



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

Participation and support for external research and evaluation

ACECQA guidelines



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1 Background to ACECQA's role in research and evaluation

Under the Education and Care Services National Law, ACECQA undertakes research and evaluation activities for the purpose of informing quality children's education and care, and to determine how and to what extent the National Quality Framework (NQF) is achieving its stated objectives.

ACECQA's [Research and Evaluation Strategy 2021-24](#) details our approach to research and evaluation under the NQF. It provides a summary of progress to date, and current and future priorities, as part of a longer term strategy to evaluate the extent to which the intended outcomes of the NQF are being realised.

The Research and Evaluation Strategy is complemented by an [NQF Evaluation Framework](#), which is a shared framework among governments against which a diverse range of research projects can be undertaken to determine to what extent the NQF is meeting its objectives. The Evaluation Framework provides governments and ACECQA with a common reference point when considering existing and future research and evaluation activities. Universities, research institutions, government organisations and other stakeholders are all encouraged to contribute to the NQF evidence base in line with the NQF evaluation framework.

ACECQA undertakes research activities, both in-house and commissioning of external research, in line with our Research and Evaluation Strategy and the NQF Evaluation Framework. In addition, from time to time, ACECQA is approached by researchers from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other research organisations ('third parties'), who seek our in-kind support in undertaking their research activities.

2 Purpose

As mentioned above, ACECQA welcomes and encourages high quality research that contributes to the NQF evidence base. The purpose of these guidelines is to outline ACECQA's approach to responding to third parties seeking our support for, or participation in, external research and evaluation activities. In particular, these guidelines outline ACECQA's position that such requests will need to:

- demonstrate how the proposed research aligns with, and will further, our Research and Evaluation Strategy 2021-24 and the NQF Evaluation Framework
- lead to research outcomes that add to the evidence base around the impact of quality early childhood education and care, with findings / learnings that are to be made freely accessible to the public.

3 Scope

The guidelines apply to proposed requests to ACECQA for our in-kind participation and support in a third party's research and / or evaluation project. The types of in-kind support ACECQA *may* provide include:

- access to ACECQA expertise, including participation by staff in consultation meetings or provision of on-going feedback on research findings
- communication about, and translation / dissemination of, relevant research findings and resources
- access to data, in accordance with the ACECQA website [terms of use](#) and the agreed [Protocol for sharing, using and disclosing National Quality Agenda IT System data by Participating Jurisdictions, the Australian Government and ACECQA](#).

In considering third party requests for support, in general ACECQA will not:

- cost in-kind support – any commitment will be delivered in a form consistent with our organisational priorities at any given time
- be party to any formal agreement for a research grant application or enter into any agreement (including memoranda of understanding) or contract that binds us
- provide financial support.

4 Principles for research support / participation

ACECQA will be guided by the following principles in considering supporting or participating in external research and evaluation activities:

- fulfilling role and purpose – the proposed arrangement provides an opportunity for research and associated bodies to help ACECQA, governments and/or the sector to further understand whether, and to what extent, any or all objectives and guiding principles of the NQF are being delivered
- maintaining independence and neutrality – ACECQA will not enter into any arrangement where it gives rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest or compromises ACECQA's independence and neutrality
- creating value – the proposed research project or activity will create value and demonstrate benefits for ACECQA, government partners, regulatory authorities and / or sector stakeholders in implementing the NQF and improving outcomes for children.

The first and third principles require that, for any arrangement that ACECQA agrees to, the third party is required to demonstrate how the proposed research and / or evaluation activity aligns with, and furthers, our strategic research and evaluation priorities, in particular as articulated in the Research and Evaluation Strategy 2021-24 and the NQF Evaluation Framework.

A template application form is provided at **Appendix A**, which is required to be completed to demonstrate this alignment.

The second principle requires that, for any proposed arrangement, there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest or adverse effect on ACECQA's independence and neutrality. For example, ACECQA will not enter into any arrangement under which a third party can direct us to undertake a particular action.

Please note that in addition to the information requested at **Appendix A**, all requests for research and evaluation support will be assessed with regard to ACECQA's capacity to participate, taking into account its current research and other work priorities.

APPENDIX A

External Research and Evaluation Support – Request Application Form

Project Description	
Requesting Stakeholder	
Project or Activity Timeframe	
Nature of In-Kind Support Requested	
Contact Person / Details	

Outcomes of proposed research and evaluation activity

OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS (as applicable)
Objectives: Concise statement about what the research project or activity is aiming to achieve.
Outcomes: The desired results, consequences, benefits, impacts of the project or activity.
Outputs: The goods, services and products delivered by the project or activity.

Demonstrating benefits to the NQF

KEY QUESTION		CONSIDERATION
1	How will this research and evaluation activity or project further the objectives of the NQF, including improved outcomes for children?	
2	What is the project's / activity's alignment to our Research and Evaluation Strategy 2021-24, and the NQF Evaluation Framework?	
3	What are the strategic benefits for ACECQA, our government partners, regulatory authorities, and / or sector stakeholders?	
4	How is the project/activity consistent with ACECQA's statutory functions, powers, roles and stewardship of the NQA ITS?	
5	Will the project / activity lead to research outcomes that will add to the evidence base around the impact of quality early childhood education and care, with findings / learnings that are freely accessible to the public?	
6	Will ACECQA's support for the activity or project be consistent with our reputation as an independent national statutory authority within the education and care and broader education sectors?	

Research ethics

Where relevant, please include a statement of assurance that all necessary research ethics approvals have or will be obtained by the third party for this research.

Submission of requests

Please submit all requests for research and evaluation support to research@acecqa.gov.au.



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