

Access to BOSTES Data and Information for External Research Purposes: Policy and Guidelines

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1. Introduction

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) recognises the importance of high quality research and values its ongoing engagement and collaboration with external government and non-government organisations, universities, other research bodies and individual researchers.

The Research Policy and Guidelines for External Researchers are designed to assist researchers who wish to access BOSTES data and information for the purposes of their own research and also those seeking to collaborate with BOSTES in joint research activities.

The Guidelines acknowledge the special ethical and methodological nature of academic and scholarly research and confirm the Board's commitment to actively collaborate with external researchers in the interests of promoting high quality research in education. They seek to establish a framework of data sharing which assists the efficient use of information and mitigates the risk of misuse.

The Guidelines take cognisance of the [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#) (GIPA) and do not seek to restrict or limit public access to information that would otherwise be made available under the Act. Applications for data and other information that fall outside of the special parameters of scholarly academic research are best made through the Board's published GIPA processes.

2. The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards

BOSTES was established by the [Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Act 2013](#) and commenced on 1 January 2014. Under the Act, the Board assumes the functions of the Board of Studies NSW and the NSW Institute of Teachers and brings together the educational cornerstones of curriculum, student assessment and teacher quality in one educational body.

The principal objective of BOSTES is to ensure that curriculum, forms of assessment, and teaching and regulatory standards under the education and teaching legislation are developed, applied and monitored in a way that drives quality teaching and improves student learning.

The key responsibilities of BOSTES are:

Curriculum and assessment

- Develop curriculum and curriculum support materials that articulate NSW educational standards at each stage of learning from Kindergarten to Year 12.
- Develop high quality resources and provide expert guidance and support for teachers undertaking assessment of the educational standards of NSW students.

Examinations and credentials

- Develop and deliver HSC examinations and award the Higher School Certificate to eligible students.
- Award the Record of School Achievement to eligible students who leave school prior to completing the Higher School Certificate.

- Implement and administer the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests in New South Wales.

Teacher quality

- Implement and oversee teacher accreditation processes against whole-of-career Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and accredit NSW teachers against those standards.
- Ensure the quality of Initial Teacher Education programs offered by providers against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- Support professional learning for beginning and continuing teachers based on rigorous professional standards.
- Coordinate the implementation of the NSW Government's *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning (GTIL) Blueprint for Action* across all NSW schools to drive improved teacher quality and educational standards for NSW students.

School registration and accreditation

- Develop and implement school registration standards.
- Register non-government schools seeking to operate in New South Wales and accredit non-government schools to present candidates for the Record of School Achievement and the Higher School Certificate.
- Approve schools to deliver courses to overseas students.
- Administer the home schooling program under delegation from the Minister.

3. Research structures

BOSTES recognises the importance of high quality research activities to continually improve educational knowledge, outcomes and resources. In this context, research is defined as any systematic activity that is undertaken in order to discover facts or principles to increase knowledge.

A wide range of BOSTES-related research activities is conducted by:

- professional BOSTES staff who undertake research and development activities as a primary part of their duties, or as part of their wider role in BOSTES
- external researchers who apply to access BOSTES data and/or information, particularly in relation to educational provision, access, participation and outcomes
- external researchers commissioned by the Board.

BOSTES has established a Research and Development Committee, chaired by the BOSTES President and including representatives of the school sectors, vice-chancellors and deans of education. The functions of the Committee are to:

- advise BOSTES on research and development related to the Board's statutory functions
- develop and monitor protocols for sharing data
- advise on effective developments with regard to learning measurement

- identify and consider research opportunities, including proposals for the use of data from universities.

The Committee is supported by the Board's Research Directorate, which has a major role in coordinating and conducting research in BOSTES. The Research Directorate is also responsible for liaison with universities and other agencies involved in research and data analysis, including the provision of data and the development of exchange protocols.

