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**GENERAL NOTICES • ALGEMENE KENNISGEWINGS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING****NOTICE 3948 OF 2026****CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT, 2006 (ACT 16 OF 2006)****CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE POLICY ON RESEARCH PROTOCOLS AND PROCESSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND PUBLIC COLLEGES**

I, Kgwaridi Buti Manamela, Minister of Higher Education and Training, hereby invite public comments on the *Policy on Research Protocols and Processes in the Department of Higher Education and Training and Public Colleges*, in accordance with section 41B(4)(d) of the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No.16 of 2006) and the Higher Education and Training Information Policy published in Notice No. 832, Government Gazette No. 36973 of 1 November 2013, This policy seeks to replace the *Policy Standard on Approval to Conduct Research in Public Colleges* in Notice No. 18, Government Gazette No. 39583 of 8 January 2016.

The policy stipulates the processes that need to be followed by researchers and research organisations when research is to be undertaken in the Department of Higher Education and Training, at public Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges, and at public Community Education and Training colleges.

All interested persons and organisations are invited to comment on the *Policy on Research Protocols and Processes in the Department of Higher Education and Training and Public Colleges* in writing and direct their comments to: The Director-General, Private Bag X74, Pretoria, 0001. For attention, Ms R Govender, Email: [Govender.R@dhet.gov.za](mailto:Govender.R@dhet.gov.za) / [dhetresearch@dhet.gov.za](mailto:dhetresearch@dhet.gov.za).

Kindly provide the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the person or organisation submitting the comments.

**The comments must be submitted within 21 working days from the date of publication of this Notice.**



**Mr KB Manamela, MP**  
**Minister of Higher Education and Training**  
**Date: 12 / 03 / 2026**



higher education  
& training  
Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**POLICY ON RESEARCH PROTOCOLS AND PROCESSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND PUBLIC COLLEGES**

**DHET 004**

**April 2026**

Policy, Research and Evaluation (PRE)  
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0001

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## 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 The *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (2013) emphasises the critical role of research in societal development.
- 1.2 The Department of Higher Education and Training (The Department) recognises the importance of knowledge production, management, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge in strengthening the quality, and diversity of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system in South Africa.
- 1.3 The Department is committed to providing an environment that supports research activities which will promote the strategic vision of the education sector and in line with the strategic plans such as the National Development Plan.
- 1.4 Good quality research is essential for informed decision making. Accordingly, the Department welcomes bona fide research, including Honour's, Master's and Doctoral students, to undertake research in the Department and at public colleges (Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET] and Community Education and Training [CET] colleges), subject to the procedures outlined in this document.
- 1.5 This Policy is determined in terms of Section 41B(4)(d) of the Continuing Education and Training, Act No. 16 of 2006

## 2. RATIONALE

- 2.1 This Policy is a revised version of the 2015 Information Standard on Approval to conduct research in public colleges. The revision incorporates feedback from internal and external stakeholders. It reflects updated requirements, streamlined processes, and alignment with strategic goals to ensure more effective governance and support for research initiatives.
- 2.2 This Policy ensures that research conducted in the Department and at public colleges adheres to both local and international ethical standards. It aims to:
  - 2.2.1 Prevent overburdening the management, staff and students at public colleges by managing the volume and timing of research activities.
  - 2.2.2 Avoid disruption to teaching and learning processes by coordinating research.
  - 2.2.3 Promote mutual respect and collaboration between the researchers, the Department and public colleges.

### 3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of this Policy is to stipulate the processes and requirements for conducting research in the Department and at public colleges. This ensures consistency, accountability, and compliance in all research activities.

