Guidelines for approving applications from external agencies to conduct research in TAFE NSW

Information for applicants
Section 1  Introduction

These guidelines apply to applications for research carried out by external and relevant internal researchers in all TAFE NSW Institutes and central Portfolio areas.

Research cannot be conducted in TAFE NSW Institutes or DET/TAFE Portfolio areas without the approval of the Institute Director or the General Manager of the Portfolio area in which the research will be conducted.

Applications to conduct research should be made directly to the Institute or Portfolio area where the proposed research will occur. Appendix A provides contact details for Institute Directors and Portfolio General Managers.

Purpose of the Guidelines
These guidelines have been developed to help ensure a consistent approach to approving research activity throughout TAFE NSW so that:

- a uniform standard of protection is provided for all TAFE NSW students and staff
- decisions related to the approval of research applications are consistent
- potential researchers have a clear understanding of what is required in proposals
- researchers applying to conduct research in more than one TAFE NSW Institute will address the same set of guidelines
- research in TAFE NSW is conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

The guidelines are intended as a basis for evaluating and providing approval for proposals to conduct research within TAFE NSW. Researchers are required to conduct their research in accordance with the code of ethics for their institution and/or organisations they have affiliations with.

Research covered by these guidelines
These guidelines cover research:

- by external organisations such as university research centres, private research consultancies and the NCVER
- by TAFE NSW staff as part of post-graduate study. In this case, staff members are acting on behalf of an external agency (the organisation they are enrolled with) and must seek approval for their research
- associated with TAFE NSW courses and university degrees.

Research outside the scope of these guidelines
These Guidelines do not apply to research which is:

- undertaken by TAFE NSW staff and directly and wholly related to their work within TAFE NSW. Immediate managers should be made aware of this internal research.
- unrelated to the provision of education and training such as market research activity which also occurs within TAFE NSW Institutes and Portfolio areas.

If researchers are in any doubt as to whether these guidelines apply to a proposed research project they should seek the advice of the relevant Institute Director or General Manager (contact details are attached).
Section 2  Research approval procedure

All research involving TAFE NSW students, customers and and/or staff must be approved by the Institute Director or General Manager of the Portfolio area in which the proposed research will occur.

All research proposals should:

- satisfy the *Criteria for Approving Applications to Conduct Research*
- include appropriate documentation (see Appendix A for relevant forms).

In some situations TAFE NSW may seek more detailed information from researchers concerning methods of analysis and presentation to ensure that the research methodologies are appropriate and capable of producing valid outcomes and that the research findings are presented fairly and accurately.

When a proposal has been approved, researchers will be provided with a letter of approval signed by the relevant TAFE NSW Institute Director or relevant Portfolio area manager.

TAFE NSW welcomes high quality research which supports TAFE NSW strategic directions. Links to relevant documents to assist you in preparing an application to conduct research in TAFE NSW are included below:
Section 3 Criteria for approving applications to conduct research in TAFE NSW

The following criteria have been developed to comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans and the principles contained in the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.

Applications from potential researchers should comply with the following principles:

3.1 **Align with goals and strategic directions**
Proposed research needs to align with the goals and strategic directions of the national vocational education sector, the NSW Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training, TAFE NSW strategic directions and goals of the particular Institute where research is proposed.

3.2 **Anonymity and confidentiality**
Whenever possible the anonymity of participants must be protected. If the research involves a survey, information should be collected anonymously. It should not be possible to link the information collected to individual participants.

When information is being gathered by audiotape or videotape or identifying information is needed to track participants in longitudinal studies, the confidentiality of participants must be assured. People, other than the researcher, should not be able to link information collected to individual participants.

Researchers who wish to collect information which enables participants to be identified by the researcher, must be able to demonstrate the necessity for collecting such information. They should outline procedures to ensure confidentiality including procedures for storing, accessing and disposing of data which enables participants to be identified (eg audiotapes and videotapes). Information should only be retained for the time needed to fulfil the research purpose. Personal information should be stored securely and protected by taking reasonable precautions against unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure. This information should be disposed of securely.

