Research applications - Appraisals and decisions procedure

Version: 1.3 | **Version effective**: 10/06/2022

Audience

Department-wide

Purpose

This procedure describes how departmental officers appraise and make a decision on a research application (application) submitted to the Department of Education (department) for consideration.

Overview

The department receives an application when a researcher is seeking to actively recruit participants to participate in research on a state school site or other state education site, in corporate office or in a regional office. An application is also received when a researcher is seeking to obtain centrally-held student data. Applications must meet the department's standards for ethical research practice before research can be conducted on a departmental site (school or worksite).

This procedure outlines how to appraise the suitability of an application by considering its: benefits, risks, risk mitigation strategies, impost on participants, compliance with legislative and/or policy requirements and the appropriateness of the research to be conducted on a departmental site.

Different types of applications are appraised differently. Applications to undertake research:

- in **one school or one office site, with no sensitivities** are appraised and decided by principals or office site managers.

- in **multiple schools or multiple sites in one region, with no sensitivities** are appraised by regional officers.

- in **multiple regions or multiple Australian jurisdictions** (that is, national applications) **or areas of sensitivity** are appraised by Research Services staff.

- using **data collected by the department** are appraised by Research Services staff.

Principals and Corporate Office managers have ultimate discretion to decide whether a research study is suitable for administration at their site, even in the instances where regional or corporate office staff have undertaken an

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initial appraisal of an application and granted permission to approach. A flowchart of the appraisal and decision-making process is included in this procedure under Process, and is available in a print version.

If a researcher directly approaches a school or corporate office to advertise for research participants, and the research is not being conducted on a departmental site, then the researcher may apply directly to a school principal or site manager using the research advertisement in schools form.

Responsibilities

All staff

- comply with the responsibilities and processes outlined in the Student protection procedure
- comply with the responsibilities and processes outlined in the Working with children authority procedure
- store information received about applications securely, in accordance with the relevant information storage procedures in place at each worksite and the Records retention and disposal practices for the department
- act and make decisions in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) and other legislative responsibilities of departmental employees.

Appraisal officers—Research Services staff, regional officers, school principals (or delegates)

- appraise applications in consultation with Corporate Office staff and Regional officers, as required
- liaise with researchers to ensure applications meet departmental standards
- recommend whether an application should be approved (permission to approach) or declined
- seek approval of a recommendation from an Approving officer
- advise Researchers of decisions in writing using a OnePortal letter template (DoE employees only), a Research Services letter template, or a reasonable alternative (school principals), and the reasons for decisions if applications are declined
- record the decision and retain records of the decision.

Research Services staff, Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations (SPIR)

- receive all Corporate Office and Regional Office applications in the Queensland Education Research Inventory (QERI)
- assign applications to Appraisal officers (in Research Services or Regional office) and confirm applications have been received
- support Appraisal officers and Corporate Office staff to appraise and decide applications
- appraise all sensitive applications
- appraise the value of the research and the quality of methodology and research instruments for each application
- publish applications on QERI, after applications are granted permission to approach
- maintain the Standards for ethical research practice, Guidelines for conducting research and Terms and conditions for conducting research.

Regional officers

- receive applications from Research Services staff

- consider the regional context and provide advice on whether the research aligns with regional priorities

- decide whether to appraise the application or return it to Research Services staff for appraisal

- notify Research Services staff of the Approving officer's decision.

Approving officer—Assistant Director-General, SPIR or Regional Director

- review the application, supporting documentation and recommendation prepared by the Appraisal officer

- decide whether to approve or decline permission to approach for the application

- advise Appraisal officer of the decision, and reasons for that decision if the application is declined.

Principals

When a Permission to approach letter signed by an Approving officer is received (Final approval):

- review the application and consider whether the research aligns with the school's priorities

- decide to approve or decline the application (Final approval)

- notify the Researcher of the decision, and

- if the application is approved, advise the Researcher of any mandatory training to be undertaken before the research team can access a school site.

When an application is received through QERI (for single school applications, no sensitivities):

- appraise the application (see Appraisal officers' responsibilities) or contact Research Services staff

- decide to approve or decline the application (Final approval)

- notify the Researcher of the decision in writing using a OnePortal letter template (DoE employees only) or a reasonable alternative, and

- if the application is approved, advise the Researcher of any responsibilities and processes for visitors to state schools, before the research team can access the school site

- notify Research Services staff of the decision.

Office site managers

- review applications with a Permission to approach letter signed by an Approving officer and decide whether to grant final approval.