### 4. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- 4.1 This Policy is applicable to research that is planned to be undertaken in the Department and at public colleges, (TVET colleges and CET colleges), by Honour's, Master's and Doctoral students, research organisations and independent researchers<sup>1</sup>. This policy may also be adopted or adapted by private colleges. Requests to undertake research at private colleges should be submitted directly to the relevant college for processing.
- 4.2 The Department is established in terms of Schedule 1 of the Public Service Act, 1994 published in Proclamation 103 in Government Gazette 15791 of 3 June 1994.
- 4.3 TVET and CET colleges are established by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of Sections 3(1a) and 3(1b) of the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2016).

### 5. APPLICABLE PROCEDURE

#### **5.1. Submission Requirements:**

- 5.1.1. Researchers intending to conduct research in the Department or at public colleges must follow the outlined procedure and ensure timely submission of all required documentation.
- 5.1.2. Applications involving the Department, any or all CET colleges or ten and more TVET colleges must be submitted to the Department for centralised processing.
- 5.1.3. Applications involving fewer than ten TVET colleges must be submitted to the Head of each respective college.
- 5.1.4. The following documents must be submitted at least two months before the proposed research start date:
- 5.1.4.1. Completed application form (Appendix 1), including a clear summary of all data collection instruments such as questionnaires, interview guides, and observation tools.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals not affiliated with a formal organisation, conducting research based on personal or professional interest in the PSET sector.

- 5.1.4.2. Signed declaration at the end of the application form confirming that all information is true and complete.
- 5.1.4.3. Ethics Clearance Certificate issued by the Research Ethics Committee of the applicant's Higher Education Institution (for students and institution-affiliated researchers only).
- 5.1.4.4. A comprehensive research proposal, inception report, or concept note detailing the research objectives, methodology, target population, and expected outcomes.
- 5.1.4.5. Official letter of approval or endorsement by the organisational head (for research organisations) or a detailed motivation (for independent researchers).
- 5.1.5. **Students** (Honours, Master's, Doctoral) must complete **Section 1** of the application form. Students must submit an Ethics Clearance Certificate (or conditional Ethical Clearance) and a full research proposal. The Ethics Clearance Certificate is provided by the Research Ethics Committee of the institution where the student is registered. Some Honours students may not receive individual ethics clearance. Instead, ethical approval is typically granted at class level or under the name of the Supervisor. In such cases, a copy of the group ethics clearance or the Supervisor's ethics clearance must be submitted. **Sections 2 and 3** of the application form are not applicable to students.
- 5.1.6. **Research Organisations** must complete **Section 2** of the application form. They must submit either a detailed research proposal, inception report or approval by organisational head. Sections 1 and 3 of the application form are not applicable to research organisations.
- 5.1.7. **Independent Researchers** must complete **Section 3** of the application form. They must submit either a research proposal, concept note or motivation outlining the purpose and scope of their research. If the researcher is affiliated with a higher education institution, an Ethics Clearance Certificate issued by the institution's Research Ethics Committee must be provided. **Sections 1 and 2** of the application form is not applicable to independent researchers.

## ***5.2. Roles and Responsibilities***

- 5.2.1. The Department's role is to centrally manage and process applications to conduct research in the Department and at public colleges. Upon receipt of a compliant application, the Department will issue an official letter granting approval. This role includes:
- 5.2.1.1 Receiving and acknowledging research applications that meet the requirements outlined in this Policy.
- 5.2.1.2 Processing applications involving the Department, ten or more TVET colleges, and any or all CET colleges.
- 5.2.1.3 Ensuring applications align with national research priorities and do not disrupt core functions.

- 5.2.1.4 Archiving all processed applications for at least three years for monitoring and audit purposes.
- 5.2.1.5 Receiving annual research activity reports from public TVET colleges, as per the format in Appendix 2.
- 5.2.2. Public TVET colleges are responsible for facilitating research activities that align with this Policy. Their specific duties include:
  - 5.2.2.1 Receiving and acknowledging research applications involving fewer than ten TVET colleges.
  - 5.2.2.2 Assessing the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed research, considering the institution's academic calendar and operational capacity.
  - 5.2.2.3 Approving compliant research applications and providing feedback to applicants.
  - 5.2.2.4 Informing the Department annually of all research conducted at the college using Appendix 2.

