



College Policy & Procedures Manual	
Category	Research
Policy #	7.1.2.1

POLICY

7.1.2.1 ETHICAL REVIEW OF COURSE-BASED RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

The College of the Rockies (COTR) recognizes that class projects and other student activities may be created to develop student research skills¹. These activities may be carried out by individual students, small groups or as a single class project. Please contact the COTR REB chair regarding capstone projects. The COTR Policy 7.1.2 Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects and the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2, December 2010) requires instructors completing student research activities involving human subjects to submit a course-based research application to the COTR REB and receive approval from the COTR REB chair and Dean prior to the start of the project. Criteria for course-based applications to the REB are outlined in this document.

Defining Course-Based Research Projects

Course-based research projects may include small research projects where students pose research questions, gather data from human participants and analyse the data for presentation. Forms of data collection may include conducting interviews, designing and implementing questionnaires or surveys, or any other activities that would be considered research within the disciplinary tradition in which the course is being taught³. Class exercises may not fit the standard definition of research in the sense that the results are not intended for publication or for generalization to other situations, however, the potential for risk to participants who participate in research class exercises requires the protocol and consent information be reviewed by a research ethics board⁴.

Distinguishing Research from Case/Professional Skill Development

It is important to differentiate between Research and Professional Skill development within the context of REB review. Course-based assignments are considered **research** and are **subject** to REB review when^{1,3,4,5} any or all of the following apply:

- The intent is to educate students on research processes used to explore and expand existing theories and conceptual knowledge
- Students compare new techniques, practices, programs with standard approaches to determine which is more effective
- The results or findings are written in a format that would be acceptable for a research journal or academic conference presentation
- Primary data is collected and organized for analysis and distribution or dissemination

Course-based assignments are considered **skill development** and **are not subject** to REB review when^{1,3,4,5}:

- The intent is to use the information to provide advice, diagnosis, identification of appropriate interventions, or general advice for a client
- The intent is to develop skills which are considered standard practice within a profession (i.e. observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing)
- The information gathering process is part of the normal relationship between the student and the participants

Any projects which are not subject to REB review under these guidelines must comply with the applicable professional standards and codes of conduct and follow any review process required by the related department.

If instructors are unsure whether a learning activity or project falls outside the scope of the procedures outlined in this document they should contact the COTR REB Chair.

Course-based research projects at COTR must comply with the following criteria:

1) Research projects must be no more than minimal risk as defined by the TCPS2.

Examples of minimal risk include:

- Participants are competent adults, youth or children
- Participants live freely in the community (not in prison or hospital)

- The topics are non-controversial and carry little or no risk to the participants
 - Methods are non-invasive, such as the use of questionnaires or interviews
- 2) The research participants must be drawn from the general population, capable of giving free and informed consent, and may not include vulnerable subjects such as persons who are not legally competent to consent, mentally incompetent persons, legal wards or therapeutically dependant
 - 3) The student projects must not involve any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions that could place participants at risk
 - 4) The student projects must not manipulate behaviour of participants beyond the range of “normal” classroom activity or daily life
 - 5) The student projects must not involve physically invasive contact with the research participants
 - 6) The student projects must not involve deception

Course-Based Projects Not Requiring REB Approval^{1,3}:

- Projects where students are conducting research on themselves during class time
- Projects involving the use of records or information that is in the public domain; including the use of anonymous secondary data and surveys or questionnaires that have already been published.
- Projects involving the use of naturalistic observation where the participants are seeking public visibility and participant confidentiality and anonymity are ensured
- Practicum or job training projects where students are fully integrated into the organization’s operational practices and are not conducting research
- Projects where the intent is to use the information to provide advice, diagnosis, identification of appropriate interventions or general advice for a client
- Projects where the intent is to develop skills which are standard practice within a profession (i.e. observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing)
- Projects where the information gathering processes are part of the normal relationship between the student and the participants.

Instructor’s Responsibility

The instructor will take the role of principal investigator and submit a single completed application for *Ethical Review of Course-Based Research Assignments Involving Human Participants* to cover all of the research assignments for the course. The instructor will also

prepare the students to undertake the research assignment(s) for this course, in compliance with the ethical standards set out in COTR policy 7.2. Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects. Instructors must complete the TCPS 2: CORE-Tutorial (<https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>) on submission of the Course-Based Application. A link to the institutional access for TCPS 2: CORE can be found on the COTR REB website. Instructors are responsible for creating informed consent forms for the research and educating students on principles related to informed consent (i.e. consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time)², privacy & confidentiality, and data storage.

Course-based applications for research will be given 3 year approval periods- if the assignment changes in its focus, study population or structure the REB chair must be notified and it will be decided if another application will be submitted or an addendum to the previous application will suffice. The ethics board must receive written evidence from outside agencies (e.g. school boards, health authorities) granting approval to carry out research that involve such agencies. A copy must be sent to the COTR REB and will be kept on file with the instructor's application.

In-Course Individual Student Research and REB Application

All course-based research assignments must involve procedures that pose minimal risk and that can be reviewed comfortably by the instructor. On occasion, instructors may receive an individual application for an in-class research project from a student that raises issues. In these instances, the instructor is to forward the application to the COTR REB Chair for review.

Instructors should reject student applications containing the following^{4,5}:

- Any indication of potential or more than minimal risk to the participants, whether psychological, emotional, physical, economic, etc.
- Any use of deception
- Any questions about intimate or sensitive aspects of the participants' behaviour or life history (e.g. sexual behaviour or childhood abuse)
- Excessive inducements to participants that may compromise voluntary participation. This may include excessive compensation or the suggestion that participants will benefit later on.

This is not an exhaustive list, if instructors have any specific questions regarding student research they are to contact the COTR REB Chair.

Submission Deadlines for Course-Based REB Approvals

Expect expedited review of all course-based applications by the REB chair within 2 weeks of the submission date. Please plan this accordingly with your assignment dates and submission to the REB.

This policy was created using the following documents:

1. Mount Royal University Course Based Student Research Ethics Application Version 2.0-September 2012
2. Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics Course Approvals/Course Ethics Process retrieved from <https://www.sfi.ca/ore/course-approvals.html>
3. University of Alberta Research Ethics Office Guidelines on Course-Based Research Projects Involving Human Participants (September,2012).
4. McMaster University REB (website) will need to include web address
5. University of Victoria (August, 2011). UVic Guidelines for Ethical Review of Course-Based Research Involving Human Participants.