4. Applying for data and information

Application for BOSTES data and information for research purposes is made by completion of an application form designed to ensure that the request for data is complete and that the purpose of the data in relation to the research project is clearly understood.

Applicants are asked to address each of the following criteria to assist BOSTES in understanding and determining how best it can support the research:

- the educational significance and potential benefits of the research to education¹
- the appropriateness and capability of the research design and methodologies to meet the aims of the project and provide valid outcomes
- the extent of BOSTES resources required relative to the potential value of the research
- privacy, confidentiality and security issues, particularly in relation to the identification of individual students and schools
- compliance with the Board's legislative responsibilities, such as privacy and ethics (including the provisions of the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#) and the pursuant Privacy Commissioner Direction on Disclosures of Information by Public Sector Agencies for Research Purposes)
- endorsement of the applicant's university, institute, school or other organisation.

5. Conditions of approval

Applicants are required to sign a declaration agreeing to:

- take appropriate action to ensure the privacy and security of all information and data obtained or created as part of the research project
- notify BOSTES of any substantial changes to the timing, scope, methodology or any other significant aspect of the project
- use the data/information provided only for the purposes identified
- ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of individual persons, schools and educational sectors in reporting findings
- acknowledge the provision of data/information by BOSTES

¹ As a general principle, projects undertaken for commercial gain, including those that involve primarily marketing activities or market research, should be submitted under the Board's published GIPA processes.

- not imply that the project is endorsed by BOSTES
- provide a report to BOSTES of the research findings at the conclusion of the research.

6. Approval process

Research applications are administered by the Research Directorate, with applications assessed against the criteria listed in section 4 above. Authority to approve the request depends on the nature of the data and information sought:

- Where data is sought in aggregated form and is readily accessible, approval may be given by the Director, Research.
- In other instances, release of the data requires the approval of the BOSTES President (or delegate).
- In some cases, such as where the requested data requires the identification of individual students (eg for data matching projects), BOSTES may require a memorandum of understanding or letter of agreement. Section 16 of the [Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Act 2013](#) includes provision for an information sharing arrangement to be established between BOSTES and other relevant agencies.
- Advice may be sought from the BOSTES Research and Development Committee, which is also provided with regular reports on research applications.

7. Research grants

BOSTES does not have a regular grants program, but may provide financial or other assistance with research projects if the value of the proposed project, its direct relevance to the Board's functions and the quality of the application are deemed to warrant it. Such assistance is negotiated on a case-by-case basis with conditions based around the following general framework:

- If funds are provided to the researcher's institution, a certified statement of expenditure must be provided to the Board once every six months. The interest accrued on the funds during the life of the project must be spent on the project.
- The researcher must follow the procedures and time schedule and use the data gathered as specified in the approved submission. Departures from the submission must be negotiated with and approved by BOSTES.
- The researcher must provide progress reports and report to a steering committee, if required. Payments of grants are dependent on evidence of satisfactory progress. The researcher must also provide a written research report to BOSTES at the conclusion of the project.
- The researcher has the right to publish manuscripts and/or articles on the basis of the research, but is required to submit a copy to BOSTES for discussion prior to publication and to acknowledge BOSTES. Articles or manuscripts must not imply that BOSTES endorses the views expressed.
- During the life of the project, the researcher must negotiate with BOSTES his/her intention to communicate with the media concerning the project.

- Equipment purchased for the project from grants provided by BOSTES is the property of BOSTES, unless otherwise negotiated.
- The institution receiving the funds may reserve the right to place copyright on all materials developed by the researcher during the conduct of the project with the proviso that copyright is waived for use by BOSTES.
- BOSTES has access to the data during the study and at any time after the completion of the study.
- Data may not be used for any purpose, other than that approved for the study by BOSTES, without the Board's prior consent.

8. Application package

Please refer to the separate document *Access to BOSTES Data and Information for External Research Purposes* (and accompanying application form) for further details regarding the process of applying for access to BOSTES data and other information.

Appendix 1: Research approval process