**5.3. Procedural steps for processing research applications:**

- 5.3.1. The Department and respective TVET college will acknowledge receipt of applications and supporting documents within five working days.
- 5.3.2. The application will be reviewed to verify completeness and alignment with departmental priorities. The application will be appraised in line with the following criteria:
  - 5.3.2.1. Inclusion of all information in the application form and signed declaration, as per Appendix 1 (all applicants).
  - 5.3.2.2. Inclusion of an Ethics Clearance Certificate in the application (for students and institution-affiliated researchers only).
  - 5.3.2.3. Inclusion of either a research proposal, or inception report, approval by organisational head, concept note or motivation (from all applicants).
  - 5.3.2.4. An assessment of the effect of research activities on the smooth functioning of the college.
- 5.3.3. Three possible outcomes may result from the review process:
  - 5.3.3.1. Full approval: The applicant receives a formal letter of permission.
  - 5.3.3.2. Conditional approval: The applicant must meet specified conditions (e.g., simplify the request, reduce research scope).
  - 5.3.3.3. Non-approval: Reasons for rejection will be clearly communicated in writing.

- 5.3.4. Applicants will be notified via official email of the outcome within 21 working days from the date of receipt, depending on complexity.
- 5.3.5. The attached application form (Appendix 1) provides space for the college to communicate its response to the applicant.
- 5.3.6. All processed applications will be archived by the Department or TVET college for a minimum of three years for recordkeeping and audit purposes.
- 5.3.7. The Head of the TVET college must submit to the Department an annual return on the number of research requests received for the year as per the template attached as Appendix 2 to this Policy.

## **6. ADHERENCE TO POPIA AND RESEARCH ETHICS**

- 6.1. The Department and its public colleges are committed to protecting personal information in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013. Researchers must ensure that personal data is processed solely for research, statistical or historical purposes, anonymised or pseudonymised where possible, and used only with informed consent or such permissible exceptions in the law. Consent forms must explain data use and comply with the conditions for the lawful processing of personal information.

## **7. SHARING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

- 7.1. Researchers are required to submit the final research report to either the Department or the participating college, depending on where the request was processed. This facilitates knowledge sharing and supports evidence-based policy development and practice.
- 7.2. The final research report must be submitted within three months of the research's completion.
- 7.3. In cases where research is approved directly by TVET colleges, the college is responsible for forwarding the final research report to the Department.
- 7.4. Where applicable, links to final research reports or outputs may be uploaded to the Department's Research Repository, where they are made publicly accessible to promote transparency and wider dissemination.

## **8. MONITORING AND REPORTING**

- 8.1. To promote accountability and continuous improvement, all public TVET colleges must report on research activities annually.

8.2. TVET colleges must use the revised reporting template provided in Appendix 2.

8.3. Reports must include the following information: the number of requests, the name of the researcher, the name of the higher education institution or research organisation, the title and purpose of the research, the college's decision (approved or declined, with reasons for any declination), whether the researcher shared the research findings or report with the college, whether the college subsequently shared the findings or report with the Department, and any additional comments.

8.4. This information will enable the Department to track research trends across public colleges, monitor compliance with the Policy, and assess the responsiveness of institutions to research requests. It will also help identify research findings that can inform evidence-based decision-making, support policy development, and enhance strategic planning.

## **9. CONDITIONS FOR RESEARCHERS**

9.1. Researchers conducting studies in the Department or public colleges must comply with the following conditions to ensure ethical, respectful, and collaborative research practices:

9.1.1. Align the research topics with the Department's strategic priorities and Research Agenda.

9.1.2. Schedule research activities that minimises disruption to departmental and college operations.

9.1.3. Make independent logistical arrangements for interviews and distributing research instruments. The Department and colleges will provide a liaison person.

