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**Human Research Ethics Requirements for Graduate Students**

*Please read this document carefully to determine whether your dissertation study requires institutional research ethics review.*

The University of British Columbia is governed by Policy LR9: Research Involving Human Participants (previously #89) and the *Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.* Any UBC graduate student conducting research with human participants (as defined in the TCPS2) is required to do two things:

1. Complete the TCPS2 ‘CORE’ tutorial (<http://tcps2core.ca/welcome>). This is an online tutorial that takes approximately 3 hours to complete.
2. Obtain institutional ethics approval from a UBC-affiliated Research Ethics Board (REB) PRIOR to conducting their research. Please note that REBs do not issue retroactive approvals. For this reason, it is important that you determine whether your project requires ethics approval prior to starting your research. Ethics approval from UBC is required even if you have obtained ethics approval from another institution to conduct the research.

The TCPS2 defines research as: “an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation.” Theses, by definition, are seen to constitute pieces of original research. According to the TCPS2, human participants are: “those individuals whose data, or responses to interventions, stimuli or questions by the researcher, are relevant to answering the research question.”

**Does your research involve any of the following?**

🞏 Interviews (even if you are interviewing an expert or public figure about his/her work)

🞏 Surveys (online or in person)

🞏 Focus groups

🞏 Administration of a questionnaire or survey (even if you don’t collect personal information)

🞏 Administration of psychological or educational tests

🞏 Naturalistic observation in real or virtual settings

🞏 Participant observation/ethnographic fieldwork

🞏 Secondary use of existing data (e.g. medical records, research data or program evaluation data)

🞏 Behavioural experiments

🞏 Analysis of laboratory, physiological, kinesiological or biological data

🞏 Linking data from existing databases

🞏 Administration or testing of drugs, medical devices, medical imaging or diagnostic techniques

🞏 The taking of blood or other specimens.

*If you checked any of these items, your study almost certainly requires institutional ethical review at UBC (even if it has also been reviewed at another university). If your study involves any other type of interaction with a human participant not included above, please check with the UBC Office of Research Ethics before assuming that it does not require review.*

**Research exempt from institutional ethics review**

The TCPS2 recognizes four exceptions to the general requirements for institutional ethics review. If you think your research meets one of these exemptions please ensure that you read the relevant article of the TCPS2, including the application section: <http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter2-chapitre2.html#a>.

1. If you are obtaining information about policies, practices or procedures from an official representative of an organization who is appointedto provide this information as part of his or her regular duties (e.g. a communications officer) and no personal opinions are solicited, these individuals are not seen to fit the definition of a human research participant under the TCPS2. Interviews conducted in this context do not require institutional ethics review. **See Article 2.1**.
2. If the information you are drawing on in your study is publicly available – i.e., legally accessible to the public, appropriately protected by law, and there is no reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g., Stats Canada data, information on the internet that is accessible to all users and doesn’t require a password to access, etc.). **See Article 2.2**.
3. If you are observing people in public places and you are not staging any intervention, the individuals being targeted have no reasonable expectation of privacy, and your dissemination of results does not allow for identification of individuals. See Article 2.3.
4. If you are relying exclusively on secondary use of anonymous data or biological materials (i.e., the information/materials never had identifiers attached to them). This exemption does **not** apply to anonymized data (i.e. data that originally had identifiers which have now been irrevocably removed). **See Article 2.4**. Please be aware that genetic material is *never* considered anonymous without a specific Research Ethics Board determination.

Although program evaluations are generally exempt from institutional ethics review, if you are conducting an evaluation for the purpose of your dissertation, it is deemed to have crossed the line into research and therefore requires research ethics review. For further details, see [Checklist for quality improvement/quality assurance/program evaluation/curriculum development studies requiring ethical review](https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/BREB_ChecklistForResearchRequiringEthicsReview.pdf).

If you are in *any* doubt as to whether your study requires research ethics review, please contact staff in the UBC-affiliated REB offices. Double-checking with staff will ensure that the requirements are not being misinterpreted.

**Key contacts**

**UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board**

Maria Valente, Review Coordinator | maria.valente@ubc.ca | 604-827-5112

**UBC Clinical Research Ethics Board**

Pia Ganz, Manager | pia.ganz@ubc.ca

**UBC Okanagan Research Ethics Board**

Lisa Shearer, Associate Manager | lisa.shearer@ubc.ca | 250-807-8289

**BC Cancer Agency Research Ethics Board**

Staff can be reached at reb@bccancer.bc.ca.

**Children’s & Women’s Hospital Research Ethics Board**

Jennie Prasad, Manager | jprasad@bcchr.ubc.ca | 604-875-2441

**Providence Health Care Research Ethics Board**

Julie Hadden, Manager | julie.hadden@ubc.ca | 604-682-2344, ext. 63496