Generally, organisations participating in research are not identified but Institute Directors or Portfolio General Managers may waive this condition, if they consider it appropriate to identify their institution in the research report/outcomes.

3.3 **Informed consent**
Participants’ consent must be obtained before any research begins. All potential participants should be supplied with an information sheet which outlines the nature and conduct of the research and any other factors which might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate. This may include information relating to the procedures for storing, accessing and disposing of data.

Potential participants should be informed:

- that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw their participation at any time
- that if they decide not to participate in the proposed research, it will not prejudice their academic standing or relationship with TAFE NSW
- about the researchers’ background and their institutional affiliation.
Participants are not generally required to indicate in writing their willingness to participate in a research project. Their participation is considered an indication of informed consent.

If there are significant changes in the nature or conduct of a research project, which may influence participants' willingness to continue to be involved, the researcher should inform participants of changes in writing.

If the research involves observation only of student participants and no direct interaction with the researcher, there is no need to get participants’ consent. In this situation, students should be made aware of the researcher’s presence. Classroom observations can only be conducted with the informed consent of the class teacher and relevant staff members.

If the research participant is under the age of 18, to comply with Section 4.2 of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, the consent of a primary caregiver (1) is required, in addition to the consent of the participant. Primary caregivers should be fully informed of the intent and nature of the research when agreeing to allow participation. Informed consent of a primary caregiver needs to be provided in writing.

3.4 Access to information
TAFE NSW students, customers and staff need to be assured that information which can be linked to them personally is not made available by other parties for research purposes. Such information should not be sought from TAFE NSW personnel unless participants have given written consent for its release. Where researchers intend to seek such information, it must be indicated clearly and unambiguously on consent forms.

Researchers should note that Institute Directors or Portfolio General Managers are not authorised to release aggregated Institute or State level data (e.g. course participation and completion rates). Permission to access aggregated data should be sought from the Deputy Director-General, TAFE and Community Education.

3.5 Sensitivity
TAFE NSW has a responsibility to ensure that its students, customers and staff are treated with sensitivity with regard to their personal and private lives and their cultural, religious and other beliefs. All researchers have a responsibility to be aware of cultural, religious and other differences in the research population. Only proposals which are sensitive to and respect these differences will be approved.

3.6 Minimisation of risk or harm
TAFE NSW has a duty to ensure that students receive the best possible education and training and are protected at all times from physical, psychological and other forms of harm. Research conducted in TAFE NSW should not adversely affect students’ educational progress or students’ and other individuals’ well-being. Adverse effects can result from:

- loss of privacy
- loss of educational opportunities
- harmful social, cultural, psychological or other consequences (e.g. from the collection of information that may result in individuals becoming distressed or being ‘labelled’ or categorised in particular ways by their peers).

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1. The term ‘primary caregiver’ is used throughout to refer to any person with the authority to provide the approval required by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
Public liability insurance
TAFE NSW requires researchers to hold public liability and workers compensation insurance for the term of the research project. Usually the researcher will be covered by the institution in which they are enrolled or by their employer. Researchers need to be covered by an insurance policy that includes:

- a broad form of public liability insurance in the amount of not less than $10 million in respect of each and every occurrence and limited in the aggregate for the period of the project; and
- professional indemnity insurance in the amount of not less than $10 million in respect of any one occurrence; and
- workers' compensation insurance in accordance with NSW legislation in respect of all research staff.

TAFE NSW requires researchers to provide evidence of their, or their organisation's, insurance cover. This is usually in the form of a copy of a certificate of currency and includes details of the insurer, the cover, value of the insurance, the parties insured and the terms of the insurance.

3.7 Prevention of unnecessary disruption
TAFE NSW has a responsibility to ensure that research activity does not impose an undue burden on TAFE personnel in Institutes or Portfolio areas. The potential contribution of the research should be of sufficient importance to warrant the involvement which participants will be asked to make. The level of disruption which is considered acceptable will be dependent on the potential value of the research. Research that imposes unacceptable levels of disruption to Institute's teaching and learning programs and the work of central Portfolio areas will not be approved.

