



National Scheme Research and evaluation framework

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Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
National Boards

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Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

The purpose of research and evaluation in the National Scheme

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) aims to contribute to world class regulatory research and evaluation. The Research and evaluation framework for the National Scheme (the framework) outlines how the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and National Boards prioritise, carry out, manage and assess research and evaluation activities related to the National Scheme.

Research and evaluation activities aim to support the National Scheme and the objectives of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). The framework intends to guide how the National Scheme conducts and manages research and evaluation through:

- aligning research and evaluation to the strategic objectives of the National Scheme
- prioritising National Scheme research and evaluation activities, and
- promoting good research and evaluation practice.

The purpose of the Research and evaluation framework

The framework aims to establish, embed and reinforce an ethical, transparent and accountable best practice research and evaluation culture within the National Scheme. This framework builds on the inaugural framework released in 2017 and will be regularly reviewed as health regulation research and evaluation evolves.

The framework covers all National Scheme research and evaluation activities including:

- activities led by:
 - internal researchers employed by Ahpra (including where they provide services on behalf of National Boards), and
 - external researchers and consultants contracted, commissioned, collaborating or in partnership with Ahpra (including on behalf of National Boards), or
- external researchers and consultants requesting access to National Scheme data and/or information for research purposes, in line with internally approved Ahpra policies.

The Research and evaluation framework as a guide

The framework is divided into four sections:

- research and evaluation principles
- research and evaluation priorities
- governance and practice, and
- engagement and communication.

These sections guide how the National Scheme expects research and evaluation to be conducted throughout the entire span of the activity, from initiation, design and supervision through to conduct and dissemination of findings.

Research and evaluation principles

National Scheme research and evaluation activities are expected to show that they meet the following principles to a significant or substantial degree.

The National Scheme research and evaluation principles are:

Benefit to the National Scheme

The research or evaluation project:

- complies with the National Law
- substantially contributes or clearly benefits, supports or enhances the National Scheme, its objectives and/or functions
- is in the public interest, providing support for the National Scheme to protect the public
- focuses on the development of preventative risk-based approaches
- addresses issues that will improve health practitioner regulation
- focuses on issues that contribute wholly or partially to improved regulatory responses in the National Scheme, including opportunities for interaction between the National Scheme and other relevant entities, and
- supports the cost-effective use of National Scheme resources.

Compliance with Australian national research and evaluation standards

The research or evaluation project:

- adopts, complies with and effectively implements NHMRC research and evaluation standards and guidelines, including the code, the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (the National statement), Ethical Consideration in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities and other relevant NHMRC standards and guidelines, and
- adopts, complies with and effectively implements the Australasian Evaluation Society's Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations.

Research merit

- Uses methods appropriate to its intended use, objectives and intended benefits and is conducted by people or teams with appropriate experience, knowledge and expertise.

Research integrity

- Is conducted in a transparent and accountable manner which meets relevant scholarly and scientific standards, and
- is intended to contribute to existing knowledge and understanding, avoiding duplication research and is practised in keeping with recognised principles of conduct.

Ethics

- Complies with Australian national standards for research and evaluation ethics.

Conflicts of interest

- Includes methods and processes that ensure any real or perceived conflicts of interest and biases are managed in a timely and appropriate way.

Privacy and data security

- National Scheme data and information for research and evaluation purposes is managed in line with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the National Law ensuring all data and information are appropriately de-identified
- National Scheme data and information used for research or evaluation purposes is handled in line with the code, the National Statement and other relevant NHMRC standards
- security and confidentiality of research data and primary materials is ensured, and
- in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data, complies with agreed principles outlined at the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit by the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective in 2018.

Dissemination and publication

The research or evaluation project:

- is disseminated in a way that can be readily implemented or used to inform the development and continuous improvement of regulatory practice, policy, standards, guidelines and/or decision-making processes
- is disseminated and published in an open access format, where possible, and
- complies with the NHMRC principles and guidelines, authorship is acknowledged suitably, fairly and unacceptable author inclusions are not allowed.

Research and evaluation priorities

As the National Scheme matures, the challenges and needs of the National Scheme will change and evolve. The below prioritisation guide has been developed to anticipate and reflect the contribution of research and evaluation activities to the National Scheme now and into the future.

The potential for research and evaluation impact and benefit to the National Scheme should be considered at all stages of research and evaluation, from conception to dissemination. It is the guiding principle for prioritising National Scheme research and evaluation activities. The National Scheme adopts the definition of research impact for research and evaluation included in the Australian Research Council's *Research Impact Principles and Framework*:

Research impact is the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.

The below questions intend to guide the assessment of each research and evaluation activity's value, contribute to research and relevance to the National Scheme.

Checklist for developing effective and valuable research and evaluation projects

The following questions have been written to help you design research and evaluation projects that positively contribute to the National Scheme.

