15. **RESEARCH POLICY**

**AIM**

To ensure that research conducted within the University of Melbourne Children’s Services benefits the care and education of young children.

To support the development of Early Childhood Care and Education, nationally and internationally.

To enhance the professional development of Children’s Services staff

To ensure that research conducted within Children’s Services is ethical, and consistent with each service’s philosophy and values.

**Definitions**

In the broadest sense of the word, the definition of research includes any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge.

Research, as defined by this policy, encompasses all documentation of children’s growth and learning as well as documentation about the operation of the services.

**Scope:**

This policy covers all areas of research – from taking observations that are integral to the daily work of Children’s Services staff, participation in external formal University research. It sets out the necessary approval steps for each form of research.

In any research involving children, children should have the opportunity to consent or refuse. This should be done in a way that is meaningful to each individual. The only exception to this is when Children’s Services staff are taking observations that are required by the licensing body.

**Procedures**

All research will be guided by the ECA Code of Ethics\(^1\).

The following matrix sets out the procedures for internal and external research.

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\(^1\) Early Childhood Association (2006) Code of Ethics
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## THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
CHILDREN’S SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Research</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
<th>Permission</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Other Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation, planning and documentation of children's learning and experiences by Children's Services staff</td>
<td>Day-to-day accounts of children's learning and experiences carried out by centre staff in keeping with legislative requirements</td>
<td>Information is confidential to staff and children and their families. All photos to be stored on shared drive on University computers.</td>
<td>Consent from children for photos wherever possible. Documentation kept on premises except when families take journals home or staff obtain permission from directors to take documentation off site.</td>
<td>All centre staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation, planning and documentation of children's learning and experiences by Children's Services staff undertaking further study</td>
<td>Tasks involving documentation of children’s experiences and learning as part of requirements of course of study.</td>
<td>Documentation to be used only for course assessment requirements.</td>
<td>Approval from director. May request copy of any documentation for centre use. Approval from families of child/children being observed. Approval from children where possible.</td>
<td>Centre director may ask to read any documentation.</td>
<td>Further use of documentation for another purpose must have specific approval. Children Services staff undertaking Research Higher Degree study must make application through the formal process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing for publication undertaken by Children’s Services staff</td>
<td>Writing about centre activities for any external publication</td>
<td>Copy of any published material to be provided to centre.</td>
<td>Prior permission from CSMT Executive members. Where writing involves information about particular children, approval from families and wherever possible children themselves. Staff permission if specifically writing about their work.</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Restrictions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Permission</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other Comments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Observation Tours</strong></td>
<td>Individual or group tours of services</td>
<td>Photography/video only with permission. Only photos of environments, not of staff or children</td>
<td>Approval by centre directors or manager</td>
<td>Centre directors or delegated staff member</td>
<td>Charges may apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation, planning and documentation of children's learning and experiences by students on placement</strong></td>
<td>Tasks involving documentation of children’s experiences and learning as part of requirements of course of study.</td>
<td>All documentation must be made available to families and centre staff. Only centre cameras to be used for photographs.</td>
<td>Approval from director. Approval from families and, wherever possible, from children themselves.</td>
<td>Supervising teacher to read any documentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal research not involving children</strong></td>
<td>Academic research not involving children conducted by University supervised person.</td>
<td>Formal application and approval process. Expectation that results will be provided to services and participants.</td>
<td>Formal application process to be followed. Must have University Ethics approval.</td>
<td>Where a research project involves staff, participation is voluntary and informed consent is required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal research involving children</strong></td>
<td>Academic research involving children conducted by University supervised person</td>
<td>Formal application and approval process. Expectation that results will be provided to services and participants. Limitations detailed in current policy</td>
<td>Formal application process to be followed. Must have University Ethics approval. Approval from families and, wherever possible, from children themselves*.</td>
<td>Voluntary. Informed consent required.</td>
<td>Where research involves funded kindergarten program, permission also required from DEECD</td>
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</tbody>
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2 NHMRC, ARC, AVCC (2007) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
USE OF OBSERVATION FACILITIES
The Queensberry Children's Centre is equipped with observation facilities. There is an observation area located directly above five of the children's rooms.

Playroom activities are able to be viewed through one way glass in the observation areas so children are not disturbed or distracted by the presence of observers.

The observation facilities are able to be used by University of Melbourne students and staff, early childhood students, and staff of other institutions, and by child care professionals from outside the University as part of a professional training program.

These facilities may also be useful to staff of the Centre in their work with the children. Staff can observe children, experiences and the room layout to help in their evaluation of programs for individuals and groups of children.

With permission from the Director, parents may also use the observation areas to see how their child is settling and to watch how the children play and interact with each other.

The activities indicated above are considered to be part of the normal operation of the Centre.

FORMAL APPLICATION PROCEDURE
1. All applicants wishing to conduct formal external research must complete a Children's Services Research Application form (Appendix A). The application process is likely to take approximately two months to complete.

