
UNIT REB POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy is relevant to all levels of the Queen's University Research Ethics Boards, namely, professors/course instructors of undergraduate and graduate courses, Unit REB, GREB members and ethics board staff members.

Authority: Chair, GREB

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Purpose

This policy concerns the different phases and/or levels of ethics review that a research project may be given.

Policy

All projects that meet the TCPS definition of research with human participants in the social sciences and humanities disciplines under the auspices of Queens' University shall undergo one or more levels of ethics review. There are currently three levels of research ethics review: UREB review, GREB Delegated Review, and GREB Full Board Review.

A responsibility that falls on UREBs and GREB to ensure *that particular individuals, groups or communities should neither bear an unfair share of the direct burdens of participating in research, nor should they be unfairly excluded from the potential benefits of research participation* ([see TCPS Chapter 4](#)). Issues of fair and equitable treatment arise in deciding whether and how to include individuals, groups or communities in research, the basis for exclusion of some, and social justice issues such as how research differentially impacts groups and communities in society. A responsibility falls on researchers to ensure that participants are chosen based on inclusion criteria that are justified by the research question ([see TCPS Chapter 1](#)).

Unit REB (UREB) REVIEW

All Social Sciences and Humanities research projects involving human participants that do not meet the criteria for exemption from review ([see TCPS Articles 2.2 – 2.6](#)) must be reviewed for ethical compliance by the UREB of the department of the Principal Investigator (PI). If a PI's department does not have a UREB, the ethics review application should be submitted directly to the GREB. For more information about how UREBs fit into the research ethics review structure [see SOP 2.6](#).

There are two main types of responsibilities at the UREB level. These are:

1. To review all faculty and graduate student research that involves human participants according to the TCPS and Queen's policies.
2. To review all course-based research projects at both the undergraduate and graduate levels according to the TCPS guidelines and policies set out below¹.

Faculty and Graduate Research

All human-based research regardless of the level of research (undergraduate, graduate, staff or faculty) must receive ethics review according to the TCPS and Queen's policy. The initial review is conducted in ROMEO by an automatic transfer to the UREBs. If no UREB exists, then the research project is submitted in ROMEO which automatically forwards the application file to the GREB for review.

For faculty, staff and graduate student theses, the UREBs may require revisions from the PI before forwarding the application to the GREB with a recommendation for either delegated or full board review. The GREB Chair will examine the file to accept/deny the UREBs recommendation for level of review (delegated or full). If the GREB Chair disagrees with the proposed level of review, this must be communicated in writing with justification to the researcher and the UREB.

For undergraduate course-based, graduate course-based and undergraduate independent studies and thesis research, the UREB will conduct the initial review and clearance according to the TCPS guidelines and Queen's policies. **Both the UREB and GREB may require a scholarly review according to [TCPS Article 2.7](#).** By May 31st of each year, all files cleared at the Unit REB level must be forwarded to the GREB for audit and storage.

There may also be instances in which the researcher(s) does not agree with the changes being recommended by the UREB or there are other concerns. In these instances, the researcher(s) or UREB may elect to forward the file to the GREB where it will normally receive a full board review. The GREB Chair will make the decision about which correspondence between the UREB and the researcher(s) will be attached to the application during the full board review. If there are occasional situations where the UREB cannot fulfill its obligations to review a file, it may be sent directly to the GREB for review. The Chair of GREB will decide if the file should proceed to full or delegated review.

¹ NOTE: Some types of research projects are considered beyond the scope of course-based research (listed at the end of Section 4.3). All projects that fall in this category must receive both Unit REB and GREB approval.

Course-Based Research

UREBs will normally issue the ethics clearance for the following categories of research:

- **Undergraduate Thesis Research Projects/Independent Study Courses (Research)**

Research in this category involves individual research projects conducted by student(s) under the supervision of a course instructor in fulfillment of a thesis course (500 level) or independent study research-based course (400 or 500 level) where data are collected with human participants. **These students are required to complete the TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE) which is available at <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome> and submit their certificate.** In some cases, the undergraduate student's project will fit under the faculty member's ethics clearance (NOTE: faculty member must add student's name and project description using a ROMEO Event/Amendment form). In other cases, the student will need to complete the **full ethics application form on ROMEO** to be reviewed and approved by the UREB. By May 31st of each year, the UREB will send these files to the GREB for audit and storage.

