes to approved Research, including changes to personnel, methodology, scope, or timelines, and must obtain written approval for such variations prior to implementation. Where a participating school or office withdraws from the Research, Researchers must cease or adjust activities as directed and inform the Secretariat promptly. Research must be conducted in accordance with the conditions of approval at all times. Failure to comply with approval conditions, or the emergence of unanticipated ethical or welfare concerns, may result in suspension or withdrawal of approval.

14.0 Reporting, Monitoring, and Research Findings

Researchers are required to meet BCE reporting and monitoring requirements to support oversight of approved Research and to ensure that projects continue to comply with approval conditions. BCE may initiate a review of an approved research application at any time for any reason, including where safety or wellbeing may be at risk, and that the review may recommend continue/suspend/cease participation.

Key requirements include the following:

14.1 Progress reporting

Researchers are required to submit a progress report at the midpoint of the research project or every 12 months, whichever comes first. The Secretariat will contact the researcher with detailed instructions for completing this reporting obligation.

14.2 Final Research Report

Researchers must submit a Final Research Report to the BCE Research Committee within one month of completing data collection or upon conclusion of the Research, unless otherwise specified in approval conditions. The Final Research Report must summarise key findings, conclusions, and any recommendations or implications relevant to BCE, including how findings may inform practice, policy, or system improvement. Submission of the Final Research Report enables BCE to assess the impact and value of the Research and to share insights with relevant stakeholders where appropriate. Failure to provide required reports on time may result in the researcher and/or institution being excluded from applying to conduct future research.

14.3 Dissemination and publications

BCE supports the dissemination of Research findings through academic, professional, or sector forums. All dissemination must comply with privacy, confidentiality, and child safety obligations and must be conducted in a manner that respects BCE's reputation and Catholic ethos. Where required by approval conditions, Researchers must acknowledge Brisbane Catholic Education and participating schools in publications or presentations.

Researchers planning to present findings at conferences, workshops, or similar events are required to notify the Research Committee Secretariat in writing six weeks in advance, including reference to the relevant BCE Research Application. This supports awareness of how BCE-approved Research is being shared and enables consideration of any sensitivities.

14.4 Sensitive findings and use of data

Where Research generates findings that are confidential or highly sensitive, including findings relating to particular schools, individuals, or vulnerable groups, Researchers must consult with the Research Committee prior to public dissemination. Guidance may be provided on appropriate contextualisation, anonymisation, or timing of release.

Research data and findings must be used only in ways consistent with the approved Research Application and participant consent. Data must not be repurposed for new or unrelated analyses without further express written approval. Where appropriate and consistent with privacy obligations, Researchers may be requested to provide summaries of findings or access to data to support BCE's educational objectives.

Adherence to these reporting, monitoring, and dissemination requirements supports transparency, accountability, and BCE's commitment to research-informed improvement.

15.0 Conflicts of Interest and Commercial Gain

Researchers must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest as part of the Research Application and must disclose any changes to declared interests for the duration of the approved Research.

A conflict of interest exists where a Researcher's personal, professional, financial, or institutional interests could reasonably be perceived to influence, or appear to influence, the design, conduct, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of the Research. Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- financial interests, such as funding, sponsorship, employment, consultancy arrangements, shareholdings, or other material benefits related to the Research
- professional or organisational interests, including affiliations with organisations that may benefit from the Research outcomes
- personal relationships or dual roles that could give rise to perceived bias or preferential treatment
- institutional interests where the Researcher's employing organisation has a direct interest in the Research outcomes.

The Research Committee will consider declared conflicts of interest as part of the review process and may determine that the conflict can be appropriately managed through disclosure, mitigation strategies, or specific conditions of approval. Where a conflict of interest cannot be adequately managed, BCE may decline approval or impose restrictions on the conduct or dissemination of the Research.

