

# Principles for the ethical and responsible conduct of research

## Introduction

The *Principles for the ethical and responsible conduct of research* (the Principles) guide the conduct of research undertaken by or for AERO. We believe that for our research to be high-quality it must be produced ethically and responsibly. By holding ourselves accountable to these Principles, we ensure our research:

- pays respect and recognition to all people involved
- has merit and integrity
- is transparent, honest and accountable
- promotes equity and accessibility.

All research conducted by and for AERO must demonstrate compliance with these Principles. Review of compliance occurs throughout AERO's [quality assurance process](#).

The Principles adhere to the following national statements on ethics:

- [NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- [Australian Association for Research in Education \(AARE\) Code of ethics](#)
- [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)

AERO also recognises the role of Human Research Ethics Committees in reviewing research proposals to ensure that they are ethically acceptable.

## Principles

### Respect and recognition

We conduct research that upholds the fundamental rights and dignity of all people, regardless of identity or background. We engage with research participants as partners rather than subjects, seeking to understand their context and perspectives. We celebrate the distinct and diverse contributions of all stakeholders in our work. We particularly value and respect the diversity, heritage and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Examples of this principle in action:

- We develop research projects that are relevant and responsive to the needs of our stakeholders.
- We create opportunities for communities to be involved in the planning and design of research to ensure they benefit.
- We work with communities to help them understand the benefits of our research. We explain our aims, the community's role and the researchers' role.
- We treat data with appropriate care, recognising that it represents real people.
- We consult research participants about our findings to check that the findings reflect their lived experience.
- We ensure all people and communities irrespective of identity or background are meaningfully represented in consultation and negotiation about any research they are involved in. We proceed with any research only after achieving mutual understanding.
- We acknowledge, respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, practices and innovations.
- The contributions of all stakeholders and contributors are recognised through authorship and acknowledgement.

## Research merit and integrity

We conduct research that advances our goal of an excellent and equitable education for all children and young people. We prioritise research that has the potential to significantly improve outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged groups. We minimise risks for our research participants and seek to do no harm. We select research methods appropriate for our aims and adhere to the highest possible standards for these methods, given our available resources. We analyse data systematically and ensure that any positions we hold are based on all available evidence.

Examples of this principle in action:

- We investigate the benefits and risks of all projects. We seek to ensure that all people participating in, or impacted by, our research should benefit from our research findings and not be disadvantaged. We plan for and mitigate any potential risks.
- We seek to avoid confirmation bias by selecting research methods appropriate to our aims and research questions.
- We seek appropriate consent before collecting data, including the consent of parents/carers when collecting data about children and young people.
- We maintain the privacy of research participants and their data. We only identify research participants if they have previously agreed or in compliance with national legislation.
- We ensure that when analysing our data we consider a range of evidence for and against any hypotheses we have. Before deciding on a particular position, we examine and respond to any evidence that appears to conflict with it.

## Transparency, independence, honesty and accountability

We are independent. We present information truthfully and accurately when proposing, conducting and reporting our research. We demonstrate care and systematic attention to detail when planning research projects. We ensure our research aims, methods and hypotheses are transparent and replicable. We are open and honest when our plans change. We aim to publish all our research. We acknowledge that there may be consequences from the dissemination of certain findings and so assess risks and minimise harm to communities before doing so. We engage in quality assurance processes to ensure we hold ourselves accountable to these Principles.

Examples of this principle in action:

- We describe projects in sufficient detail before commencing and, when appropriate, allow all relevant stakeholders to review our plans.
- We identify and appropriately mitigate any conflicts of interest before undertaking any research project.
- We subject our research to appropriate external review.
- We ensure responsible use of, and access to, data and research results through effective management of data and research results. This includes working with all people and communities irrespective of identity or background to develop mutually agreed plans for managing the use of, and access to, research results.
- We publicly release technical information about how the research was conducted and any changes to research plans, including what the changes were and the reasons for the changes.
- We adhere to all appropriate legislation, guidelines and policies around child safety and privacy including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

## Equity and accessibility

We ensure everyone can access and benefit from our work. We conduct research that is inclusive and that treats everyone fairly, irrespective of personal or social circumstances. We actively pursue research that aims to close equity gaps. We make our research accessible for all, in formats that are easy to use and access.

Examples of this principle in action:

- We seek to ensure that everyone can participate in our research, irrespective of different abilities, identities, backgrounds or cultures.
- We take into account the significance of, and actively seek to shed light on, any equity gaps that we find through our research projects.
- We ensure that any research conducted includes specific findings that respond to local community needs and interests.
- We notify participants of how and when findings will be disseminated.
- We ensure that findings are disseminated in formats that are easy to use and access.
- Research processes and findings relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are communicated via mutually agreed upon tools/languages.