Other school staff, site staff or regional staff

- refer matters relating to research to principals, office site managers or Research Services staff.

Corporate Office staff—line areas and line managers (or delegates), in operational areas

- receive a request for policy advice on an application from Appraisal officers in Research Services

- review application and provide advice on:

  o its alignment with departmental strategic objectives and policies

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- o   the benefits and risks of conducting the research at the proposed sites, and

- o   whether the risk mitigation strategies are likely to address the potential identified risks.

- work with Research Services staff to resolve issues with the application and/or supporting documentation

- set conditions to mitigate the identified risks and/or improve the benefits of the research (where relevant)

- recommend the application is supported or not supported or supported with conditions

- seek approval of the advice and recommendation from the line area's approving officer

- return approved policy advice to Research Services staff

- provide advice on whether conditions placed on the application and/or supporting documentation have been met to the satisfaction of the line manager.

Researchers—applicants

- submit a complete application package to the department via QERI

- ensure all members of the research team who will work with one or more students or visit a school site have a valid blue card or exemption card, as per the Working with children authority procedure

- amend applications in response to feedback from Appraisal officers and Corporate Office staff

- submit the signed permission to approach letter to principals with the complete application package

- comply with responsibilities and processes for visitors to state schools or work sites, including undertaking an induction session (if required)

- comply with the Guidelines for conducting research and Terms and conditions for conducting research

- protect and promote a human rights culture in the conduct of research that is consistent with the objects of the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).

Process

All DoE research applications must be received through QERI before any research can be undertaken on a DoE site. If a school or site is contacted by a researcher, staff must direct them to the QERI website to submit an application for appraisal. All applications with sensitivities must be appraised by Corporate Office. The below flowchart provides an overview of the process.

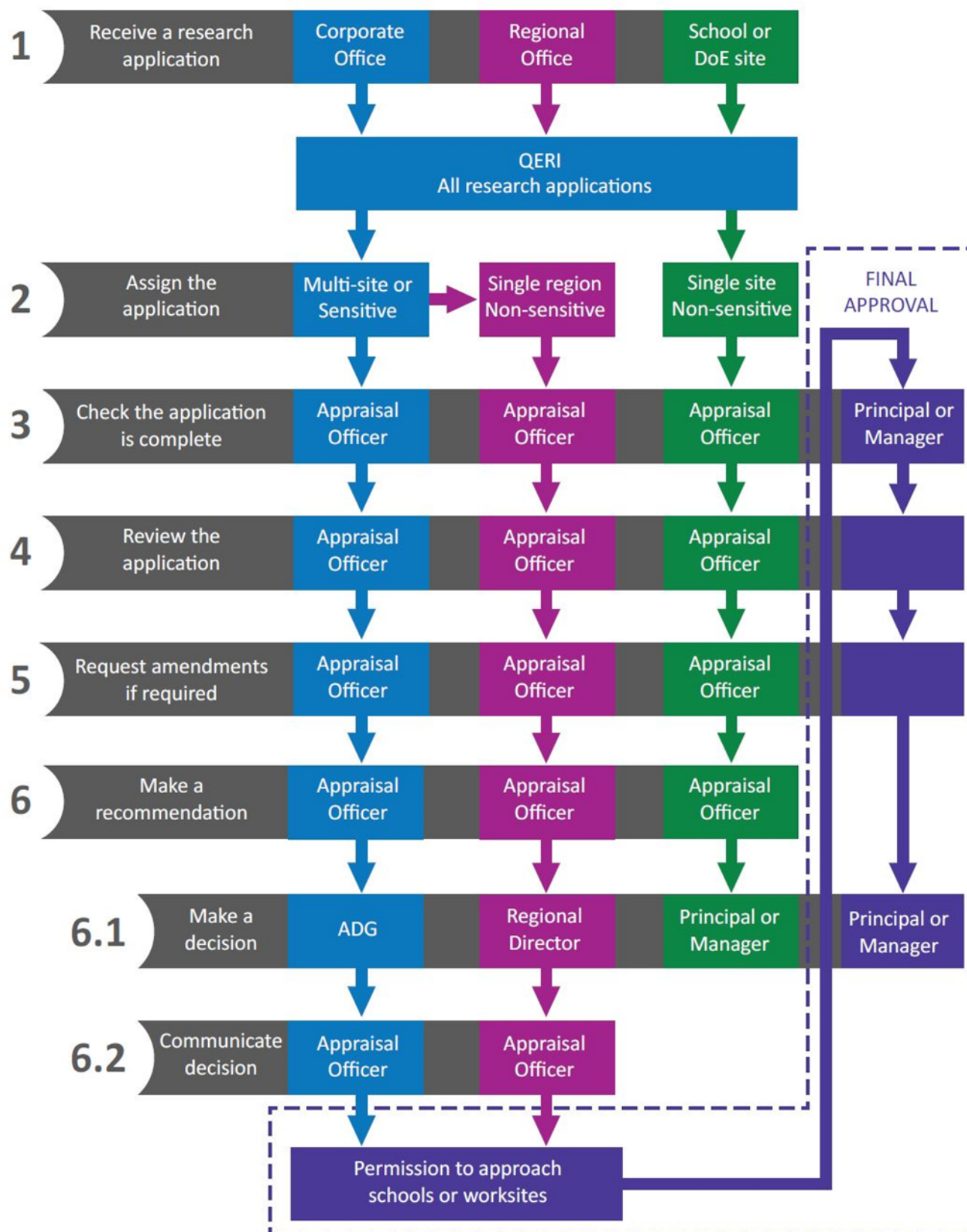## Flowchart – Research applications: Appraisals and decisions

