

Quality Guidelines for NDA Research

# Overall Research Design

* The research has been scoped out following engagement with the external and internal stakeholders as appropriate (e.g. officials from relevant policy area of Govt Dept and other NDA staff as appropriate) to ensure it will cover all relevant issues. A first step is to ensure that the research conforms with NDA's mission and strategy, adds value and does not duplicate work elsewhere.
* The research has value for policy makers and, where appropriate, practitioners. A key goal for NDA research is to guide policymakers and practitioners in the achievement of an inclusive, accessible Irish society in which people with disabilities enjoy equal rights and opportunities to participate in economic, social and cultural life.
* The report contains a clear and comprehensive statement of the aims of the research.
* The research design is appropriate for answering the policy questions which have been developed in consultation with customers and end users of the research, both internal and external to NDA.
* There are no major gaps in the report. It does not omit key data sources, key relevant literature, or key issues.
* The research contributes to our knowledge/understanding of a given field.
* The research conforms to ethical principles and has obtained ethical approval as appropriate.

# The Research Report

* For contracted reports, the research aligns fully with all the specifications contained in the contract. The research is completed within agreed timescales and budget.
* The report is presented in a logical structure (e.g. executive summary, context, relevant literature, aims and objectives, methods, findings, discussion of findings, conclusions). The report includes a title page, executive summary, contents page, lists of tables and charts, acknowledgements, glossary of specialist terms, list of abbreviations and acronyms, list of references, relevant appendices. Contracted work includes the appropriate disclaimer.
* The report includes a concise review of the methodology employed in the research within the body of the report with a more technical description (e.g. search methods and terms for literature) outlined in the appendix.
* The report contains appropriate signposting that guides the reader through the commentary, with key messages being highlighted or summarised throughout the report.
* The report is accurate with regard to quotations, data, references, etc., and has been proofread for spelling, grammar and syntax.
* The writing style is clear, focused and to the point, taking account of the target audience. It is temperate in tone, not emotive. Authors refrain from personal opinion/editorial and focus on the evidence. Technical terms when used are adequately explained.
* The report is rigorously objective and factual. The report contains no plagiarism. Direct quotations are labelled as such and duly referenced.
* The report contains no libellous or abusive comments.
* All tables give the original source and show appropriate units of measurement.

# Literature Review

* There is evidence of a systematic approach to the review of literature which should summarise and evaluate the knowledge base to date.
* Databases and search terms are clearly outlined to allow for replication of literature searches.
* The report sets out clearly the size of samples used in studies reviewed and any conclusions are appropriate to the limitations or otherwise of same.
* The report distinguishes empirical findings from opinion.

# Methodology

* The research methodology is appropriate to address the research question.
* The methodological choices are discussed within the report and the limitations of the methodology are acknowledged. The value of the evidence is weighed by reference to the methodology used and size of sample.
* The methodology is valid, reliable, replicable and (as appropriate) generalisable.
* A description is provided of any formalised appraisal criteria used to support the methodology.
* Any modifications made to the methodology during the course of the research are explained and justified.
* All necessary details of the methodology are outlined (e.g. research instruments used, number of participants, size of sample, response rates, tests of significance). Where a sample has been taken for the study, the number of respondents should be shown in any tables using the data.
* The selection criteria of the sample are detailed and justified and any difference between planned and actual sample (e.g. non-participation) explained.
* Informed consent has been given by research participants and management of confidentiality/anonymity is documented.
* The safety of participants and researchers has been assured and potential risks explained.
* Data collection methods are appropriate for the type of data required and are clear and replicable.

# Data Analysis

* A rationale is provided for the data analysis methods chosen (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, etc.).
* Data analysis is clear and valid, and synthesised to make sense of data.
* Evidence of how descriptive categories, classes, labels, and coding frames were constructed is provided for qualitative analysis.
* Analysis involving the comparison of data (e.g. international data) includes a determination as to whether extraneous variables (e.g. policy, legal or contextual differences) allow a fair comparison to be made.
* Storage and protection of data, according to established protocols and legislation, is referenced in the report.

# Interpretation of Findings

* The findings are clearly linked to the aims of study.
* Clear links are identified between data, interpretation and conclusions such that others can follow a coherent, convincing and objective 'decision trail'.
* There is a synthesis and analysis of data, in such a way that conclusions clearly emerge for the reader.
* Findings have a coherent logic, 'make sense' and are resonant with other knowledge.
* Areas where findings concur or differ from those in the literature are noted.
* There is convincing discussion of the generalisability of findings and limitations of findings relating to aims & objectives (e.g. certain groups not represented etc.) and what remains unknown.
* There is a credible and clear discussion as to how findings contribute to knowledge/understanding and their applicability to current and/or new policy developments, practice.