



## NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES

### CRITERIA FOR QUALITY RESEARCH

#### Introduction

Quality research employs sound research designs to deal with important problems.

When assessing research applications, the Department considers:

1. benefit – the potential benefit of the research
2. feasibility/methodology – what benefits will occur
3. cost/impact – the time, effort and impact on staff and students as participants and co-investors
4. ethics – respect and protection for participants.

Likely benefits (benefits and feasibility) are considered regarding likely risks (impact and ethics).

Methodologies are relevant to educational research. Their selection depends on the purpose of the research and the nature of the research questions.

These include:

- quantitative methods allowing generalisation, prediction and the testing of hypotheses
- qualitative methods providing interpretation of meaning, complex phenomena and dynamic processes, which can serve exploratory purposes and provide deep knowledge.

#### Criteria for judging quality research

Quality research is well designed and capable of producing sound results that are relevant to the research goals. This means the design of the project demonstrates care and attention to detail in planning, described in sufficient detail to make the project clear to peers.

Quality research has merit. It is:

- justifiable by its potential benefit, which may include contributing to knowledge and understanding, to improved social welfare and individual wellbeing and to the skill and expertise of researchers
- designed using appropriate methods for achieving its aims
- based on a thorough study of current literature, as well as previous studies:

- research can be supported by a systematic review of literature demonstrating the importance of the research question and building on results of previous research
- similar research has not been carried out before in the same, or similar contexts
- designed to ensure that respect for participants is not compromised by the aims of the research, its execution, or results
- conducted or supervised by appropriate experienced, qualified, competent persons or teams
- conducted using appropriate facilities and resources.

Quality research is carried out by researchers with integrity and a commitment to:

- searching for knowledge and understanding;
- following recognised principles of ethical research conduct;
- ensuring research goals, questions, strategy, methodology, research instruments and the broader purposes of the research are clearly described, well matched and the links between all these elements are made explicit:
  - research goals and questions are feasible, focused and clearly stated
  - research strategy adopted is appropriate to the questions
  - research instruments are well designed to obtain responses that will answer the questions – they do not include the examination of unnecessary elements
  - instruments are appropriate for use with participants in terms of language, complexity and length
- conducting research honestly, eg:
  - minimise the possibility of unrecognised or selective influences on the data collection and analysis are explicit
  - methods for analysing the data are clearly stated and appropriate to the nature of the data
  - research design considers and accounts all important influences on the issues or variables being investigated
  - limitations of the research are identified and unwarranted generalisation is avoided
  - where interviews and questionnaires are proposed, ensure leading questions are avoided
- it is clear how participants will be recruited, and proposed participants are appropriate in number and kind
- publishing and communicating results, whether favourable or not, that permit scrutiny and contribute to public knowledge and understanding.