**Student Bill of Research Rights and Responsibilities:  
Students' Rights as Research Participants**

This document reflects the Ryerson Research Ethics Board's (REB) current interpretation of Tri-Council Policy on data collection involving human participants undertaken at Ryerson University. It will assist faculty and staff at Ryerson and facilitate compliance with the [Tri-Council Policy Statement](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf).

Please also refer to [Ryerson University Academic Council Policy 51 regarding Research involving Human Subjects](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol51.pdf).

This document describes what students can expect regarding their rights should they be asked to participate in a research study. It evolved as a result of student concerns and REB experience in applying the Tri-Council Policy Statement to protocols using Ryerson University students as participants. It sets out information that must be included in a consent form, describes the student's right to be free from any coercion or bias that might result if the researcher is the student's instructor and is also required to evaluate the student in a course. It describes how a researcher may and may not obtain participants' names in keeping with the university's privacy policy, and addresses the issues of deception and conducting research during class time.

**1. Consent Form.** In accordance with the principles of free and informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality, and in consideration of the vulnerable nature of students as research participants, students as research participants have the right to a Consent Form that includes statements addressing the following points:

**a.** the purpose of the research study;  
**b.** who the researcher(s) is/are;  
**c.** who students can contact for further information about the study and how they can make contact;  
**d.** if the study is funded, the funder must be named;  
**e.** what the research procedures will be (this should be clear and simple);  
**f.** the time commitment expected of the participants (this should be clear and realistic);  
**g.** the risks and benefits involved in participation, and how the risks will be minimized;  
**h.** the entirely voluntary nature of participation in the study;  
**i.** that whether or not the student participates in the study will not influence their academic performance, academic standing, or their future relations with Ryerson;  
**j.** that students may choose not to answer certain questions and are able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty;  
**k.** whether the data collected will be anonymous or confidential, together with a statement describing what steps will be taken to maintain anonymity or confidentiality;  
**l.** in studies that include participation in a focus group or other non-private group discussion, students should be informed that while confidentiality can be maintained by the researcher, its maintenance cannot be guaranteed by the other members of the discussion group;  
**m.** whether the findings will be presented in aggregate (summary) form only, or whether individual responses will be identifiable;  
**n.** what the findings will be used for (e.g., publication, dissertation);  
**o.** how the data will be securely stored and for how long it will be stored before destruction;  
**p.** for studies funded by the federal granting councils, a statement should 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.";  
**q.** if there is any possibility of commercialization of research findings;  
**r.** if appropriate, that students will be given the opportunity to have access to the general results of the study when available;  
**s.** who to contact in addition to the Principal Investigator or the contact person named above if a student has a complaint or concern about the research. It is recommended that this person generally be the Chair of the School/Department of the Principal Investigator or the Chair's designate. The Chair of the REB and/or the Secretary of Academic Council may also be listed as secondary resource people; and  
**t.** (upon approval) that the research project has been approved by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board.

**2. Administration of Research.** Students have the right to be free from any coercion or bias that might result when a researcher is also evaluating them in a course. The person administering the research (beginning with the request for participants) must be someone other than an instructor of the students. This is to reduce any perception of coercion and to reduce the possibility of bias by the person evaluating the students as a result of knowing who is or isn't participating in the research project.

**3. Obtaining Participants' Names.** Students have the right to privacy of personal information.

Under the University's Privacy Guidelines, the University may not supply a researcher with the names of students for research purposes. Nor may a researcher with knowledge of student names as a result of teaching, or other University-related activity, use that knowledge to generate a list of student names for research purposes. The researcher may create a written form describing the kind of participants being recruited and why, which can be:

**a.** distributed in class (it would be important for the researcher not to be present at the time of distribution in order to reduce any perception of coercion);  
**b.** posted in a place where potential participants will see it; and/or  
**c.** distributed via a class e-mail listserv (not using individual student names). If this option is employed, the use of the e-mail listserv should be "at arm's length." In other words, the listserv should either list students in the class of a third party or, if the listserv lists students in the researcher's own class, students should be directed to respond to a third party.

**4. Deception.** Students have the right to full disclosure as soon as possible.

In exceptional circumstances, the full or true purpose of the research may not be revealed to the participants until the completion of data collection. In such cases, students must not be subjected to undue stress or embarrassment and must have the right to full disclosure of the purpose of the study as soon as possible after the data have been collected. Note that techniques of this kind are contrary to the policy of full advanced disclosure. These techniques should be used with discretion and may only be employed with the approval of the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board.

**5. Research during Class Time.** Students have the right to have class time devoted to classroom activities appropriate to meeting the objectives for the scheduled course. The REB discourages the use of class time for research activities. If class time is to be used for research, the researcher must make a case to the REB as to why the research is directly relevant to course content. The researcher must also demonstrate how a student can participate in the research activity without having his or her responses included in publishable data, for example, by explaining that respondents will be able to check off a box withdrawing consent.