9.1.4. Refrain from using resources of the Department or college (such as stationery, photocopies, and telephones) for research activities.

9.1.5. Present research findings and information objectively without bias.

9.1.6. Acknowledge that participation in research activities is voluntary, and that participants should not feel compelled to participate in the research. Departmental officials are, however, strongly encouraged to participate in the research.

9.1.7. Abide by the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) requirements.

9.1.8. Provide consent forms to participants to complete prior to the commencement of the research.

9.1.9. Obtain written parental consent of students under 18 years, prior to participation in the research.

- 9.1.10. Inform participants about the use of recording devices such as voice-recorders and cameras, and respect objections from participants.
- 9.1.11. Maintain participants' rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for human dignity at all times. Participants must not be identifiable in any way from the result of the research.
- 9.1.12. Exclude the names of colleges and participants from research reports, unless written consent has been obtained.
- 9.1.13. Include a disclaimer stating that findings do not represent the official views of the Department or the participating colleges.
- 9.1.14. Distribute the final report and summary of findings to the Department and participating colleges.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

This revised Policy strengthens the framework for research approval in the Department and at public colleges, addressing gaps in communication, and strategic alignment. By fostering collaboration, enhancing standardisation, and ensuring the dissemination of research findings, the Policy aims to maximise the value of research conducted within the Department and at public colleges.

**11. APPENDICES**

**11.1. APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND/OR PUBLIC COLLEGES**

**11.2. APPENDIX 2: ANNUAL RETURN ON RESEARCH REQUESTS UNDERTAKEN IN PUBLIC COLLEGES**



**APPENDIX 1:**  
**APPLICATION FORM TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND PUBLIC COLLEGES**

**1. STUDENT APPLICANT INFORMATION**

<b>1.1.</b>	Title (Dr /Mr /Mrs /Ms)		
<b>1.2</b>	Name and Surname		
<b>1.3</b>	Institutional Postal Address		
<b>1.4</b>	Contact Details	Tel:	
		Cell:	
		Private Email Address:	
		Institutional Email Address:	
		Supervisor's Email Address:	
<b>1.5</b>	Name of Institution where enrolled		
<b>1.6</b>	Field of Study		
<b>1.7</b>	Qualification Registered for:	<b>Please tick relevant option:</b>	
		Honours Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Master's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Doctoral Degree (PhD)	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2. RESEARCH ORGANISATION APPLICANT INFORMATION**

<b>2.1</b>	Name of Organisation which is undertaking the research	
<b>2.2</b>	Postal Address of Organisation	
<b>2.3</b>	Name of Client for whom the research is being undertaken, if applicable	
<b>2.4</b>	Name and Surname of Contact Person	
<b>2.5</b>	Title of Contact Person (Prof /Dr /Mr / Mrs /Ms)	
<b>2.6</b>	Contact Details	Tel:
		Cell:
		Organisation Email Address:

**3. INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER APPLICANT INFORMATION**

<b>3.1.</b>	Title (Dr /Mr /Mrs /Ms)	
<b>3.2</b>	Name and Surname	
<b>3.3</b>	Business Postal Address	
<b>3.4.</b>	Purpose of Research (example: for conference presentation)	
<b>3.5.</b>	Contact Details	Tel:
		Cell:
		Business Email Address:

**4. DETAILS OF THE STUDY**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>Title of the Study</b>

<b>4.2</b>	<b>Research Relevance and Institutional Alignment</b>
<b>4.2.1 What are the main aims and objectives of the study?</b>	
<b>4.2.2 How will the research benefit the Department and/or colleges? In what ways does the research align with the strategic priorities or objectives of the Department and/or colleges?</b>	
<b>4.2.3 What criteria were used to select the Department and/or specific colleges as the focus of the research?</b>	

**5. TYPE/S OF ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE INSTITUTION**

Where is your research taking place?	Tick appropriate option/s	How many colleges involved?
DHET		N/A
TVET college		
CET college		