Relevance to the National Scheme

1. How will the research and/or evaluation activity enhance public safety?
2. How does the research and/or evaluation activity contribute to our understanding and knowledge of the National Scheme and its objectives?
3. Is the project expected to make a substantial contribution to one or more of Ahpra's strategic objectives?
 - 3.1 What objectives or themes does it align with?
 - 3.2 Is it expected to be a critical enabler of any National Scheme initiative? I.e. will it form part of the evidence base, inform improvements or changes to the National Scheme or lead to new ways of working?
4. Who will benefit from the research and/or evaluation activity? (e.g. the public, regulated practitioners, Ahpra, National Board(s), other key stakeholders)
 - 4.1 Does the research focus on priority populations (i.e. those identified in [Policy Direction 2019-02 including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#), the elderly, young people, people living with disabilities or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds)?
 - 4.1.1 How is the research and/or evaluation expected to benefit the priority populations?
 - 4.1.2 Are priority populations involved in co-designing the research and/or evaluation activity?
 - 4.1.3 How are priority populations involved in the knowledge translation strategy?
 - 4.2 Does the research bridge a knowledge gap that is important to achieving the strategic objectives of the National Scheme and/or the National Scheme Strategy?
 - 4.3 Is there opportunity for co-design methodology with involved stakeholders for the research and/or evaluation activity?
 - 4.3.1 How is the co-design implemented within the research and/or evaluation activity?

Research and evaluation impact and benefit

5. How does the research and/or evaluation activity potentially effect or benefit the National Scheme and its objectives?
 - 5.1 How will the findings or output effect National Scheme policy development/decision-making?
 - 5.2 How will the activity's research and evaluation impact and value to the National Scheme and its objectives be evaluated?
6. What is the research and/or evaluation engagement and communication strategy?
 - 6.1 Will the knowledge translation strategy produce translatable outcomes that either have the potential to measurably reduce the risk of harms to the public or improve public safety?
 - 6.2 How will the outputs be effectively disseminated and/or implemented within the National Scheme?

Governance and practice for research and evaluation

The framework will be supported through the development and maintenance of National Scheme-wide policies and processes, reflecting Australian national standards (i.e. the code, the National Statement) and best practice in research and evaluation. Overall governance for National Scheme research and evaluation activities is provided by Ahpra, with strategic oversight, consultation and advice from the Forum of NRAS Chairs and National Boards.

The current National Scheme research and evaluation governance structure is:



Engagement and communication for research and evaluation

Engagement

Enhancing the trust and confidence of our stakeholders through engagement is an important component of the National Scheme Strategy and the National Scheme Engagement Strategy. In relation to National Scheme research and evaluation, the National Scheme adopts the definition of research engagement included in the Australian Research Council's *Engagement and Impact Assessment 2018-19 National Report*:

Research engagement is the interaction between researchers and research end-users outside of academia, for the mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge, technologies, methods or resources.

In the National Scheme context, engagement happens during all stages of research and evaluation activities. Engaging relevant stakeholders early builds trust, facilitates knowledge sharing and learning and bring everyone on the same journey. The National Scheme adopts the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum (recognised as the global standard for defining forms of engagement) to help shape approaches to research and evaluation engagement. Engagement, such as co-design and collaboration, in practical terms provides value by:

- supporting scoping and shaping of research and evaluation activities
- providing different perspectives which informs research and evaluation activities
- enhancing meaningful partnerships and communication with relevant stakeholders
- providing oversight and feedback on research and evaluation, when appropriate, and
- supporting dissemination of research and evaluation, when appropriate.

The National Scheme will continue to develop engagement activities for research and evaluation work that enable co-design, partnerships, collaboration and promotes the benefits of the National Scheme and its objectives to our stakeholders.

Communication

Sharing research and evaluation outcomes in an accessible way is an important part in making sure that National Scheme research and evaluation activities have a positive research impact. Sharing outcomes builds knowledge, facilitates learning and shows transparency and is an important part of the research and evaluation process. It also enables the National Scheme to learn and build knowledge and share findings with other regulatory bodies and other stakeholders.

New knowledge from research and evaluation that shows the benefits to the National Scheme will be communicated and distributed to our stakeholders to continue to support the National Scheme and its objectives.

Research and evaluation outcomes are communicated in a variety of ways. The National Scheme will share and communicate research and evaluation activities and outcomes in an accessible way using plain English and, where appropriate, including visual displays. The audience and intended effects and benefits will also be considered. Potential ways in which National Scheme research and evaluation activities can be communicated, when appropriate, include:

- peer-reviewed journal publications
- conference presentations, public seminars and/or workshops
- through health practitioner and consumer organisations
- reports and media releases on the Ahpra and National Board websites, and
- dashboards and interactive tools.

Research and evaluation definitions

The agreed definitions for research and evaluation are used across the National Scheme and are important to understand when using the framework.

Research

The National Scheme adopts the definition of research included in the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (the code):

The concept of research is broad and includes the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate novel concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

Evaluation

The National Scheme adopts the definition of evaluation included in the NHMRC's *Ethical Consideration in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities* and Australasian Evaluation Society's *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations*:

Evaluation is a term that generally encompasses the systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgements, usually about the effectiveness, efficiency and/or appropriateness of an activity. This term is used in a broad sense to refer to any set of procedures, activities, resources, policies and/or strategies designed to achieve some common goals or objectives.