Research undertaken primarily for commercial, marketing, or material gain, or where the primary benefit does not accrue to BCE schools or the broader Catholic education system, will not be supported. Researchers must disclose any commercial affiliations, sponsorship arrangements, or financial interests associated with the proposed Research, including any intention to use Research findings for commercial purposes.

16.0 Intellectual Property, Publications and Publicity

16.1 Ownership of intellectual property

Ownership of intellectual property (IP) arising from approved Research will depend on the nature of the Research and the status of the Researcher(s), and will be determined in accordance with applicable law, BCE policies, and any specific agreements entered into as part of the approval process.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing:

for Research conducted by external Researchers, ownership of scholarly outputs (including reports, theses, and academic publications) generally remains with the Researcher or their employing institution

for Research conducted by BCE employees in the course of their employment, resulting IP generally remain with BCE, consistent with applicable employment arrangements and BCE policies

for collaborative research partnerships or BCE-funded projects, IP ownership, authorship, and use rights will be explicitly specified in a contract, deed of agreement, or approval conditions.

16.2 Licence and use rights

Notwithstanding ownership arrangements, BCE may require a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to store, use, reproduce, and internally disseminate Research outputs for educational, policy, system improvement, and business purposes. Any such licence will be specified in the approval conditions or associated agreements.

16.3 Publications and acknowledgement

Researchers are encouraged to disseminate Research findings through academic, professional, or sector forums, subject to compliance with approval conditions, privacy obligations, and child safeguarding requirements. Where Research outputs identify or draw upon BCE schools, staff, students, or data, Researchers must appropriately acknowledge Brisbane Catholic Education in publications or presentations, unless otherwise agreed.

Draft Publications or proposed Publicity that identify BCE, a BCE school, or members of the BCE community will be required to be provided to BCE in writing for review six weeks prior to release. BCE may request reasonable amendments to protect confidentiality, accuracy, or the wellbeing of participants.

16.4 Student work and participant materials

Intellectual property in student work samples or participant-generated materials generally remains with the student or participant. Explicit consent must be obtained for the reproduction, publication, or dissemination of such materials beyond data analysis, and consent documentation must clearly describe how these materials will be used. Researchers must ensure that student works are properly attributed in accordance with applicable intellectual property laws.

16.5 Publicity and media

Publicity, media engagement, or public communications relating to approved Research must comply with BCE approval conditions and any applicable communications protocols. Researchers must not represent Research findings as endorsed by BCE unless such endorsement has been explicitly granted in writing.

17.0 Amendments, Breach, and Withdrawal of Approval

17.1 Variations to Approved Research

Researchers must seek written approval from BCE for any significant amendment to an approved Research project prior to implementation. Amendments include, but are not limited to, changes to:

The research aims, questions, or methodology, participant groups, recruitment strategies, or consent processes, data collection instruments or procedures, research personnel, including a change of principal or lead investigator, project scope, timelines, or sites, data management, storage, or dissemination arrangements.

Requests for amendments must be submitted to the Research Committee Secretariat with sufficient detail to enable assessment of the proposed changes. BCE will determine whether the amendment can be approved administratively or requires further review by the Research Committee. Research must continue to be conducted in accordance with the originally approved conditions until written approval of the amendment has been granted.

17.2 Breach of Approval Conditions

A breach occurs where Research is conducted in a manner that is inconsistent with the approved Research Application, approval conditions, these Guidelines, or applicable ethical, legal, or policy requirements. Breaches may include, but are not limited to:

- conducting Research at unapproved sites or with unapproved participant groups
- failure to comply with consent, privacy, or child safeguarding requirements
- use of data or materials beyond the scope of participant consent
- failure to submit required reports or to comply with reporting conditions
- failure to disclose conflicts of interest or significant changes to the Research.
- Commencing Research activities prior to receiving Formal BCE Approval and required site level Final Approval

Researchers must notify the Research Committee Secretariat in writing as soon as practicable if a breach is identified or suspected. BCE may require corrective action, impose additional conditions, or initiate further review in response to a breach.

