



Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority



Ethical guidelines for the teaching of psychology in Western Australian schools

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Ethical behaviour

Ethical behaviour involves actions that are consistent with fundamental values about what is right, fair, just or good.

Teachers and students engaged in the teaching and learning of psychology in schools have a legal and moral responsibility to behave ethically at all times. The code of conduct that encapsulates the ethical behaviour that is to be adhered to is encompassed in the following documents that are essential reading for teachers:

- the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*, issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in accordance with the NHMRC Act 1992 (Cwlth), available from the NHMRC website <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>
- the National Privacy Principles in the *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000* (Cwlth), available from the website of the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner <http://www.privacy.gov.au/>
- the *Code of Ethics* of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), available from the APS website <http://www.psychology.org.au>

Conducting investigations in Psychology

Investigations in Psychology should be conducted in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), (updated May 2015)*. Relevant sections of this document for schools are:

- Chapter 2.1: Risk and benefit
- Chapter 4.2: Children and young people
- Chapter 5.1: Institutional responsibilities

It is expected that students would undertake activities classified as ‘negligible risk research’ (paragraph 2.1.7 – there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort) or ‘low risk research’ (paragraph 2.1.6 – the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort).

Research that can be exempted from review

Chapter 5.1.8 states ‘Research that carries only negligible risk (see paragraph 2.1.7) and meets the requirements of paragraphs 5.1.22 and 5.1.23 may be exempted from ethical review’.

Research involving no more than low risk

Chapter 5.1.7 states ‘For research that carries only low risk (see paragraph 2.1.6) and does not fall under any of the chapters listed in paragraph 5.1.6, institutions may choose to establish other levels of ethical review. These levels are described in paragraphs 5.1.18 to 5.1.21’.

Chapter 5.1.3 states ‘Institutions may establish their own processes for ethical review of research, or use those of another institution’. Of particular note for schools, Chapter 5.1.20 states that ‘The levels of ethical review referred to in paragraph 5.1.18 may include, but may not be limited to review or assessment at departmental level by the head of department’.

Ethically approved investigations

Investigations that were approved by the Secondary Psychology Ethics Committee convened by the Curriculum Council of WA, and reflect the guidelines contained in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), (updated May 2015)* and the Privacy Amendment Act 2000 (Cwlth), are available on the School Curriculum and Standards Authority website.

Developing investigations in Psychology

Schools may develop their own investigations. In doing so, due consideration must be given to *the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), (updated May 2015)*.

[School letterhead]

CONSENT FORM

Investigation: Psychology

Participant's name	
Investigation title	
Teacher's name	

I consent to participate in the research investigation named above. The nature of the research, including the procedures, has been explained to me, and is summarised on the information letter I have been given.

I give permission for the responsible teacher, named above, to use the outlined investigation procedures with me.

I understand that:

- (a) I am free to withdraw from the investigation at any time. There will be no consequences if I decline to participate or if I initially agree to participate, but later decide to withdraw.
- (b) The investigation is for the purpose of teaching and learning.
- (c) The confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded. Written responses will be identified only by a code number in order to ensure that responses are anonymous.
- (d) There are no known adverse effects of participation in this investigation.
- (e) I will maintain the confidentiality of other participants in this investigation.

Please return this signed consent form to your teacher.

Signed: _____
(student)

Date: _____

Students may participate in this investigation only if a parent or guardian completes the following section.

I consent to the participation of _____ in the above research investigation.

Signed: _____
(parent/guardian)

Date: _____