Image 1: Flowchart – Research applications: Appraisals and decisions

Process: The responsible officer, outlined in **bold** in each step of the instructions, must follow the instructions assigned to them. Some actions are optional as indicated.

1. Receive an application in QERI

Research Services OR Principals and other school staff

- Receive a notification from QERI about a new application.

If an application is not received in QERI, you will not receive a notification from QERI.

If you have received an application directly from an applicant, advise them to submit the application in QERI before continuing to step 2.0.

Principals and other school staff (Single school applications)

- Contact Research Services staff for advice if required.

2. Assign the application

Research Services - Corporate Office and Regional Office applications

Assign the application according to the location of the research (Section 3) and whether there are any sensitivities (Section 9):

- Applications with no sensitivities seeking access to multiple schools in one region or one office site: Save the application package in Content Manager (DoE employees only). Email the Content Manager record number to the regional office or office site manager, based on the location of the research. Seek their agreement to review the application.

- Applications with sensitivities; or
  - Applications seeking access to multiple schools in multiple regions; or
  - National applications or applications to conduct research across multiple jurisdictions; or
  - Applications for access to centrally-held data:
    Assign to Research Services staff in QERI.

Note: Single school applications with no sensitivities are assigned to principals directly by QERI. Research Services staff will regularly report on the applications received and contact principals to confirm application/s have been received through QERI.

Regional officers OR Office site managers

Contact Research Services staff for advice if required.

3. Check the application is complete

Appraisal officer - Research Services staff, regional officers, school principals (or delegates)

Check all sections of the application have been completed and all of the supporting documentation has been received. A checklist of the mandatory supporting documents can be found in the Supporting documents checklist.

- If the application is incomplete or further information is required, contact the applicant for more information. You may also request the application is resubmitted with changes or withdrawn

- If a supporting document is missing, illegible or out-of-date, contact the applicant and request the relevant document is submitted to you via email

- Check requirements for Working with children authority procedure have been met.

4. Review the application package

Appraisal officer - Research Services staff, regional officers, school principals (or delegates)

The appraisal officer will:

- appraise the application using the Appraisal checklist

- check the proposed research study is suitable for administration on a departmental site

- ensure requirements of the Working with children authority procedure have been met

- ensure child safety measures are in place when researchers will be on school sites

- ensure specialist policy and ethics advice is sought on applications focussing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- consult with Corporate Office staff for policy advice on the application (when relevant)

- protect and promote human rights by acting and making decisions in a way that is compatible with *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) (HRA)

- give proper consideration to human rights relevant to a decision, in accordance with s.58 of the HRA.

The contents of the application package will need to:

- be complete and meet the department's standards for ethical practice

- demonstrate a benefit to participants, office sites, schools and/or the department

- meet privacy, confidentiality and data storage requirements

- mitigate all of the risks identified.

Information sheets and consent forms must be supplied for all participant categories (including a gatekeeper information sheet for the site manager/principal). Information sheets must clearly describe the study, its methodology, data storage protocols and participation requirements to inform participants' active consent.

Research Services (for Corporate Office applications only)

In addition to the appraisal officer assessment, the Research Services staff will assess the application for:

- its alignment with the department's research priorities

- value to the research field

- quality of methodology and instruments (e.g. well designed, purposeful and capable of producing sound results that are relevant to the research goals).

4.1 Optional – Seek policy advice

Research Services (for Corporate Office applications only)

- Policy advice is sought for complex applications and culturally-sensitive applications

- Prepare the policy advice template and send the template to relevant line areas for policy advice in Content Manager and via email.