17.3 Suspension or withdrawal of approval

BCE may suspend or withdraw approval to conduct Research in whole or in part where:

- BCE reasonably suspects that participant safety, wellbeing, or rights are at risk
- a material breach of approval conditions has occurred
- unapproved amendments have been implemented
- BCE believes that continuation of the Research is no longer consistent with BCE priorities or operational considerations; or
- required information, clarification, or reports are not provided within specified timeframes.

Where approval is suspended, BCE will notify the Researcher in writing of the reasons for suspension and any requirements that must be met for approval to be reinstated. Where approval is withdrawn, Research activities must cease immediately as directed, and BCE may provide instructions regarding participant communication, data handling, and reporting obligations.

Researchers release BCE, inclusive of its officers, agents and employees, from any loss, damage or liability of whatever nature (including indirect or consequential loss) arising from any suspension or withdrawal of approval under this clause.

17.4 Consequences and ongoing obligations

Suspension or withdrawal of approval does not remove a Researcher's ongoing obligations in relation to confidentiality, privacy, data security, or ethical conduct. BCE reserves the right to take further action in accordance with its policies, including consideration of a Researcher's compliance history when assessing future Research Applications.

Nothing in this section limits BCE's ability to act promptly to protect participants, schools, staff, or the integrity of the research process where urgent concerns arise.

18.0 Appeals and Complaints

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) is committed to fair, transparent, and accountable decision-making in the review and oversight of Research conducted in BCE schools and offices. Where concerns arise, the following avenues are available.

18.1 Appeals

Where a Research Application is not approved, the Researcher may lodge an appeal in writing with the Research Committee Secretariat. Appeals must be submitted within ten business days of receipt of the decision notification and must clearly state the grounds for appeal, including any additional information or clarification relevant to the original decision. The Research Committee will reconsider the application in light of the information provided and will notify the Researcher in writing of the outcome following further review. Approval decisions are not routinely overturned and will generally be reconsidered only where substantive new information or clarification is provided.

18.2 Complaints

Complaints relating to the research approval process, ethical matters, or the conduct of Research in BCE schools may be raised by Researchers, participants or Parents/Caregivers, school staff, or other stakeholders. Complaints will be managed in accordance with BCE policies and relevant national ethical frameworks, including the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. BCE will address complaints respectfully and in a timely manner. Where appropriate, matters may be referred to external authorities or regulatory bodies. Individuals seeking to raise a complaint may contact the Research Committee Secretariat or the relevant BCE office for guidance on the appropriate process.

19.0 Governing Legislation and References

Research conducted under these Guidelines must be undertaken in accordance with all applicable Commonwealth and Queensland legislation, recognised national ethical standards, and relevant Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) policies, procedures, and codes of conduct.

These requirements apply to all stages of a research project, including (but not limited to) research design, participant recruitment, consent processes, data collection, data management, reporting, and dissemination of findings. Approval granted under these Guidelines does not exempt researchers from compliance with any legislative, ethical, or governance obligations that apply to their research activities.

Responsibility for identifying, understanding, and complying with applicable requirements rests with the researcher. Where there is uncertainty about which obligations apply, or where requirements appear to overlap or conflict, researchers are expected to seek clarification prior to commencing or amending research activities.

Authoritative links to the legislation, ethical frameworks, and BCE governance instruments referred to throughout this document are provided in Appendix A (Links Index). The Links Index is intended to serve as the central reference point for these sources and may be updated from time to time to reflect changes in legislation or policy.

20.0 Key Contacts

The Research Committee Secretariat is the primary point of contact for enquiries relating to Research Applications, approval processes, variation requests, reporting obligations, and general guidance on research governance within BCE.