- **Undergraduate Individualized Course Research Projects**

Research in this category involves a research assignment provided by the course instructor with specific objectives where students must conform to clearly specified guidelines. Although some aspects of the assignment may vary among students, they may not go beyond the limiting parameters set by the instructor. For example in an interview project, the general topic of the interview and the types of people who can be interviewed are specified. The questions posed by each student may vary as long as they meet the project guidelines (e.g. no deception permitted, no socially sensitive topics, anonymity required, etc). The professor will complete a full ethics application form on ROMEO that will include: the assignment instructions, a template for students' letter of information and consent form. Once the course assignment is approved by the UREB, the professor has the responsibility of managing the student(s) assignment. The course instructor must review a hard copy of the ethics (short) application form and attached materials (LOI, CF, protocol, recruitment script, etc.), and approve the project in writing (email/letter). Then, the course instructor(s) must submit these materials to the Unit REB by the end of April each year. By May 31st of each year, the Unit REB must forward all course clearances and materials to the GREB for audit and storage.

- **Common Course Assignments/Laboratories**

Research in this category involves a course assignment in which all students are invited to participate in a common research project. That is, there is no individual variation among students in the project being conducted. An example of an acceptable use of

this category is a laboratory exercise in which all students are invited to participate in a survey or task which is part of a course assignment. An example of a non-acceptable use of this category is when a course-instructor is conducting a survey or task for his/her own research use that is not directly tied into teaching the course material (these applications are handled as a separate application through Unit REB and GREB). The course instructor will complete a **full ethics application** on ROMEO. The application should include: letter of information, consent form, test materials, etc. Once approved by the UREB, the course instructor may conduct the common data acquisition but students' participation must be voluntary and should be anonymous. By May 31st of each year, the UREB shall forward the application and files to the GREB for audit and storage.

- **Graduate Course-Based Research Projects (excluding graduate thesis)**

Research in this category involves a mini-research project within a graduate course where data are collected on human participants. **These students are required to complete the TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE) available at <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome> and submit their certificate.** An example of this type of course-based research project would be an assignment where students must conduct a data acquisition survey or pilot study based on the course material. For these courses, the professor must submit a **full ethics application form** on ROMEO and, once approved by the UREB, the professor must then manage the graduate student projects. Duties include: receiving ethics short application forms and attached materials, reviewing them, and providing written (letter/email) approval for the projects. By the end of April of each year, the professor must send the student applications, materials and clearance letters/emails to the UREB. By May 31st of each year, the UREB shall forward these applications and files to the GREB for audit and storage.

- **Management Structure for Specific Large Courses**

There are a select number of specific larger research-based courses that have asked for special privileges because: (i) they are managed centrally throughout the academic term and are repeated year after year (i.e., PSYC501) or (ii) they are managed centrally and involve a one year course-based masters project (i.e., SURP). In these cases, UREB and professor in charge of the course have sought GREB approval to manage these courses differently because of the number of students involved and/or departmental checks and balances. Students in these courses are required to complete the **TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE) available at <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome>** and submit their certificates as part of their ethics applications. These courses have a yearly GREB approval process and a course instructor manages projects using the ethics (short) application form. The course instructor is responsible for granting ethics approval for student projects and submitting all files to the UREB by the end of April each year. By May 31st of each year, the UREB shall forward these applications and files to the GREB for audit and storage.

Research beyond the Scope of Course-Based Research

The GREB strongly discourages course-based research activities that involve any of the following types of research. Exceptions may occur if the project is part of a faculty member's ethics clearance. If any application fall in these categories, it will require a full ethics application form on ROMEO, UREB approval, followed by GREB approval using a delegated for full review process. (See TCPS [Articles 2.2](#) and [6.12](#)):

- More than minimal risk as defined by the TCPS. That is, involving risks that are greater than the participants would face in their everyday lives.
- Vulnerable participants: children, persons who are not legally competent to consent, mentally incompetent persons, legal wards or the therapeutically dependent.
- Personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions which could put the participants or the researcher(s) at risk.
- [Serious deception](#) (e.g. giving negative feedback about an important aspect of self; creating a fearful environment; convincing someone they have a serious medical condition).
- Manipulation of the behaviour of participants beyond the range of "normal" classroom activity or daily life.
- Physically invasive contact with the research participants.
- Aboriginal peoples and certain issues involving aboriginal peoples.

Both the full application form and the short application form are available but in different ways:

- 1) The full application form is available on [ROMEO](#) at <http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/queensethicsromeo.html>
- 2) The short form for course-based research only available as a WORD document and can be found at <http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB.html> .
- 3) The CORE (Course on Research Ethics) developed by the TCPS can be accessed via <http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/cchrrp.html>