

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION  
ETHICAL GUIDELINES

**1. Preamble**

- 1.1 These ethical guidelines supersede all previous ethical guidelines of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (the 'Association'), including the previous revision in December 1998.
- 1.2 The guidelines articulate a set of principles and tikanga Māori, to guide the decisions and practice of all voluntary members of the Association in their dealings with one another, the research community, institutions and organisations and people who are the focus of their educational research. Researchers should have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities to others while undertaking research.
- 1.3 The prime activity of members of the Association is to develop and implement programmes of research that seek to affect educational goals, policies, practices, services, facilities or justice in beneficial ways. Such research should be carried out with care, and with genuine respect for research participants and their educational communities.
- 1.4 These guidelines acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, including active protection of te reo me ōna tikanga Māori, tino rangatiratanga or Māori self-determination, and the duty of educational researchers to consult meaningfully with tangata whenua on all research programmes that concern Māori. The guidelines also acknowledge the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 1.5 The guidelines are underpinned by contemporary understandings of Aotearoa New Zealand as (a) locally, a linguistically and culturally diverse state; (b) regionally, in the Pacific; and (c) globally, part of an increasingly networked society.
- 1.6 These guidelines recognise the need for ethical considerations to be responsive to the rapidly evolving practice of contemporary educational research: the acceptance of more diverse research approaches and philosophies; the influence of new research technologies; the proliferation of the internet and social networking communities; and the growth in contract research and evaluation.
- 1.7 The aim of these guidelines is to provide a set of values for research practice that include but go beyond everyday norms of decency or good. The guidelines are not intended as a set of unchanging rules, but to assist members in making good, informed choices about the conduct of their work as researchers in complex educational settings with multiple constituencies. All members of the Association are

expected to strive to protect the integrity and reputation of the field of educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand by ensuring they conduct their research to the highest standards.

- 1.8 Educational researchers proceed from a wide range of theoretical approaches, research methods, paradigms and goals. Association members are expected to engage with and examine different perspectives in a spirit of genuine curiosity and enquiry. With due consideration of the public's right to know, researchers should avoid bringing the research community into disrepute by public accusations or allegations about the research conduct of others.
- 1.9 The strength of these ethical guidelines will lie in their common adoption and use by educational researchers across the country. Recognising that members of the Association act in diverse study and working contexts, and conduct research for a variety of ends, it is assumed that these guidelines will be read in conjunction with relevant organisational guidelines and codes promulgated by professional bodies.
- 1.10 Ethical decisions concerning the conception, design, commission, conduct, reporting and dissemination of educational research are based on a range of moral foundations and different kinds of reasoning. There will rarely be total agreement on these matters among all members of the Association and sometimes ethical principles may be in mutual conflict.
- 1.11 It is intended that the guidelines should reflect current thinking around good educational research practice. As such, the guidelines provide the basis for collegial dialogue and rational analysis when conflicting moral foundations and reasoning are presented during the course of the research. Ethical dilemmas may occur at any stage of educational research, from conception to dissemination. Whenever dilemmas occur, they require consideration and resolution by reflexive educational researchers.
- 1.12 Researchers are expected to discuss the ethics of their proposed research with suitably qualified and experienced peers. Where the risks of a proposed research project are considered to be greater than those found in routine educational activity, researchers should make special efforts to either seek formal, independent ethical review (in the case of their own proposals for research), or assurances that this has been undertaken (in the case of contract or collaborative research proposals).

## **2. General Principles**

- 2.1 Educational researchers should seek at all times to avoid harm and do good. Members of the Association may undertake research only on topics and using methods where they have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience. Educational research aims to advance knowledge and consequently should be worthwhile, not trivial or repetitive.
- 2.2 Members of the Association are kaitiaki or guardians of the integrity of educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand. This requires an appreciation of and commitment to the nurturing of both established and emerging educational research traditions in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.
- 2.3 In the conception, design, conduct, reporting and dissemination of the research there should be thoughtful concern for the rights and interests of all the individuals, groups and institutions involved and affected by it.
- 2.4 The rights and welfare of students, research participants and the public will generally take precedence over the self-interest of members of the Association or the interests of employers, colleagues or other special interest groups.
- 2.5 Those involved in the commission or conduct of educational research are expected to identify and declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to ensure that such conflicts are independently reviewed, mitigated and managed.
- 2.6 All research work should be conducted and reported objectively and frankly, without prejudice. Due note is taken of limitations in techniques and the influence of particular theories and ideologies in research.
- 2.7 There should be in all aspects of research a spirit of open enquiry and open discussion. With due care for participants, both positive and negative information should be reported fully. Researchers also have a duty to consider alternative explanations for their findings.
- 2.8 Research findings should be expressed in ways that are readily understood by those with an interest in them. The dissemination of findings should seek to maximise the beneficial effects of educational research.
- 2.9 Opinions unsupported by evidence should be clearly distinguished from research findings. Researchers endeavour to ensure that their research findings are reported and interpreted accurately by others.