Corporate Office staff - line areas

- Complete the policy advice template, noting any sections of the application or supporting documents that require amendment by the applicant

- Seek a senior officer's approval for the advice, as per the line area's approval processes, and record the approval against the advice record in Content Manager

- Notify Research Services staff via email and return the approved advice in Content Manager.

5. Request amendments to the application (if required)

Appraisal officer - Research Services staff, regional officers, school principals (or delegates)

- If determined the application package needs to be amended based on the assessment against the Appraisal checklist, negotiate with the applicant for changes to be made

- Alternatively, if the application is unsuitable for administration on a departmental site then recommend the application is withdrawn by the applicant.

Research Services

- If changes were requested in step 4.1, negotiate with the applicant for changes, as required.

Applicant

- Make changes to the application package or provide more information to address feedback provided by departmental staff, as required.

5.1 Optional – Return updated documents to line areas

Research Services (for Corporate Office applications only)

- If changes to an application package were requested by a line area in their policy advice, return these updates to the line area for a decision on whether the amendments meet the satisfaction of their area.

Line area and line area managers

- Review updated documents and recommend whether to support, not support or support with conditions

- Seek approval of the recommendation and the policy advice, as per the line area's approval processes

- Record the decision and the decision-maker against the advice record in Content Manager

- Return the application to Research Services staff via Content Manager and notify Research Services

- Repeat steps 5.0 and 5.1 until all parties are satisfied with the application package.

At this point, the process splits into two streams: follow either Stream A or Stream B

Stream A—Permission to approach:

For **Regional officers or Research Services staff** who have completed an appraisal (steps 1 – 5) and are seeking a decision from an Approving Officer on whether to grant permission to approach.

OR

Stream B—Final approval:

For **Principals or Office site managers** who have either:

- completed their own appraisal of the application (steps 1 – 5), or
- received a Permission to approach letter and application package from a researcher.

6. Make a recommendation - Stream A

Appraisal officer – Research Services staff, regional officers

- Review the appraisal package and approved policy advice. Complete Supporting documents checklist
- Make a recommendation for the Approving Officer on whether permission to approach should be approved or declined by referring to the criteria outlined in Appraisal checklist:
    - If the appraisal is positive overall and the policy advice is supportive of the application (where relevant), recommend permission to approach is approved
    - If the appraisal is unsatisfactory overall or the policy advice is not in support of the application (where relevant), recommend permission to approach is declined.
- ***Note for Research Services staff**: complete the additional appraisal documentation on the alignment with departmental research priorities, value of the research, and the quality of methodology/instruments
- Request a second staff member review the appraisal documentation and moderate your recommendation
- Progress the appraisal documentation and recommendation to an Approving officer for consideration.

6.1 Make a decision - Stream A

Approving officer - Assistant Director-General, SPIR or Regional Director

- Review the recommendation and appraisal documentation
- Protect and promote human rights by acting and making decisions in a way that is compatible with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld)
- Endorse the Appraisal officer's recommendation or make a new recommendation - permission to approach
- Notify Appraisal officer of the decision, and reasons for the decision when recommendation is not endorsed.

6.2 Communicate a decision - Stream A

Appraisal officers

- Notify the applicant of the decision in writing using a [OnePortal letter template](#) (DoE employees only) or a Research Services letter template, and:
  - o if approved, prepare a Permission to approach letter for principals or office site managers, advising that the applicant has Corporate Office/Regional Office permission to approach the school/site, and that participation is voluntary and at the discretion of the school principal/site manager
  - o include reasons for the decision if the application is declined.

Regional officers

- [Notify Research Services](#) of the Approving officer's decision.

Research Services

- Publish details of the application on QERI, as per QERI process.

OR

6. Final Approval - Stream B

Principal or Office site manager

- Ensure the application was submitted through QERI; or
- Receive the application package and a Permission to approach letter from a researcher.

6.1 Make a decision - Stream B

Principal or Office site manager

- Review the application package and the completed appraisal checklist
- Check requirements for [Working with children authority procedure](#) have been met
- Protect and promote human rights by acting and making decisions in a way that is compatible with *[Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)](#)*
- Approve or decline the study being conducted on your site - Final approval.

6.2 Communicate a decision - Stream B

Principal or Office site manager

- Notify the applicant of the decision in writing using a [OnePortal letter template](#) (DoE employees only) or a reasonable alternative, and:
  - o if approved, sign the Gatekeeper consent form—retain a signed copy for record-keeping purposes and return a signed copy to the applicant; or
  - o include reasons for the decision if the application is declined.
- Include information on induction protocols for visitors or other responsibilities/processes required of the school/site.