3.8 Appropriate research methodologies
TAFE NSW needs to ensure that research methodologies are appropriate and capable of providing a valid assessment of educational processes and outcomes. The researcher should articulate and provide justification for the methodology, and outline strategies employed to ensure methodological validity and reliability. TAFE NSW reserves the right to withhold approval of studies which are considered to be methodologically inadequate.

3.9 Commercial gain
TAFE NSW does not generally grant approval for research which is undertaken primarily for commercial or material gain.

3.9 Research in an environment where there are students under 18 years of age
TAFE NSW needs to ensure that researchers comply with NSW Department of Education and Training Policy related to working in an environment with participants under 18 years of age.

Researchers wishing to conduct research with students under 18 years of age or conduct research in an environment where there are students under 18 years of age will need to comply with the DET Policy for *Protecting and Supporting Young Children* (2004) and the DET *Working with Children Policy* (2007). Researchers need to demonstrate their awareness and acknowledge their responsibilities in relation to the Department of Education and Training procedures, *Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People: Revised Procedures, December 2000.* This document details procedures to be followed when, in the
course of their work, staff develop concerns about suspected risk of harm to a child or young
person or ‘a class’ of children or young people.”

Researchers will be required to declare that they have not been convicted of a serious sex
offence as defined in Section 5 of the Child Protection Act (Section 5 of the Child Protection
Act, 1988 defines a serious sex offence as an offence involving sexual activity or acts of
indecency that were committed in NSW and that was punishable by imprisonment of 12
months or more, or an offence of a similar nature that was committed elsewhere and would
have been punishable by imprisonment of 12 months or more if it had been committed in
NSW).

Researchers wishing to undertake research involving students under 18 years of age must
sign the Confidential Declaration by External Researcher (see Appendix B) and provide
appropriate documents of identification totalling 100 points (see Proof of Identity Checklist,
Appendix B).

Useful links
The following links to documents and forms are included to assist in development of
research applications.

NSW Department of Education and Training Corporate Plan 2008-2010:

Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training 2008-2010, Delivering Skills for NSW:

Department of Education and Training Protecting and Supporting Children and Young
People Procedures, December 2000
tml

NSW Privacy And Personal Information Protection Act 1998

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans
Section 4  Research application process

When seeking approval to conduct research, researchers should submit the following documentation. Forms to use as part of the application are included in Appendix A.

1. **Application to conduct research (Form 1)**
The application should provide essential details of the proposal and the researcher(s). All researchers must complete and sign this form to acknowledge that the information supplied is correct and that they agree to conduct the research in accordance with the *Criteria for approving applications to conduct research in TAFE NSW*.

2. **Proposal outline**
An outline of the research proposal should be provided. This should indicate the:
- research questions or hypotheses
- context and background for the research
- means by which the data/information will be gathered
- participants from whom the data/information will be gathered
- methods for ensuring the privacy of participants
- planned time-line for the research.

3. **Research instruments**
The researcher must submit copies of interview schedules, questionnaires or other data collection instruments (including tests or stimulus materials). These are to be in the final form proposed for use. Where modifications are made, the researcher must submit the revised copies before they are used with participants.

4. **Research dissemination details**
Researchers need to provide details of the publication and dissemination of the proposed research.

5. **Working with children documentation**
All members of the research team need to complete the *Confidential declaration by external researcher* (Appendix B, Form 3) and provide identification documents as detailed in the *Proof of Identity Checklist* (Appendix B, Form 4).

6. **Information/consent letter**
Researchers should provide an information letter for distribution to participants under 18 years of age and their primary caregivers. The letter must include a section which allows the primary caregiver to provide informed consent.

Information/consent letters must satisfy the requirements of Section 3.3 of the *Criteria for Approving Applications*. Where researchers intend to collect information which enables participants to be identified by the researcher, the procedures for storing, accessing and disposing of data, as outlined in Section 3.1 should be described.

