

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
CHILDREN'S CENTRE
OBSERVATION AND RESEARCH POLICY

AIM

To ensure that research conducted within the La Trobe University Children's Centre is of benefit too and extends the development of the children and their community.

To support the development of Early Childhood Education nationally and internationally.

To enhance the professional development of Centre staff.

To ensure that research conducted within the Centre is consistent with the philosophy and values about the care and education of children.

To maintain ethical standards

The Centre welcomes students to our team. The Centre accepts students seeking practical experience and those undertaking research projects each year from a variety of Educational Institutions.

Practicums and Observational visits are arranged in consultation with the Director, Field Supervisors (a person who has achieved a minimum two year qualification and is employed by the Centre), along with personnel from the relevant Educational Institution.

Student visits to the Centre for practicums or observational projects are arranged to minimise any disruption to the operation of the Centre. Students are expected to maintain a professional attitude at all times and demonstrate a work ethic equivalent to that reflected in the Centre Philosophy and other such documentation as is provided by the Centre.

To ensure an understanding of expectation by both Centre personnel and students, undertaking practicums or observational projects, guidelines have been developed and are as follows:

1. The Director, or her nominated representative, will provide and discuss with each student a package of information about the Centre.
2. Students are to work the same roster as the Field Supervisor.
3. Students must have written work up to date and available for Field Supervisors each day.
4. Students must contact the Centre if absent.
5. Students are to have two hours planning/preparation time each week with the Field Supervisor.
6. Students are also provided with an hour at the end of each day to complete written tasks/preparation (They must not leave the Centre).
7. Students will be supervised at all times by Centre Personnel.
8. Communication between Centre Personnel and Students is encouraged at all times.

Allowing students to utilise our Centre, keeps us informed of new ideas and developments affecting both the children and service provision, whilst also further promoting the reputation of the Centre.

The activities indicated above are considered to be part of the normal operation of the Centre and will be arranged by the Director.

Specific consent will be sought from parents for the participation of individual children in research projects, photographs, video recording, and audio recording or motion film. The research projects may involve interviews, completion of questionnaires, or systemic observational record taking of individual children. In such cases parents will receive a request for permission for their children's participation via individual consent forms as well as information about the project.

Procedure

1. All applicants must complete a Centre Research Application form (APPENDIX A)
2. The full application to the appropriate Ethics Committee with Ethics committee approval must be attached to the application. The application must be submitted to the Centre Director. Applications will not be considered without this documentation.
3. Applications must be submitted 7 working days prior to the Centre's Staff Development Team (SDT) meeting. The SDT meets on a fortnightly basis.
4. The Staff Development Team will discuss the application and will then consult with all Early Childhood staff who will be required to be involved in the research.
5. Staff and parents have the right not to participate or withdraw at any time. If all staff and parents do not wish to participate in the research the applicant will be notified as soon as possible.
6. If staff and parents agree to the research proposal and are satisfied that all their questions have been addressed by the applicant, SDT will forward the application with a recommendation to the Children's Centre Management Committee (CCMC). This committee meets in the fourth week of each month. (See Appendix B, dates)
7. The applicant will be contacted within 2 weeks of the CCMC meeting with a written response to the application.
8. Where a research project involves staff participation through
 - Administration tasks
 - Interviews
 - Research meetings with staff
 - Accompanying a child, the researcher will need to reimburse the centre for relief costs. The current rate for the cost of relief staff (\$26.00 per hour) or staff overtime will be charged to the researcher.
9. Children will not be permitted to be taken out of their room without the presence of a staff member from their section. That staff member will remain with the child/children and will accompany them back to their room when the research is complete.

10. Children will not be permitted to be involved in the research without signed informed consent from their parent/s or legal guardian 5 days prior to conducting research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to collect the consent forms and hand them to the Director prior to conducting research.
11. Children will not be offered a reward for participation in the research project.
12. Applicants will be required to provide their own equipment and resources. If the applicant wishes to use the centre resources permission must be granted from the Director prior to conducting the research.
13. The applicant will provide at regular intervals during the research written feedback to the centre about the research conducted. On completion of the research the centre will be provided with a written report of the outcome of the research. The researcher will also provide any articles pertaining to the research to the centre.
14. Where a person converts their research from Masters to PHD during their data collection, or during their time at the centre, the researcher will submit the conversion report to CCMC for approval.
15. In the event where the researcher needs to collect extra data a written agreement must be obtained from the Director.
16. If there are any questions or concerns arising out of the research project from any of the parties involved they are to be forwarded to the Director.
17. Video and audio recordings, photographs, or motion film must be securely stored with the researcher. This material must not be used for any other purpose than specified in the research protocol. Subjects may request this material be destroyed at any point in the research time frame and at any time subsequent to the research project concluding.

Approved: 7th October, 1997.
Approved: 309th Meeting, 29th May 2001.
Minute No. 309.03.v