

# Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations

## Appendix 5

### Guidelines for Observation and Research in Schools and Early Childhood Services

Section 20 of the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations states as follows:

A researcher involved in research and/or related activities in schools or early childhood services must comply with the *Guidelines for Observation and Research in Schools and Early Childhood Services* (Appendix 5 of these regulations).

This Appendix expands the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations for Faculty of Education staff and students. The purpose of this Appendix is to clarify differences between research and research related activities that require formal ethical review and those aspects of teacher education, including performance evaluation, that may show similarity to research but that do not require formal ethical review.

Essentially, when research and research related activities are undertaken by a Faculty of Education staff member or student teacher and written about for the purpose of a university assignment, dissertation, thesis or research project, then formal ethical review and approval are required under the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (see section 1 of this appendix).

Activities undertaken as part of teacher education, including performance evaluation, that are not reported on as research do not require formal ethical approval from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. However, such activities are to be undertaken in an ethically responsible manner that reflects the spirit of these Regulations and relevant Codes of Conduct (see section 2 below).

#### **1 Research and Related Activities Undertaken as a Researcher**

All research and research related activities require the consent of the school or early childhood service where they occur and the consent of participating pupils and normally their parents or other caregivers. Consent from pupils must be sought in an age-appropriate manner, and in relation to very young children may be agreement (assent) rather than formal consent.

University assignments that involve observations, interviews, or use of children's or young persons' work are research related activities. Paper conveners are responsible for gaining approval of these assignments from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. In all other cases, the researcher is responsible for submitting the research project to the Committee.

Examples of research and related activities are:

- observation of children and young persons as part of a research project set up or supervised by university staff;
- observation of children and young persons as part of a task assigned for a university paper that would not take place in the normal course of teaching;
- observation of another teacher as part of a research project set up or supervised by university staff;
- interviewing a teacher, pupil, principal, parent, board member or other person in a school or early childhood service;
- perusing school or early childhood service records for the purpose of gathering information for any university assignment or research project;
- collecting, copying or using in some other way the work of pupils, including that generated by ICT pedagogies, for example, online teaching.

#### **(i) Observation of Children and Young Persons**

Observation of children and young persons in school and early childhood services settings as part of research is covered by the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations. The children/young persons are research participants and written informed consent from parents is necessary. Children and young persons are to be informed and asked to consent /assent in an age-appropriate manner.

If participants will be studied on more than one occasion, this should be explained to them in advance as part of the procedure for gaining consent/assent. As a courtesy they should be told in advance when more observations will take place. Ongoing assent should be checked.

Research data must be kept confidential. Research data should be presented in such a way that no individual could be identified. Parents do not have a right to access individual data. These procedures should be clearly explained to parents and children/young persons before consent is requested.

### ***(ii) Observation of Qualified or Student Teachers for Research Purposes***

Observation of qualified or student teachers in school and early childhood services settings as part of research is covered by the Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations. The teachers are then research participants and written informed consent from them is needed. If the children/young persons are also being observed as part of the research, section 1 and 1(i) above apply.

If participants will be studied on more than one occasion, this should be explained to them in advance as part of the procedure for gaining consent. As a courtesy they should be told, in advance, when more observations will take place, but it is not necessary to obtain consent each time.

Research data must be kept confidential. Research data should be presented in such a way that no individual could be identified without his or her consent. These procedures should be clearly explained to participants before consent is requested.

Research participants in school and early childhood services settings should not be able to insist on being identified because of the risk of identifying other people in the process. Names may be used in research reports only in exceptional circumstances where no other persons would be identifiable and there would be no risk of harm to others.

### ***(iii) Use of Teachers' and Pupils' Work***

Pupils and teachers in school and early childhood services settings have copyright of their work, including that generated by ICT pedagogies, for example, online teaching. They must be asked for permission to copy any of their work in a way that respects their right of refusal.

## **2. Activities Undertaken as Part of Teacher Education**

Examples of activities undertaken in the professional role of teacher or student teacher to enhance the education of children and young persons or the professional development of teachers are:

- observation of pupils by a student teacher on teaching practice as part of the normal professional development of a teacher;
- writing about observations made in the course of being a student teacher on teaching practice for the purpose of a university assignment;
- observation of qualified or student teachers for performance evaluation.

### ***(i) Observation of Qualified or Student Teachers for Performance Evaluation***

Observation of qualified or student teachers in school and early childhood services settings for performance evaluation does not require written or any other consent. However, as a courtesy the purpose, time and mode of the observation should be explained in advance.

Information should be released only to those authorised to receive it for the purpose of teacher evaluation. If qualified or student teachers will be evaluated on more than one occasion, this should be explained to them in advance. As a courtesy they should be told, in advance, when more observations will take place. Evaluation data, including data about other persons present, should be kept confidential.

If evaluation data is collated it should be presented in such a way that no individual could be identified.

### ***(ii) Use of Teachers' and Pupils' Work***

Pupils and teachers in school and early childhood services settings have copyright of their work, including that generated by ICT pedagogies, for example, online teaching. They must be asked for permission to copy any of their work in a way that respects their right of refusal.