Email: ResearchImpact@bne.catholic.edu.au

21.0 Submission checklist

The following must be submitted with research applications:*

- Formal approval letter from an accredited human research ethics committee or an ethics statement*
- Evidence of public liability insurance*
- Sample letter to the BCE office Manager and/or school Principal regarding the research project*
- Sample letter to parents regarding the participation of their child in the research project*
- Consent forms (for all categories of research participants)*
- Participant information sheets (for all categories of research participants)*
- Release form (if required)*
- Copies of research instruments e.g. survey questionnaire, interview guide questions*
- Sample 'help-seeking card' for the participants (if research is sensitive in nature)*
- Positive Notice Blue Card (or evidence of exemption)*
- A copy of administering organisation's privacy statement*
- Completed and signed BCE Volunteer and Other Personnel Registration Form*

**The checklist is not required for applications to advertise research. Applications to advertise research must include a copy of the advertisement with the application form.*

22.0 Frequently asked questions

22.1 Eligibility and scope of research

I am a BCE teacher and wish to conduct research within my own school. Do I need to complete a research application?

Yes, if:

- *you intend to share the research findings outside of BCE (for example, through academic publications, conference presentations, webinars, online posts, in a library, the media, or advertising), or*
- *the research is being undertaken as part of a Masters Capstone project.*

Are program or project evaluation activities considered research? Do I need to apply?

Yes. If the evaluation uses research methods and instruments, gathers data from participants, and aims to contribute to organisational knowledge or inform decision making, it is considered research. If you plan to share findings outside BCE, you must submit a Research Application form.

What is human research?

Human research involves people or their data/tissue, including surveys, interviews, observations, use of personal documents, or access to data in any form.

Can commercial organisations undertake research in BCE?

No. BCE does not approve research projects conducted for commercial or material gain.

22.2 Conflicts of interest and incentives

What should I do if I think there may be a conflict of interest?

All applicants - internal or external - must declare any potential conflict of interest in the Research Application form, including any affiliations or financial interests with organisations related to the research subject.

Can I provide incentives to research participants?

Yes, incentives are permitted to encourage participation, but they must be reasonable and not place participants or BCE's reputation at risk.

22.3 Ethics approval and review

What if I don't have access to an accredited human research ethics committee (HREC)?

If you cannot access an HREC, an ethics statement addressing informed consent, privacy, risks and benefits, data management, and dissemination of results will be required. BCE may still request a formal HREC review for high-risk projects.

When do I need to submit the final list of participating schools?

Researchers must provide the final list of participating schools within two months of the designated commencement date of the project. This requirement applies to all projects.

22.4 Child safeguarding and Blue Card requirements

Do BCE teachers need to provide evidence of a Positive Notice Blue Card?

No. BCE teachers who hold a valid QCT registration only need to provide their Employee Number; no other evidence of a Blue Card is required.

If I am at a school for a short period, do I still need a Blue Card?

BCE cannot provide advice about Blue Card requirements, applicants are encouraged to seek their own legal advice and/or contact Blue Card Services in relation to their own working with children check requirements.

If I hold a Working with Children Check from New South Wales, do I need a Queensland Blue Card?

BCE cannot provide advice about Blue Card requirements, applicants are encouraged to seek their own legal advice and/or contact Blue Card Services in relation to their own working with children check requirements.

If I am conducting research on a school site but not working directly with students, do I need a Blue Card?

BCE cannot provide advice about Blue Card requirements, applicants are encouraged to seek their own legal advice and/or contact Blue Card Services in relation to their own working with children check requirements.

If I am surveying students online or by post, but not interacting face to face, do I need a Blue Card?

BCE cannot provide advice about Blue Card requirements, applicants are encouraged to seek their own legal advice and/or contact Blue Card Services in relation to their own working with children check requirements.

22.5 Consent requirements

Do I need parental consent to involve students in research?

Yes, written parental or guardian consent is required by external researchers for student participation in research, in addition to student assent where appropriate.

22.6 Application process and documentation

How long does the research application approval process take?

Approval times may vary depending on the complexity of the research and completeness of your submission. Generally, allow at least 4–6 weeks for review and feedback.