2. The full application to and approval from the appropriate Ethics Committee must be attached to this application. The application must be submitted to the centre Director where the research is to be conducted. Applications will not be considered without this documentation.

3. Applications must be submitted 7 working days prior to a Children’s Services Management Team (CSMT) meeting. The CSMT meets on a monthly basis, usually mid month. (Please contact the Administrative Officer on 8344 9621 for meeting dates)

4. CSMT will discuss the application and will then consult with all early childhood educators who may be involved in the research.

5. Staff, children and parents have the right not to participate in the research. If all staff and parents do not wish to participate in the research the applicant will be notified as soon as possible.

6. After considering the above, CSMT will forward the application with a recommendation to the Child Care Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC). This committee usually meets in the fourth week of each month.

7. The applicant will be contacted within 2 weeks of the CCMAC meeting with a written response to the application.

8. Where a research project involves staff participation through
   - administration tasks,
   - interviews,
   - research meetings with staff, or
   - accompanying a child,
   the researcher will need to reimburse the centre for all relief staff costs, based on the actual rate charged.

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9. Children will not be permitted to be taken out of their room without the presence of a staff member from their room. That staff member will remain with the child/children and will accompany them back to their room when the research is complete.

10. Children will not be permitted to be involved in the research without signed informed consent from their parent/s or a legal guardian prior to conducting research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to collect consent forms and hand them to the director prior to conducting research.

11. Children must also give consent to their involvement wherever possible. Children’s consent must be obtained at the actual time of the research, and their right not to be involved at any point must be respected.

12. Applicants will be required to provide their own equipment and resources. If the applicant wishes to use the centre resources permission must be granted from the Director prior to conducting the research.

13. In the event where the researcher needs to collect extra data a written agreement must be obtained from the Directors.

The applicant will provide at regular intervals during the research written feedback to the centre about the research conducted. On completion of the research the centre will be provided with a written report of the outcome of the research. The researcher will also provide any articles pertaining to the research to the centre.
Application for Research involving Children or Staff

For research at a University of Melbourne Children’s Service’s site to be approved all applicants must submit to the Child Care Management Advisory Committee:

- An outline of the proposed research, including tasks and/or questions that will be given to staff, children or parents at the service.
- A copy of the submission to the appropriate Ethics Committee
- A copy of Ethics Approval.
- A copy of all information to be distributed to staff and parents
• this completed application.

PROJECT TITLE:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):

Tel:                           Email:

OTHER INVESTIGATORS:

Tel:                           Email:

UNIVERSITY/ORGANISATION:

FACULTY/DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL/CENTRE:

1. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1 BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL (PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT):

1.2 HOW WILL THE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED IN THE SERVICE (METHOD)?

1.3 PROPOSED DURATION OF PROJECT: From:....../....../......      To: ....../....../......

1.4 START DATE FOR DATA COLLECTION: ....../....../......

1.5 NAME OF CHILDREN’S CENTRE THE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED:

1.6 NUMBER, TYPE AND AGE RANGE OF SUBJECTS:

1.7 HOW WILL SUBJECTS BE RECRUITED?
1.8 ARE ANY OF THE SUBJECTS IN A DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY OF THE INVESTIGATORS, (PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVED IN RECRUITING FOR OR CONDUCTING THE PROJECT?)

YES  NO  (If YES, has this been identified through the Ethics Committee? Please explain the relationship and the steps to be taken by the investigators to ensure that the subjects’ participation is entirely voluntary.)

1.9 INVESTIGATORS’ EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS:

1.10 ARE THERE LIKELY TO BE ANY DIRECT BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS FROM THIS RESEARCH?

YES  NO  (If YES, please describe.)

1.11 WILL CHILDREN’S SERVICE’S STAFF BE PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH?

YES  NO  (If YES, will this be outside normal duties, how this will be funded?)

1.12 WHAT REQUIREMENTS ARE NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH?

( SPACE, EQUIPMENT, CENTRE STAFF ETC.)

1.13 JUSTIFICATION FOR RESEARCH AND EXPECTED LONG TERM OUTCOMES:

Please provide the following:
- a brief description of the current research being undertaken in this field;
- a justification as to why this project should proceed given current research in the field;
- an explanation of any expected/potential benefits to the community which are likely to result from this particular research project? How are these significant?

1.14 HOW AND WHEN WILL YOU REPORT BACK TO THE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN’S SERVICES STAFF AND FAMILIES ON THE PROGRESS OF THIS RESEARCH?
2. CHILDREN’S SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM COMMENTS

2.1 DOES THE RESEARCH FIT WITH THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SERVICE? :

YES  NO  (If YES, how?)

2.2 WILL THE RESEARCH EXTEND STAFF’S THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE?

YES  NO  (If YES, please supply details.)

2.3 HAVE STAFF AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH?

YES  NO  (If NO, please supply details.)

3. CHILD CARE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS