



Simcoe County District School Board

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GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

These guidelines provide information to individuals who are interested in conducting research that involves SCDSB schools, staff, students or parents. Although the Board is prepared to support educational research, we are also mindful that the students have been entrusted to the schools for their personal education. Educational research must not be done at the expense of students' academic programs. In order to allow access to the schools while safeguarding the educational process, applications for conducting research are evaluated by the Educational Research Advisory Committee. The Committee considers all applications carefully using a number of criteria outlined on the following pages. It should be noted that, even if the External Research Review Committee approves a project, this does not automatically guarantee access to a particular school. The school principal must also be willing to accommodate the study in his/her school.

WHO MAY APPLY?

Applications are accepted from:

- Masters thesis candidates;
- Doctoral thesis candidates;
- Institutionally funded projects;
- Externally funded projects.

NOTE: The External Research Review Committee gives low priority to undergraduate projects.

HOW TO APPLY

- Obtain approval from sponsoring agency or institution representative.
- Obtain approval from the Ethics Review Board of sponsoring agency or institution.
- Complete the SCDSB application form to do research or evaluation.
- Submit 5 copies of completed application package to the chairperson of the Board's Educational Advisory Committee.
- Send your submission to:

Chair, Educational Research Advisory Committee
Simcoe County District School Board
1170 Hwy. 26, Midhurst, Ontario L0L 1X0

WHAT TO SUBMIT

Materials to be submitted must include:

- a) the completed board application form;
- b) a complete written proposal;
- c) advanced copies of all data collection instruments/protocols; and
- d) evidence of ethical approval of the external institution or sponsoring agency
- e) certification of a Criminal Records Check – Vulnerable Sector Screening for any person who will have direct involvement with students;
- f) the applicant should include a reasonable timeline and should avoid formal examination periods and peak times such as September and the last 6 weeks of the school year.

Proposals should include satisfactory evidence that the rights and well-being of individuals will be protected.

WHAT HAPPENS?

- There are four committee meetings throughout the school year, and they are held mid October, December, February and March.
- The Educational Research Advisory Committee considers the proposal by taking into account the criteria and policy guidelines outlined in the following pages.
- There are circumstances where a researcher may have contacts in a particular school or may wish to include particular schools for reasons related to the design of the study. The reasons should be included in the proposal.
- The applicant will be notified in writing and/or by e-mail regarding the final disposition of the project.
- When a proposal is approved, the Chair of the Committee will typically make the initial contact with the principal. The principal will be provided with general information about the research project and the name of the researcher who will contact him/her to discuss whether the school will consider participating.
- Committee approval does not obligate schools to participate in the study. The final decision rests with the principal.
- The applicant will then contact the principal to make practical arrangements for implementation of the project and to ensure that minimal interruptions take place.
- Potential participants (staff, parents and students) also have the right to decide whether or not they wish to participate in the project.

WHAT CRITERIA DOES THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER?

Relevance to education:

- Is the study relevant to education in general?
- Is the study relevant to education in Simcoe County?
- Is the study consistent with Board policies and priorities?
- What is the value and/or benefit to the system?
- Is there an acceptable process for providing feedback of results to participating schools?

Research methodology:

- Is the study designed well?
- Is the methodology appropriate given the purpose of the study?
- Are the theory and research questions clear and presented in plain language?
- Are there clear procedures for sample selection?
- Are the research instruments adequate and appropriate?

Protection of staff and students:

- Are the demands made on the system and on the time of the students and staff realistic?
- Is the study free from sensitive or intrusive items?
- Are the confidentiality of data and the rights and well-being of the participants protected?
- Are there clear procedures for obtaining informed consent? (See sample parent consent form attached.) Is the consent form written in plain language?
- Is there an appropriate protocol to deal with sensitive issues arising during research (e.g., students' who wish to withdraw from the study, disclosure of sensitive information by participants, debriefing participants)?

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE POLICY GUIDELINES

A guideline for the conduct of research or evaluation studies by individuals or external agencies in Simcoe County District School Board schools.

The Educational Research Advisory Committee of the Simcoe County District School Board considers proposals from individuals or external agencies seeking to undertake research or evaluation studies on various aspects of the educational system. Because of the large number of requests to do research in SCDSB schools, proposals from undergraduates are given low priority. Market research is only considered if there is an educational application or relevance. The observance of common procedures should facilitate the processing of the requests and promote cordial working relationships. Permission to conduct such studies in Simcoe County District School Board schools will be based upon the following:

1. An application to do research or evaluation should be made in writing to the chairperson of the board's Educational Research Advisory Committee.
2. Studies that have direct relevance to education and demonstrable benefits for the participants, education and SCDSB will be given priority.
3. Materials must be submitted in final form, (e.g., a complete written proposal, advanced copies of all data collection instruments/protocols). Drafts will not be considered.
4. The application should include a reasonable timeline and should avoid peak times of the year and formal examination periods.
5. Proposals must have the written approval of the external institution or sponsoring agency and include satisfactory evidence that the rights and well-being of individuals will be protected.
6. Any person who will have direct involvement with students must provide certification of a Criminal Records Check – Vulnerable Sector Screening. *Certificate must have been obtained within the previous six months.*
7. The rights and well-being of study participants must be protected.
8. The research must ensure that the confidentiality of information about SCDSB schools, teachers and students is protected and that no SCDSB school, teacher, or student is identified in any report.
9. Under Freedom of Information legislation, information collected as the routine part of school records is not obtained with the expectation of disclosure to independent researchers. Therefore, it is not possible for the SCDSB to identify particular individuals or groups of students for the researchers.
10. Parental permission is required for any research with or about students under the age of 18 y in SCDSB schools. Permission must be **informed consent**; passive consent is not acceptable. Copies of consent letters must be included with the application.
11. Researchers will not be allowed to gather data in SCDSB schools during September, after mid-May or in January in semestered schools, except in very unusual circumstances.
12. The study should be minimally intrusive. Demands placed on schools and study participants should not be excessive and should not conflict with students' academic program.
13. Committee approval does not obligate schools to participate in the study. The final decision rests with the principal.
14. Following completion of the study, a copy of the final report should be sent to the chairperson of the board's Educational Research Advisory Committee. The researcher must agree to arrange for feedback of the results to the participating schools.

It is important that arrangements are made for sharing results of the research or evaluation with participants. Intentions to publish results in journals, books, magazines, monographs or newspapers should be discussed with the Educational Research Advisory Committee. A copy of the Simcoe County District School Board Educational Research Policy #4123 is available upon request.