6.3 Optional – Publish on QERI - Stream B

Research Services

- If the application was granted Final approval, publish details of the application on QERI.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Active consent (or 'informed consent')	A person's affirmative, honest, voluntary agreement to participate in a research project based on sufficient information and an adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participating. Active consent requires the participant (and guardian for minors) to sign and return a form if they agree to participate.
Active recruitment	A targeted campaign to recruit participants for a research project through a school or office site with the assistance of a school or office site's resources, such as through school mailing lists or departmental mailing lists.
Application package	The completed application form and all of the supporting documentation.
Final approval	Approval from a school principal or Office site manager for research to be administered on their departmental site.
Gatekeeper information sheet and consent form	A package of information provided to gatekeepers (school principals and/or office site managers) to explain a research project and seek their active consent for the research to be administered on their site. A gatekeeper information sheet describes a proposed research project and the implications of participating for all categories of participants at that site. A gatekeeper consent form is a place to record a gatekeeper's consent. The completed form must include the gatekeeper's name, signature, the name of the departmental site and a date.
Information sheet	A detailed written description of a research proposal that provides potential participants with sufficient information about the project and an adequate understanding of the implications of participating. Information sheets should be prepared for each category of participant—teacher, parent/guardian, student etc.—and they should be clear that participation in the project is voluntary.
Office site	An office site is a business unit within corporate or a regional office that may be approached by a researcher to participate in a research project. For example: if a researcher is interested in evaluating departmental policies and procedures in the early years' sector then they may seek to interview corporate staff. Approval would be required from the office site manager/s.

Term	Definition
Passive consent	A method of consent that requires participants or parents/guardians to "Opt out" of research rather than actively consent to participation. The department **does not** allow research that uses passive or opt-out consent processes.
Permission to approach	Permission granted by Corporate Office or Regional Office to contact school principals and/or site managers to seek Final approval to conduct research at their site. Permission to approach does not constitute the Final approval to conduct research on an education site.
Queensland Education Research Inventory (QERI)	QERI is a web application that enables researchers to apply online to conduct research involving departmental sites or data.
Sensitivities	Sensitivities are research topics, focus areas, methodologies, data analysis and/or reporting that may cause a participant to feel distress or potentially lead to reputational damage to a school, office site and/or the department. Section 9 of the QERI application form provides the list of Sensitivities. Sensitivities do not preclude Permission to approach or Final approval being granted, however the risks associated with the sensitivities will need to be appropriately mitigated.
Supporting documents	Additional documents to inform the appraisal process that are required to be submitted as part of the application. Supporting documents are outlined in the application form and include: information sheets, consent forms, copies of Blue cards and approval from the researcher's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Legislation

- *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) (Mandatory Reporting) Sections 4-5E; 8-11; 13A-13E; 13G-13I; 159A-159N; 159Q-159R; 186-188; 197A; and Schedule 3
- *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (Qld) (Mandatory Reporting) Sections 364-365A, 426
- *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld) (Offshore data storage) Section 33
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld)
- *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- [Appraisal checklist](#)

- [Supporting documents checklist](#)

- [Research applications: Appraisals and decisions flowchart](#)

Other resources

- [Code of Conduct](#)

- [Obtaining and managing student and individual consent procedure](#)

- [Student protection procedure](#)

- [Working with children authority procedure](#)

- [Working with children authority guidelines](#)

- [Workplace health, safety and wellbeing procedures](#)

- [Management and completion of mandatory all-staff training program procedure](#)

- [Information asset and recordkeeping procedure](#)

- [Guidelines for conducting research](#)

- [Terms and conditions for conducting research](#)

- [Standards for ethical research practice](#)

- [Approving research applications – OnePortal pages](#) (DoE employees only)

- [Blue Card Services](#)

- [Queensland Education Research Inventory (QERI)](#)

- [Frequently asked questions – Research Services](#)

- [Template letters](#) (DoE employees only)

Contact

For further information, please contact your closest [regional office](#) or:

Research Services, SPIR
Phone: 3034 5929
Email: ResearchServices@qed.qld.gov.au

Uncontrolled copy. Refer to the Department of Education Policy and Procedure Register at
https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/research-applications-appraisals-and-decisions-procedure to ensure you have the most current version
of this document.

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Review date

1/07/2022

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

1.0 Research applications: appraisals and decisions

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