

# GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISING AND REVIEWING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide instructors with information on how to review research involving human participants that is being conducted by undergraduate students.

## 2. Background

In accordance with Article 6.12 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2), TMU's Research Ethics Board (REB) shall not review minimal risk research conducted by undergraduate students. Minimal risk research is "research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in the aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research" (p.22). \*<sup>i</sup>

Instead, research involving human participants that is (i) minimal risk and (ii) that is conducted by undergraduate students shall undergo ethics review by their instructor or Undergraduate Ethics Review Committee.

## 3. Requirements for Conducting Undergraduate Research

All undergraduate students conducting minimal risk research involving humans must submit an ethics proposal to their instructor. The proposal should include the following information:

- Student name(s)
- Project title
- Course number/code
- Proposed dates to begin and end collecting data
- Project completion date
- Purpose of project
- Project methodology
- Copy of data collection instruments to be used
- Description of participants, how sampled, how enlisted
- Description of procedures in which participants will participate
- A risk/benefit analysis
- Statement of information to be given to participants
- Statement of methods and appropriateness of methods of obtaining consent
- Copy of consent form or information
- Description of methods to be adopted to protect the right of participants to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality
- Description of feedback to be given to participants

- Student Self-Assessment Checklist (to be developed by the course instructor based on Section 5 below)

## 4. Ten Steps for Managing Undergraduate Research Projects

Step 1: Instructors should familiarize themselves with the TCPS 2 and TMU's Senate Policy 51: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human participants.

Step 2: Instructors should teach and discuss research ethics as it relates to their students' projects. Instructors should clearly state in their course syllabus that data collection **must not begin until the research project has received ethics approval**.

Step 3: Once students submit their ethics proposals, instructors should check the proposals to ensure that they are properly completed.

Step 4: Instructors should thoroughly review students' proposals in light of the items listed in their developed checklist and the principles laid out in the TCPS 2. It is important that faculty members be aware of potential risks to the participants that might arise in student research projects. This awareness includes taking steps to minimize such risks and knowing how to handle the risks should an adverse situation develop.

Step 5: Students' projects that adhere to all of the relevant ethical guidelines are to be presented with a certificate or letter of approval indicating that their project has received ethics approval. This certificate or letter should lay out the terms of the approval and is to be generated by the instructor. (Students' projects that do not meet the ethical guidelines must resubmit their proposals until approval is given. No research-related activities should begin until ethics approval has been granted.)

Step 6: Instructors should monitor student research projects for their impact on human participants and must report unexpected adverse effects on human participants to their School/Department or Faculty Ethics Committee, as well as the REB.

Step 7: Instructors should keep copies of all students' checklists, students' supporting materials (e.g., consent forms, recruitment notices, etc.) as well as the terms and duration of their students' ethics approvals.

Step 8: Instructors must compile an Annual Report and submit this report to their relevant School/Department/Faculty Ethics Review Committee at the end of each semester.

The Annual Report should include the following information: (a) the academic term; (b) the School or Department; (c) the course number and title; (d) the instructor's name; (e) the number of research projects; (f) the number of students doing research projects; (g) the approximate total number of participants involved in all research projects; (h) a line for the

faculty member's signature; and (i) a copy of the Ethics Certificate or Letter of Approval for each research project.

Step 9: The School/Department or Faculty Ethics Review Committee should aggregate the reports and forward a copy of the School/Department or Faculty Ethics Review Committee report to the TMU REB.

Step 10: Instructors should keep a copy of their students' documents, including, if possible, the final product for one year following completion of the research course. If instructors are not in the tenure stream, they should deposit the materials with their School/Department or Faculty Ethics Review Committee. If instructors are in the tenure stream, but will be on sabbatical, or other leave, during the year following the completion of the research course, they should deposit the materials with their School/Department or Faculty Ethics Review Committee for the duration of the leave.

## 5. Student Self-Assessment Checklist

Course Instructors supervising undergraduate research involving human participants are responsible for developing a Student Self-Assessment Checklist that ensures that students' projects meet the criteria listed below:

### 5.1 - General Requirements:

- (1) There must be no more than minimal risk to participants.
- (2) The research procedures must not involve any therapeutic interventions.
- (3) There must be no deception.

### 5.2 - Methods of Obtaining Consent:

Consent must be obtained in one of two ways: (a) in writing, by having each participant sign a consent form, or (b) by having a statement in the consent information to the effect that the participant agrees that by returning the questionnaire or answering the researcher's questions, etc., they agree to allow the information they provide to be used in the research project.

The following consent information must be included, either in a Consent Form or Information Sheet:

#### Free and Informed Consent

- Participants must be informed of the purpose of the research.
- Participants must be informed who the researcher(s) is/are.
- Participants must be informed of who to contact for further information (this can be the researcher/s). A Toronto Metropolitan University telephone number must be included.

- If the study is funded, the funder must be named.
- Participants must be informed of the procedures to be followed and the time commitment expected.
- Participants must be informed of the risks & benefits involved in participation, and how the risks will be minimized.
- Participants must be informed that participation is voluntary.
- Participants must be informed that their participation in the study will not influence their academic performance (if the participant is a TMU student), academic standing (if the participant is a TMU student), or their future relations with TMU.
- Participants must be informed that they may choose not to answer certain questions and may withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.
- Participants must be informed what the findings will be used for.
- Participants must be informed of who to contact if they have a complaint or concern about the research. It is recommended that this person generally be the student's program Chair or the Chair's designate.

#### Privacy and Confidentiality

- Participants must be informed that the information collected will be anonymous or confidential.
- When the information collected will not be anonymous, participants must be informed that identified data will be separated from the names of individuals through the coding of data. (Coding keys must be kept separate from the data.)
- In studies that include participation in a focus group or other non-private group discussion, participants must be informed that while confidentiality can be maintained by the researcher, its maintenance cannot be guaranteed by the other members of the discussion group.
- Participants must be informed whether the findings will be presented in aggregate (summary) form only, or whether individual responses will be identifiable.
- Participants must be informed as to how the data will be securely stored and for how long it will be stored before destruction.
- For studies funded by the major public granting councils, a statement must be included indicating that "The data, without any information that could be used to identify you personally, may be used by other researchers in the future."
- Participants must be informed if there is any possibility of commercialization of research findings.
- If the research results will be made available to the participants, they must be informed of this and of how the results will be made available.

## 6. Establishing an Undergraduate Ethics Review Committee

In some cases, Faculties, Schools, or Departments may decide to establish an Ethics Review Committee to review research that is being conducted by undergraduate students within its faculty, school or department. In these cases, instructors will not be responsible for reviewing and approving ethics protocols by their students. Faculties, Schools, or Departments that decide to establish their own ethics review committee are advised to contact and consult the REB at [rebchair@torontomu.ca](mailto:rebchair@torontomu.ca).

All Ethics Review Committees shall:

- (i) Be made up of a minimum of two faculty members.
- (ii) Be familiar with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the Toronto Metropolitan Policy on Research Involving Humans.
- (iii) Collect and keep on file the Annual Reports by individual faculty members and instructors.
- (iv) Aggregate these individual reports and send a School/Department or Faculty Ethics Review Committee Report to the Toronto Metropolitan REB.
- (v) Be available to advise and assist individual faculty members and instructors regarding research involving human participants.

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<sup>i</sup> \*All page number references refer to the online version of the TCPS 2 (2014).

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2014*.