**6. PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Please indicate who is expected to participate in your study (for example, lecturers, students, college Principals, campus Heads, support staff, Heads of Departments).</b>			
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Complete questionnaires</b>	<b>Category of participants</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
		a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Participate in interviews</b>	<b>Category of participants</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
		a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Participate in focus group discussions/ workshops</b>	<b>Category of participants</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
		a)	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Undertake observations</b> <i>Please specify</i>		
<b>6.5.</b>	<b>Other</b> <i>Please specify</i>		

**7. DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION**

<b>The following documents must be attached as a prerequisite for approval to undertake research in the Department and colleges</b>	
<b>FOR STUDENTS</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	Ethics Clearance Certificate
<b>7.2</b>	Approved Research Proposal
<b>FOR RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS</b>	
<b>7.3</b>	Research Proposal/Inception Report/Approval by Organisational Head
<b>FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS</b>	
<b>7.4</b>	Research Proposal/Concept Note/Motivation
<b>RESEARCHERS AFFILIATED WITH A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION</b>	
<b>7.5</b>	Ethics Clearance Certificate
<b>7.6</b>	Research Proposal

**8. DECLARATION BY THE APPLICANT**

I undertake to use the information that I acquire through my research, in a balanced and a responsible manner. I furthermore take note of, and agree to adhere to the following conditions:

- a) Align the topic with the Department's strategic priorities and Research Agenda.
- b) Schedule research activities that minimises disruption to departmental and college operations.
- c) Make independent logistical arrangements for interviews and distributing research instruments.
- d) Refrain from using resources of the Department or college (such as stationery, photocopies, and telephones) for research activities.
- e) Present research findings and information objectively without bias.
- f) Acknowledge that participation in research activities is voluntary, and that participants should not feel compelled to participate in the research.
- g) Abide by the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) requirements
- h) Provide consent forms to participants to complete prior to the commencement of the research.
- i) Obtain written parental consent of students under 18 years, prior to participation in the research.
- j) Inform participants about the use of recording devices such as voice-recorders and cameras, and respect objections from participants.
- k) Maintain participants' rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for human dignity at all times. Participants must not be identifiable in any way from the result of the research.
- l) Exclude the names of colleges and participants from research reports, unless written consent has been obtained.
- m) Include a disclaimer stating that findings do not represent the official views of the Department or the participating colleges.
- n) Distribute the final report and summary of findings to the Department and participating colleges.

<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	

**FOR OFFICIAL USE****DECISION BY HEAD OF COLLEGE**

<i>Please tick relevant decision and provide conditions/reasons where applicable</i>		
<b>Decision</b>		<i>Please tick relevant option</i>
<b>1</b>	Application approved	
<b>2</b>	Application approved subject to certain conditions. <i>Specify conditions below.</i>	
<b>3</b>	Application declined. <i>Provide reasons for non-approval below.</i>	
<b>NAME OF COLLEGE:</b>		
<b>NAME AND SURNAME OF HEAD OF COLLEGE:</b>		
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>		



higher education  
& training  
Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## DHET 004: APPENDIX 2: ANNUAL RETURN ON RESEARCH REQUESTS UNDERTAKEN IN PUBLIC TVET COLLEGES

This form must be completed annually and submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training by 31 January for research requests received for the previous academic year.

The Director: Policy, Research and Evaluation

Telephone: 012 312 5093/5297

Fax: 012 323 0991

E-mail: [dhetresearch@dhet.gov.za](mailto:dhetresearch@dhet.gov.za)

### 1. COLLEGE INFORMATION

<b>1.1.</b>	Name of TVET college		
<b>1.2</b>	Name and surname of Head of TVET college		
<b>1.3</b>	Contact details of Head of TVET college	Tel:	
		Cell:	
		Email address:	
<b>1.4</b>	Signature		