7. **Approval for the research from university ethics committee**
Research proposals from university staff and students are generally assessed by university authorities as well as being submitted to TAFE NSW. If a university requires submission to its human research ethics committee, a copy of the committee’s approval must be submitted before final TAFE NSW approval can be given. University human research ethics
committees are asked not to make approval by TAFE NSW a condition for their approval or to grant approval subject to approval by TAFE NSW. TAFE NSW may consider the proposal while the university ethics committee is making its assessment, but final TAFE approval will not be given until approval of the university ethics committee is supplied.

8. **Referees reports (Appendix B, Form 2)**

Two current referees’ reports must accompany proposals. Where the research is part of the requirements for the award of a university degree, at least one of the referees must be the research student’s supervisor.
## Appendix A

### TAFE NSW Institute Directors and Portfolio General Managers

#### Institute contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAFE NSW - South Western Sydney Institute</th>
<th>TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building A, 500 Chapel Road</td>
<td>G Block, Port Macquarie Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANKSTOWN NSW 2200</td>
<td>Hindman Street Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 9796 5402 Fax: 9790 7353</td>
<td>PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAFE NSW - Riverina Institute</th>
<th>TAFE NSW - Northern Sydney Institute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cnr. Coleman &amp; Macleay Streets</td>
<td>Institute Services Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650</td>
<td>Block C, 213 Pacific Highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 6938 1478 Fax: 6938 1445</td>
<td>ST LEONARDS NSW 2065</td>
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<tr>
<th>TAFE NSW - Hunter Institute</th>
<th>TAFE NSW - Illawarra Institute</th>
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<tr>
<td>Block C, Newcastle College</td>
<td>3 Rowland Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitland Road</td>
<td>WOLLONGONG NSW 2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIGHES HILL NSW 2297</td>
<td>Ph: 4222 2900 Fax: 4226 4748</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph: 4923 7602 Fax: 4923 7711</td>
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<tr>
<th>TAFE NSW - Sydney Institute</th>
<th>TAFE NSW - New England Institute</th>
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<tr>
<td>Level 1, Building A</td>
<td>Janison Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Street</td>
<td>TAMWORTH NSW 2340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULTIMO NSW 2007</td>
<td>Ph: 6768 2448 Fax: 6768 2449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 9217 4302 Fax: 9217 4056</td>
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<th>TAFE NSW - Western Sydney Institute</th>
<th>TAFE NSW - Western Institute</th>
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<tr>
<td>Level 1, Block A, 2-10 O'Connell Street</td>
<td>Level 1, 235 Lords Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINGSWOOD NSW 2747</td>
<td>ORANGE NSW 2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 9208 9574 Fax: 9208 9277</td>
<td>Ph: 6393 5941 Fax: 6393 5969</td>
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#### Portfolio areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Manager, TAFE NSW Strategy</th>
<th>General Manager, TAFE NSW Customer Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 33</td>
<td>PO Box 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYDNEY NSW 2000</td>
<td>SYDNEY NSW 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 9561-8194 Fax: 9561-8188</td>
<td>Tel: 9266 8942 Fax: 9244-5017</td>
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<tr>
<th>DET International and TAFE NSW National Business</th>
<th>General Manager, NSW TAFE Training and Education Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2, 1 Oxford Street Darlington NSW 2010 Australia</td>
<td>PO Box 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: 8293 6921 Fax 82936972</td>
<td>SYDNEY NSW 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Ph: 9561-8189 Fax: 9561-1123</td>
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Form 1

Application to conduct research in TAFE NSW

1. Contact details
Name of principal researcher: 
Title: 
Contact name (if different from above):
Address:
Telephone: 
Fax: 
E-mail address: 
Title of proposal:

2. Precis of proposal (including how the research meets the Criteria for Approval):

3. The project proposal is attached. (Yes/No)

4. Have you previously applied to conduct this or similar research in TAFE NSW? (Yes/No)
   If 'Yes', please provide details

5. Have you applied to other TAFE NSW Institutes or Portfolio areas to conduct research related to this proposal?
   If 'Yes', please provide details

