

Principal Letter – Interviews

Project Title: Building Capacity for Outdoor Education in NSW Secondary Schools

Researcher:

Helen Cooper - PhD Candidate
School of Education, Western Sydney University

Email: 22107524@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Dear [Principal name],

One of your staff members [name] has been invited to take part in an interview as part of a research study investigating how outdoor education (OE) is supported and implemented in NSW secondary schools. This study forms part of a PhD research project being conducted at Western Sydney University.

The study aims to explore how teachers and school leaders perceive the role of outdoor education, how it is supported within school systems, and how professional learning influences its delivery. The findings will contribute to a greater understanding of systemic and individual factors influencing OE in schools.

Your staff member is eligible to participate because they are:

- A teacher or school executive at a NSW secondary school, and
- Involved in, or knowledgeable about, outdoor education practices, policies, or pedagogy in your school context.

If you permit your staff member to participate in this study, please see the consent form. Please contact Helen Cooper if you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether to participate.

Helen Cooper 22107524@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Supervisor – Professor Tonia Gray t.gray@westernsydney.edu.au

Thank you

How is the study being paid for?

This study is funded through the Australian Research Council

What will you be asked to do?

If you choose to take part, you will participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

They will be asked questions about your experiences with outdoor education, including:

- Their background and involvement in OE;
- School-level support and leadership around OE;
- Professional learning and training opportunities;
- Challenges and opportunities for OE in their setting.

With their permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription.

How much of their time will they need to give?

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes – one hour and may take place via Zoom, telephone, or in person, depending on their preference and availability.

Interviews will take place during a free period or after school hours, or during a time convenient to the participant.

Participation is entirely voluntary. They can:

- Decline to answer any question,
- Pause or stop the interview at any time, or
- Withdraw from the study before or during the interview without any consequences.

What benefits will they, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

There is no direct personal benefit. However, their input will help identify ways to better support outdoor education practices and policy across NSW secondary schools.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for them? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

The risks involved in this study are minimal. However, some questions may prompt personal reflection about their work or professional challenges. They are not obliged to answer any

question that makes them uncomfortable, and they can terminate the interview at any time. If they feel uncomfortable after the interview, they are directed to contact their supervisor, or access your school's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums, including high-impact academic journals. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant or school cannot be identified, except with your permission.

Will the data and information provided be disposed of?

Extended Consent - What does this mean?

When they agree to extended consent, it means that they agree that their data, as part of a larger dataset (the information collected for this project) can be re-used in projects that are

- an extension of this project
- closely related to this project
- in the same general area of this research.

The researchers will allow this data to be used by others via mediated contact, that is another researcher will need to apply to the university to access this dataset.

To enable this re-use, their data will be held at the University in its data repository and managed under a Data Management Plan. The stored data available for re-use will not have information in it that makes you identifiable. The re-use of the data will only be allowed after an ethics committee has agreed that the new use of the data meets the requirements of ethics review.

The researchers want to keep the data for five years for possible re-use. After this time the data will be securely destroyed.

You are welcome to discuss these issues further with the researchers before deciding if you agree. You can also find more information about the re-use of data in research in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) – see Sections 2.2.14 - 2.2.18.

What will happen to their information if I agree to it being used in other projects?

This request is in line with current University and government policy that encourages the re-use of data once it has been collected. Collecting information for research can be an inconvenience

or burden for participants and has significant costs associated with it. Sharing their data with other researchers gives potential for others to reflect on the data and its findings, to re-use it with new insight, and increase understanding in this research area.

Can they or the school withdraw from the study?

Yes, your school or the participant can withdraw from the study at any time. Decisions of schools or participants who choose withdraw will be respected, with no pressure to reconsider the decision or participate in activities against their will.

If you withdraw, any data collected from you will be destroyed, unless it has been de-identified and included in aggregated analysis.

Can I, or the participant, tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study. If you require further information, please contact the researcher through the details below.

What if I require further information?

Please contact Helen Cooper you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether to participate.

Helen Cooper 22107524@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Supervisor – Professor Tonia Gray t.gray@westernsydney.edu.au

Privacy Notice

Western Sydney University staff and students conduct research that may require the collection of personal and/or health information from research participants.

The University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan set out how the University collects, holds, uses and discloses personal or health information. Further details about the use and disclosure of this information can be found on the [Privacy at Western Sydney webpage](#).

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may email the Ethics Committee through Research Services: humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be

informed of the outcome.

If you agree for the participant to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Consent Form. The information sheet is for you to keep, and the consent form is retained by the researcher/s.

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H15898.