

Ethical conduct for research involving human participants procedure

Parent policy

Ethical conduct for research involving human participants policy #500-3-2

Purpose

This procedure provides guidance for conducting research in accordance to Bow Valley College's (BVC) expectations for ethical conduct and the standards outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans 2 2022 [TCPS2 (2022)].

Scope

Any research done at the College by BVC faculty, staff, and/or learners, or that uses BVC faculty, staff, and/or learners as participants requires an ethics review. Any research conducted by BVC faculty, staff, and/or learners that takes place outside of BVC, where the researcher's intention is to represent the College, also requires ethics review. Projects conducted by researchers from outside the BVC community who access College resources (equipment, personnel, or learners) fall within the jurisdiction of the BVC Research Ethics Board (REB) to ensure that all research is conducted in a fair and ethical manner.

Compliance

Employees, contractors, and learners are responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with BVC policies, procedures, and any other attached documentation that relate to their position, employment, or enrolment at the College.

Procedures

- **Types of applications**
 - **Full ethics application:**

This is submitted for new research projects conducted by BVC faculty, staff, and/or learners. Projects of this type may involve participants that are BVC staff, faculty and/or learners and the research activities may or may not take place on BVC premises. Projects in which this type of application applies will pose some risks to participants and will not have received ethical approval from another institution to conduct the project. Applications of this type will be reviewed through the full board review process.
 - **Expedited review application:**

A research project is eligible for this type of review if the project is of minimal risk and/or has already been approved by another ethics board. Applications of this type will be reviewed by the Chair and another REB member.
 - **Course-based research assignment application:**

Some course-based activities or assignments may require REB approval if they involve human participants (e.g., patients, clients, etc.) in specific types of activities. A specific application is provided for such instances.

Instructors are NOT required to complete an ethics application for course-based activities involving human participants if the intent of the assignment is within the usual bounds of interaction that would be found in a teaching or practice environment, such as:

 - Employing the information gathered by learners to provide participants with advice, a diagnosis, and/or identify appropriate interventions.

- Facilitating the development of skills deemed to be standard practice within a profession (e.g., assessment, observation, evaluation, and auditing).
 - Gathering information as part of the regular relationship between learners and ‘participants’ (e.g. education worker and pupils, health care worker and patient, social worker and client);
 - Instructing learners about how to design and conduct research projects without involving other participants (e.g., practice collecting data from other learners enrolled in the class).
 - Though formal ethical approval is NOT required for such course-based research activities, the research assignment may still present ethical concerns that must be considered. It is incumbent upon the instructor and Program Chair/Associate Dean to ensure that learners are aware of these ethical considerations and understand how to conduct themselves ethically when carrying out the assigned activities.
 - Instructors ARE required to apply for ethical approval for the course-based research assignment if the research activities involve substantial elements of research-like activity, especially any of the following:
 - Learners gathering information from human participants that are not enrolled in the course and in which the intent is to compare information collected among learners in the class.
 - Learners gathering information from human participants that are not enrolled in the course and who would be classified as a member of a vulnerable population group.
 - The intent is to disseminate the information gathered beyond those enrolled in the class and the instructor.
 - If any of the above conditions apply to the course-based research assignment, the instructor is required to contact the REB to inquire about whether ethical approval is required. If the board determines that ethical approval is required, the instructor must complete an ethics application form specific to course-based research assignments and submit it to BVC’s REB for approval at least one (1) month before the course begins. If instructors are unsure of whether ethical approval is required for their assignment, they must ensure that they contact the REB early enough to ensure that if approval is required, they will be able to submit an ethics application one (1) month prior to the course commencing. Ethics applications for course-based research assignments will be reviewed by the Chair and another REB member (delegated review). If approval is granted, the instructor serves as the ethics authority for the particular research assignment.
 - Ethical approval covering an entire course-based activity will only be granted if all learners are required to complete an identical research assignment so that variations unknown to the REB are not introduced. Approval will be granted for three (3) years provided that no changes are made to the research assignment during this time.
 - Throughout the three (3) years following approval, the Chair or Associate Dean who oversees the course is required to monitor the implementation of the research assignment in the course and report any ethical issues or unexpected deviations from the assignment to the REB.
 - Capstone Projects or Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) requirements that involve data collection on human subjects may require review outside the scope of course-based procedures.
- **Types of reviews**
 - **Full board review:** The regular monthly meeting of the REB to review new ethics applications. Normally REB decisions are made by consensus. If the board cannot come to a consensus and

the decision must be made using a majority vote approach, and the views of the minority will be communicated to the researcher.