6. I agree to share research findings with the designated TAFE NSW contact person prior to publication

6. Is the proposed research part of a University course? (Yes/ No)
   If 'Yes' please complete sections 7.

7. a) Name of university
   b) Degree
   c) Supervisor
   d) Faculty
   e) Department

8. Will the findings of the research be primarily used for commercial gain? (Yes / No)

_I declare that the above information is correct. I have read the Criteria for Approving Applications and agree to comply with them in carrying out the proposed research. I will ensure that I, and any assistants working with me and/or on my behalf, will maintain the confidentiality of all information collected from participants._

Signature of principal researcher 
Date

18/03/2010 10
Form 2

External research referee’s report

Name of principal researcher:

Title of proposed research:

Name of referee:

Referee’s position:

Organisation/Institution:

Referee’s address:

Telephone: Fax:

E-mail address:

Relationship to researcher:

Please comment on the following aspects of the proposal, in relation to the TAFE NSW Criteria for Approving Applications.

1. Significance, purpose and value of the research

2. Appropriateness of the research design

3. Methodological adequacy and viability

4. Ethical considerations

5. To what extent do you consider the principal researcher to be capable of undertaking the research described in the attached proposal?

Referee’s signature: Date:

TAFE Strategy, March 2009
Confidential declaration by external researcher

a) I am aware of the special responsibilities associated with undertaking research with participants under 18 years of age and conducting research in an environment where there are individuals under 18 years of age. In particular, I am aware of responsibilities in relation to the NSW Department of Education and Training child protection policies: *Working with Children Policy* (2007) and the *Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People: Revised Procedures, December 2000.*

b) I declare that I have not been convicted of a serious sex offence as defined by Section 5 of the Child Protection ACT 1998.

c) I am aware that I may be required to provide proof of identity and a criminal record check if it is considered necessary to comply with the Department’s child protection policies and procedures.

Signature of researcher:

Date:
Form 4

Proof of Identity Checklist

To be completed by each researcher/research assistant who will be interacting with or observing participants under 18 years as part of their research in TAFE NSW. To ensure appropriate identification, applicants should provide copies of identification totalling 100 points.

The following lists set out the value of each document according to the 100 point check:

70 points
Name of preferred applicant verified from one of the following (more than one document from this list cannot be counted):
- Birth Certificate
- Birth Card issued by the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Citizenship Certificate
- Current Australian passport
- Expired Australian passport which has not been cancelled and was current within the preceding 2 years
- Current passport from another country or diplomatic documents.

40 points
Name and photograph/signature of preferred applicant verified from one of the following (more than one document can be counted):
- Current driver photo licence issued by an Australian state or territory
- Identification card issued to a public employee
- Identification card issued by the Australian or any state government as evidence of a person’s entitlement to a financial benefit
- Identification card issued to a student at a tertiary education institution.

35 points
Name and address of preferred applicant verified from any of the following (more than one document can be counted):
- Document held by a cash dealer giving security over property
- A mortgage or other instrument of security held by a financial body
- Council rates notice
- Document from current employer or previous employer within the last two years
- Land Titles Office record
- Document from the Credit Reference Association of Australia.

25 points
Name of preferred applicant verified from any of the following (more than one document can be counted):
- Current credit card or account card from a bank, building society or credit union
- Local council rates notices
- Current telephone, water, gas or electricity bill
- Foreign driver's licence
- Medicare Card
- Electoral roll compiled by the Australian Electoral Commission
- Lease/rent agreement
- Current rent receipt from a licensed real estate agent
- Records of a primary, secondary, or tertiary educational institution attended by the applicant within the last 10 years
- Records of a professional or trade association of which the applicant is a member.

At least one of the documents should show the applicant’s signature and preferably their current address.

All original documents must be sighted and certified by relevant personnel. Certification from a Justice of the Peace is also acceptable.

The suitable wording for certification of the copy would be “I certify this is a true and unaltered copy of the original”.

The certification statement is written on the copy and then signed by the officer verifying the certification, printing their name and position.