

Title of Policy	Ethical Review of Course-based Research Involving Human Participants
Policy Number	7.1.7
Category (Policy Type)	7 - Research
Approval Body	College Policy Committee
Policy Sponsor	Vice President, Academic and Applied Research
Operational Lead	Manager, Applied Research and Innovation
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## CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

The College of the Rockies recognizes that class projects and other student activities may be created to develop student research skills. These activities may be carried out by individual students, small groups, or as a single class project. Policy 7.1.2 Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects and the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2, December 2020) requires instructors completing student research activities involving human subjects to submit a course-based research application to the College Research Ethics Board (REB) and receive approval from the REB and Dean prior to the start of the project. Criteria for course-based applications to the REB are outlined in this document and accompanying procedure 7.1.7.

## SCOPE

This policy is for all faculty whose students engage in research methods on human participants. Course-based research projects may include small research projects where students pose research questions, gather data from human participants, and analyze 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 taught. 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 board.

## DEFINITIONS

**Deception:** A situation in which information is withheld from a research participant that is material to their decision to participate, or to continue participating, in a study, and/or they are intentionally misled about any matter related to the research, including procedures and purposes.

**Ethics Review:** The processes and guidelines by which research proposals are evaluated to determine if they meet the quality and ethical principles and standards for research involving human subjects.

**Informed Consent:** An informed consent to participate in research is made:

- By a competent individual;
- Based on adequate information regarding the nature and foreseeable consequences of the research (as these are known at the time the request is made) and all available alternatives;
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time; and
- Without undue influence, coercion, and incentives that promote a disregard of risks (Guidelines for the consent process can be found in Chapter 3 of the TCPS2 (2020)).

**Minimal Risk for Research:** Risk that is within the range normally encountered by, and acceptable to, the human subject in their everyday life.

**Researcher(s):** The person(s) primarily responsible for conducting a particular research activity.

**Research Involving Human Subjects:** An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a discipline inquiry or systematic investigation, which involves living individuals, human biological materials, as well as human embryos, fetuses, fetal tissue, reproductive materials, and stem cells. This applies to materials derived from living and deceased individuals (TCPS 2, 2020).

**Risk:** The likelihood that something harmful might occur and the magnitude of the harm.

**TCPS:** The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) is a joint policy of Canada's three federal research agencies – the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This Policy expresses the Agencies' continuing commitment to the people of Canada to promote the ethical conduct of research involving humans. It has been informed, in part, by leading international ethics norms, all of which may help, in some measure, to guide Canadian researchers, in Canada and abroad, in the conduct of research involving humans. (TCPS2, 2020)

**Vulnerable Subjects:** Individuals or groups where a power differential could operate to their disadvantage as participants (for example: students, minors, prisoners, employees, military personnel, disadvantage minority groups, incapacitated people, and individuals with cognitive impairments or intellectual disabilities). Individuals should not automatically be considered vulnerable because of assumptions made about the group to which they belong. The circumstances of participation and vulnerability shall be considered in the context of the proposed research project (TCPS 2, 2020).

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **A. COURSE-BASED RESEARCH**

A. 1 Course-based research must comply with the following criteria:

A. 1. 1 Research projects must be no more than minimal risk as defined by the TCPS2 (2020).

Examples of minimal risk include:

- Participants are competent adults, youth, or children
- Participants live freely in the community (for example, 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

- A. 1. 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 dependent.
- A. 1. 3 The student projects must not involve any personal, sensitive, or incriminating topics or questions that could place participants at risk.
- A. 1. 4 The student projects must not manipulate behaviour of participants beyond the range of “normal” activity or daily life.
- A. 1. 5 The student projects must not involve physically invasive contact with the research participants.
- A. 1. 6 The student projects must not involve deception.

## **B. INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

B. 1 Instructors of students engaged in course-based research will adhere to the following:

- B. 1. 1 The instructor will 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 (see corresponding procedure for policy 7.1.7, section B).
- B. 1. 2 The instructor will prepare the students to undertake the research assignment(s) for the course in compliance with the ethical standards set out in College of the Rockies policy 7.1 and 7.1.2.
- B. 1. 3 Instructors must complete the TCPS 2: CORE-Tutorial (<https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>) on submission of the Course-Based Application.
- B. 1. 4 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), privacy & confidentiality, and data storage. Assistance from the REB chair will be available for the instructor and students.
- B. 1. 5 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 if an addendum to the previous application will suffice.

## B. 2 Course-based and Capstone Projects

- Course-based research requires ethics approval of the research assignment through the REB (see corresponding procedures for policy 7.1.7, section B).
- Capstone projects may require individual ethics review because they involve student researchers recruiting participants from the community, and research methodologies and dissemination may incur harm to research subjects (see corresponding procedures section C).
- The REB chair will make the final decision on whether an assignment meets the standards for a capstone project or not.

## B. 3 Instructors should reject student applications containing the following:

- B. 3. 1 Any indication of potential or more than minimal risk to the subjects, whether psychological, emotional, physical, economic, etc.
  - B. 3. 2 Any use of deception.
  - B. 3. 3 Any questions about intimate or sensitive aspects of the subject's behaviour or life history (e.g., sexual behaviour or childhood abuse).
  - B. 3. 4 Excessive inducements to participants that may compromise voluntary participation. This may include excessive compensation or the suggestion that subjects will benefit later.
- NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list. If instructors have any specific questions regarding student research, they are to contact the College of the Rockies REB chair.

## **RELATED POLICIES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Policy 7.1 Research

Policy 7.1.2 Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects7.1.2 Procedures

Policy 7.1.3 Responsible Conduct of Research

7.1.2 Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects - Procedures

7.1.7 Ethical Review of Course-based Research Involving Human Participants - Procedures

[TCPS 2 \(2020\)](#)

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

Biin, D., Canada, D., Chenoweth, J., & Neel, L. (2021). Pulling Together: A Guide for

Researchers, Hiił' al. BCcampus. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationresearchers/>

[Memorandum of Understanding between College of the Rockies and Ktunaxa Nation Council](#)