Educational Research	
Adopted: June 6, 2002	**Last Reviewed/Revised:** October 3, 2022
Next Scheduled Review: 2025-2026	
Associated Policies & Procedures: II-38 Educational Research I-07 Protection of Privacy VI-81 Privacy Procedure II-37 Volunteers in Catholic Schools VI-101 Information Security	

Purpose

To outline the procedures for conducting educational research within the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB).

Application and Scope

This procedure applies to all individuals seeking approval to conduct research (external or internal*) within the HCDSB community. This procedure will ensure that research with human subjects (i.e., staff and/or students) conducted within the HCDSB meets high scientific, ethical, and professional standards that respect and protect potential participants. As such, all research involving human subjects (i.e., staff and/or students) conducted within the HCDSB must be approved by the HCDSB Research Advisory Committee (RAC) before it starts.

References

Education Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

The First Nations Principles of OCAP

Definitions

Research is defined as "an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation" (Tri Council Policy Statement, 2014, p. 5).

External Research is described as when an external agency/individual/institution wants to do research in a school or the HCDSB. This includes requests from an HCDSB employee collaborating with a non-HCDSB agency or educational institution, and requests from an HCDSB employee wanting to do research outside their own area of responsibility for the purposes of completing a professional course or program of study (e.g., graduate degree).

Internal Research is described as a central office, school or classroom research project that is related to HCDSB or Ministry initiatives, conducted by any HCDSB employee. It also includes an HCDSB employee who conducts research within their own work environment to promote professional growth (e.g., Additional Qualification (AQ)course).

Requirements

- Anyone seeking to conduct educational research will be referred to either the HCDSB website or to StaffNet to consult HCDSB policy II-38, administrative procedure VI-25, and obtain a copy of necessary application forms.
- The applicant will complete the appropriate package (e.g., the Internal or External Research Request form, or the Program Evaluation form) and submit it to Research and Development Services for consideration.
- FOR EXTERNAL APPLICANTS ONLY: Applicants are required to complete the appropriate form. In the case of wanting to conduct a research study, an external research request application is required. In the case of wanting to conduct a program evaluation, the program evaluation form is required. Submissions must include a signed and completed electronic form and all supporting documents, including the research proposal, sample consent letters, copies of any surveys, and interview or focus group guides. The form and supporting documents should be submitted by the application deadline dates, which are posted on the HCDSB website. Completed applications should be emailed to research@hcdsb.org. Please note that research proposals must be approved by the appropriate ethics committee of the researcher's institution before the application will be considered by the HCDSB RAC. A copy of the sponsoring institution's Ethics approval should be attached to the application.
- FOR INTERNAL APPLICANTS ONLY: A completed Internal Research Project Form should be completed and forwarded to Research and Development Services. Research activities conducted by HCDSB employees that are not part of their ordinary job responsibilities and authority require the permission of the appropriate Superintendent. Some projects may require a review by the HCDSB Research Advisory Committee (e.g., those where an external agency/institution is part of the project). If applicants are unsure, please consult with the Chief Officer, Research and Development Services.
- All research proposals must be reviewed for ethical and methodological consideration and approved by the HCDSB RAC _before_ the research can be initiated in the schools. Approval by the RAC is valid for one school year. If the study is not finished, or the external researcher wishes to continue the project in the following year, the researcher must contact the Chief Officer, Research and Development Services, for an extension, and must also connect with those who are participating in the study.

- Depending on the nature of the study, external researchers may be required to provide a Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check* before being granted permission to enter school sites to conduct research. See Policy *II-37 Volunteers in Catholic Schools*.
- It is understood that educational research proposals need to be compatible with the Christ-centred learning environment provided to all students within the HCDSB.
- All research applications will be vetted by the Chair of the HCDSB RAC to ensure that it aligns with HCDSB mission, vision, values, policies, procedures, and strategic priorities. Note that there may be some applications whereby vetting is not possible, and yet the HCDSB will participate (e.g., the EQAO student questionnaire is an example of such a case). All applications will be reviewed by the HCDSB RAC; the membership of this committee is listed below.
- The HCDSB RAC meets four (4) times a year: September, November, February, and May. Applicants will receive a written response from the Chair of the HCDSB RAC approximately six weeks after each deadline. Successful applicants from the May meeting are expected to begin their projects in following school year. External researchers must refrain from conducting research in September and June, during the HCDSB quiet period and/or over the summer break or other days deemed to be holidays. All research proposals must make such provisions as are practical for limiting any disturbance of the daily instruction of students. All proposals are evaluated on this criterion by the HCDSB RAC.
- Approval from the HCDSB RAC does not guarantee participation of a particular school and/or staff members and students in the research study. If the research project interferes with the educational process in a school, the Principal may request that the school be excluded from the study.
- Informed consent is required for all research activities that are not conducted under the authority of the Education Act. The form of this consent may vary across projects, but it should be obtained from participants before the study begins. Consent must be voluntary, informed, and an ongoing process.
- When students participating in the study are under the age of 18, consent must be obtained from a parent/guardian.
- Student assent is an expression of approval and is also required for all research activities. Researchers will ensure that it is made clear to students that they are being invited to participate in the study, that their participation is voluntary, and that they can withdraw at any time.
- All persons conducting research within the HCDSB must guarantee anonymity of the individual students, schools, and school personnel in reporting the results, unless written approval is obtained from those involved in the research study and/or Research and Development Services.
- Under the authority of the Education Act, personal information can be collected and used for research purposes by staff of Research and Development Services, who are supporting internal research activities. The information will be used, disclosed, and retained in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- All researchers must submit a copy of their written report (or an executive summary, infographic etc.) to the Chief Officer, Research and Development Services upon study completion.
- All researchers should engage in knowledge exchange/mobilization efforts with participating schools/staff members/students upon study completion.

Membership:

The HCDSB Research Advisory Committee is composed of (when applicable):

 i. HCDSB's Chief Research Officer (CHAIR)

 ii. Chief Social Worker/Chief of Mental Health Programming/Chief Speech and Language Pathologist/Chief of Psychological Services

 iii. Curriculum Consultant/Coordinator

 iv. Human Rights and Equity Office

 v. Special Education Consultant/Coordinator

 vi. Superintendent of Curriculum Services

 vii. Superintendent of School Services

 viii. Superintendent of Special Education Services

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Administrative Council

AUTHORIZED BY: _____

       Director of Education and Secretary of the Board