What documentation must I submit with my research application?

- Consent forms for participants
- Participant information sheets
- Research instruments (e.g. surveys, interview guides)
- Privacy statement of the administering organisation
- Evidence of Blue Card or exemption, if applicable
- Any additional supporting documents as required.

22.7 Reporting, monitoring, and dissemination

Do all research projects have reporting obligations?

Yes. All research projects approved under these Guidelines are subject to reporting and/or notification requirements. The specific requirements depend on the stage of the research and the duration of the project.

When must a progress report be submitted for research projects?

A progress report must be submitted either at the halfway point of the project or every 12 months, whichever comes first.

How will researchers receive instructions for submitting progress reports?

Researchers will be contacted by the secretariat with detailed instructions on how to fulfil this reporting requirement.

When must the Final Research Report be submitted?

All projects are required to submit a Final Research Report within one month of completing the research.

What notification is required for publications or presentations?

If a project involves publications, conference presentations, workshops, or similar dissemination activities, researchers must notify BCE at least six weeks in advance of the planned activity.

What types of activities are considered dissemination?

Dissemination activities may include academic or professional publications, conference or seminar presentations, workshops, professional learning sessions, or other public or semi-public presentations of research findings.

What happens if reporting or notification timelines are not met?

Failure to meet reporting or notification requirements may be treated as a breach of approval conditions and may affect the continuation of approval for the current project and/or consideration of future research applications.

Appendix A: Key Links for Research Compliance

The following links are provided for reference and should be consulted when preparing, conducting, or reviewing research under the Guidelines for Conducting Research in Brisbane Catholic Education Schools.

Note: Researchers are responsible for ensuring they consult the most current versions of all external standards, legislation, and guidance documents.

Category	Instrument / Resource	Link
Privacy	Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)	https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03712/latest
	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy
	OAIC overview of the Privacy Act	https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-legislation/the-privacy-act
	Australian Privacy Principles quick reference	https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles/australian-privacy-principles-quick-reference
BCE Privacy and Data Breaches	BCE Privacy Statement	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/about/legals/privacy-statement
	Notifiable Data Breaches scheme (OAIC)	https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/notifiable-data-breaches
Child safeguarding and mandatory reporting	Child Protection Act 1999 (Cth)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010
	Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2024-049
	Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1899-009
	Education (General) Provisions Act 2006 (Qld)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/browse/inforce#/act/title/e
BCE safeguarding, student protection,	Student Protection hub (policies, processes, training, and complaints about non-compliance)	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/students-parents/student-protection

and related complaints		
Working with Children Checks	Working with Children Check Act 2000 (Qld)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-060
	Queensland Blue Card Services	https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card-services
Work Health and Safety	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)	https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2011-018
	Queensland WHS laws (overview)	https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws
	Safe Work Australia (national WHS resources)	https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/
National Ethics Frameworks	National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC)	https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2025
	Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)	https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018
National Application Form	Australian Association for Research in Education	https://www.aare.edu.au/research-and-advocacy/research-ethics/national-application-form/
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Ethics	AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020)	https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/aiatsis-code-ethics.pdf
Animal Ethics	Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (8th ed., updated 2021)	https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes
	Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee (QSAEC)	https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/animals-in-education/QSAEC

BCE Volunteer / Third-party- Requirements	Student Protection & Code of Conduct Training Applicable Codes of Conduct	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/students-parents/student-protection/student-protection-and-code-of-conduct-training-for-volunteers-and-other-personnel
	BCE Volunteer Code of Conduct	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/661/Volunteer%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf
BCE Codes of Conduct	Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/661/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y
BCE Policies and Complaints gateway	BCE Policies (gateway for system policies, including complaints management)	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/about/bce-policies
BCE communications and intellectual property	BCE Copyright Statement	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/about/legals/copyright-statement
	BCE Web Disclaimer	https://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/about/legals/web-disclaimer



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