### 3. Principles Relating to Research Participants

- 3.1 *Harmful Effects and Unintended Consequences.* Care should be taken to avoid unnecessary anxiety or harm to participants, groups or communities by the research procedures that are used, by the details in the research reports, or as a consequence of participating in the research.
- 3.2 *Informed consent.* In some research exercises, it may be appropriate for both the group or community and individuals to consent to participate. Before participants make a decision about their involvement in a project they need to be given a clear description of what the research involves, how it will be reported, and the extent of public availability. Their consent to being involved should then be sought without undue pressure or persuasion and they should have the right to withdraw at any time.
- 3.3 *Hidden purposes.* If the real purpose of the study cannot for good reason be told to the participants, then special steps such as peer review should be taken to ensure they are not harmed in any way by the research procedures. Appropriate debriefing procedures are to be used at the first opportunity with participants when the study has been completed.
- 3.4 *Adverse effects.* If there are any doubts or unknowns concerning the effects of a research procedure on participants, active steps should be taken to protect them from any kind of harm and to get the consent of all parties concerned after the possible risks have been explained to them. If adverse effects are encountered during the course of a research exercise, it should normally be terminated as soon as is practicable in order to avoid further harm.
- 3.5 *Capacity to consent.* Researchers should consider the capacity of each potential participant to give consent or assent to participate. In any research involving participants whose capacity is uncertain, consent should also be sought from parents, whanau, or someone else who has authority to give it. Typically, in research that involves young children, parents or caregivers are also asked for their consent.
- 3.6 *Confidentiality.* Confidential information should be stored securely and de-identified whenever practicable. Any individual information or other private matters should be kept strictly confidential, to the extent permitted by the law. Researchers should inform potential participants of any circumstance in which there may be a legal, contractual, or professional obligation to disclose confidential research information.

- 3.7 *Use of identifiable information.* If permission is to be sought by the researcher to retain and use identifiable information for other purposes, participants should be made fully aware of all intended uses of the information, for what period of time, and the potential effects of such use.
- 3.7 *Time taken.* When research projects take time away from regular teaching and learning activities, care should be taken that such actions do not hinder the participant's educational progress.
- 3.8 *Institutional responsibilities.* Researchers should not recruit participants from educational settings simply for convenience. Where any institution or community grants access to potential participants in a research exercise, all that community's requirements and responsibilities in this matter should be openly acknowledged and respected by researchers.

#### **4. Principles Relating to Research Personnel**

- 4.1 *Duty of care.* Members of the Association belong to a research community in Aotearoa New Zealand. All members have a specific duty of care to other research personnel such as colleagues, novices and students enrolled in research training degrees.
- 4.2 *Awareness.* Everyone associated with a research exercise should be fully aware of its purposes, its methods and the uses to which research information will be put before they become involved in it. This is particularly important in team or contract research where Association members may not have participated fully in the conception and design of the exercise; or where participation in a funded intervention or evaluation may be a contractual requirement.
- 4.2 *Training.* No one should be involved in collecting data on complicated or sensitive research topics unless they are suitably trained or are being trained and supervised by a qualified person. It is expected that training in research ethics will be an explicit part of any research personnel education programme.
- 4.3 *Education.* Senior researchers should as a matter of course provide education for novice researchers and research assistants. This education may take place formally within a particular project, research group or institution; or less formally among groups of educational researchers with common interests. Senior members of the Association who are more likely to have access to established national and international networks of colleagues have a particular obligation in this regard.

- 4.4 *Research Assistants.* Research assistants, including students and sub-contractors, should have the relevant parts of these ethical guidelines drawn to their attention especially as they relate to confidentiality and respect for privacy.

## **5. Principles Relating to Research Findings**

- 5.1 *Ownership.* Intellectual property rights including the right to publish, disseminate and further develop research findings should be clarified, agreed and documented at the outset of any research project. This is particularly important in the case of contract, team or supervised student research; or research that involves specific cultural communities who possess unique knowledge.
- 5.2 *Peer review.* There should be a willingness to make draft reports of research available for critical review by participants and other scholars in the same field. Equally, educational research should not be publicly disseminated unless it has been subject to independent peer review.
- 5.3 *Impact.* Researchers have a basic duty to disseminate the findings of their research to appropriate scholarly, professional and community constituencies. This helps to ensure that research both challenges inappropriate educational conventions and encourages the widest adoption of new educational wisdom.
- 5.4 *Availability.* Members of the Association should exercise considerable caution in commissioning or entering into research contracts which do not permit the open dissemination of research findings within a reasonable period of time.
- 5.5 *Acknowledgement.* There should be a ready acknowledgement of all forms of assistance given to a research project including all sources of funding or patronage, and specialist expertise.
- 5.6 *Reciprocity.* Participants and institutions involved should normally be given a report of research findings both as a courtesy and to enable them to benefit, directly or indirectly, from their willingness to facilitate the research exercise.

Revised December 2010.