- **Expedited review (also known as a delegated review):**
Research projects that meet the criteria for this type of review involve minimal risk or have already acquired ethical approval from another institution's REB. These applications are reviewed outside regular monthly meetings by the REB Chair and one other Board member.
- **Continuing review:**
Multi-year research projects are subject to continuing ethics review from the date of initial REB approval through the life of the project. Applicants are required to submit an annual status report for projects active longer than one year. Researchers conducting projects that run longer than three years must submit a new ethics application at the end of the third year.
- **Appeals**
 - Applicants have the right to request, and the REB has the obligation to provide, reconsideration of a decision. In cases where the REB and the applicant cannot reach an agreement through discussion, the researcher has the right to appeal as outlined under Article 6.18 - 6.20 of the TCPS2 (2022)¹. Before the researcher initiates an appeal, they must have fully exhausted the reconsideration process and the REB must have issued a final decision.
 - Appeals may only be heard on the basis of either a procedural error that materially and adversely influenced the decision of the BVC REB or a substantive error by the original REB in applying or interpreting the Research Ethics Policy of the originating institution or specific articles(s) of the most current Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS).
 - BVC has agreements with Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP) and Northwestern Polytechnic (NWP) to address appeals from decisions of the BVC REB. The administrator of BVC's REB will forward all documentation related to the appeal to the Associate Vice President, Strategic Planning and Research (RDP) or Provost and Vice President Academic (NWP) with a cover letter requesting an Appeal Board review.
 - The procedures to be followed by the RDP REB will be those of RDP and may be modified, as required, by the Chairperson of RDP's REB. The appellant and the Chair of the BVC REB have the right to meet with the RDP REB regarding the appeal. In reviewing the appeal, the RDP REB will determine if there has been a procedural error that materially and adversely influenced the decision of the BVC REB, normally within thirty (30) working days of receipt of the file and will transmit its decision and reasons to the parties.
 - Normally, within ten (10) working days of the decision of RDP's REB, the written results of the appeal and reasons will be forwarded to the appellant and the Chair of BVC's REB. The results will be binding on the appellant and BVC and any reconsideration of the application will be binding and not subject to further appeal.
- **Appointment of members**
 - Board members will be drawn from faculty and staff members at BVC and will normally include one external member. Every effort will be made to recruit individuals with appropriate research experience or other relevant background. Deans and directors will be excluded from membership to avoid any perception of power imbalance.
 - The Vice Chair of the REB: Vice President, Academic will select a current member to serve as the Vice Chair and the other REB members will vote on this appointment. Provided that the board is agreeable to this individual serving as the Vice Chair, this individual will serve in this role for two (2) years before transitioning into the Chair role.

¹ <https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2022-en.pdf>

- The Chair of the REB: upon the end of the two-year term of the REB Chair, the current Vice Chair will assume the role of Chair. This individual will serve in the Chair role and the previous Chair will transition into the Past Chair role.
 - All regular REB members will be appointed to the board by the Vice President, Academic.
 - All members will be appointed to the Board for a two-year term.
 - All board members may serve on the board for a maximum of six (6) years, provided that they have not assumed the role of Chair prior to their fifth year of service.
 - If the Chair is unexpectedly not able to fulfill their duties, then the Vice Chair would assume the role. The new Chair would then select a member on the board to fill the Vice Chair role. The other REB members would then vote on whether this individual should assume the role of Vice Chair.
 - If the Vice Chair was not able to fulfill their duties unexpectedly, then the Chair would select a member of the board to assume the vacant position. The members of the board would vote on whether this individual should assume the role of Vice Chair.
- **Conflict of interest:**
 - REB members, Alternates, and/or the REB Chair must disclose to the REB any potential, perceived, or actual conflicts of interest related to their responsibilities with the REB, and especially as it relates to the research under review.
 - REB members, Alternates, and/or the REB Chair will withdraw from the committee discussion when their own research projects are under review by the REB, or when any conflict of interest exists with any project which is under review or consideration.

Definitions

Concern for welfare:

The welfare of a person is the quality of that person's experience of life in all its aspects. Participants are to be provided with enough information to be able to adequately assess risks and potential benefits associated with their participation in research.

Conflict of interest:

A conflict of interest may arise when activities or situations place an individual in a real, potential or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, and personal, institutional or other interests. These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current or prospective professional associates (<https://rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/framework-cadre-2021.html>)

Consent:

Consent means a person voluntarily agrees with what is being done or proposed. In research, consent must be free (a result of one's free will), informed (with full understanding of risks, potential benefits, expectations, and rights), ongoing (with ability to withdraw participation after initial consent).

Course-based research:

Research assignments that learners must complete as a requirement of a course. These research projects involve human participants and pose only minimal risk to participants.

Human participant(s):

Living individuals, human remains, cadavers, tissues, biological fluids, embryos, or fetus/fetuses

that are to participate in or be the subjects of research.

Justice:

Fair and equitable treatment of persons. Fairness entails treating all people with equal respect and concern.

Minimal risk:

The probability or magnitude of harms encountered by participants is no greater than those encountered in aspects of their everyday life.

Participant(s):

Those who are to be involved in or be the subject of research.

Procedural error:

Real or reasonably perceived bias, including bias based on validity, method, theoretical grounds of the method or research, scope, or undeclared conflict of interest on the part of one or more members of the REB.

Research:

An activity under the auspices of the College by employees, learners, and/or external partners, which involves a systematic undertaking to establish facts, principles, or knowledge in order to solve specific problems of an organization or community. Most activities that involve information collected solely in the course of teaching (that is, projects that are not Client-Driven Course-Based Collaborative Research) are not considered research for the purposes of this policy. In addition, other usual college functions such as market research (the gathering data/ information about consumer/customer preferences, ideas and attitudes), quality assurance studies, performance reviews, instructor evaluations, program evaluations or reviews, curriculum development projects, or testing within normal educational requirements are not considered research for the purposes of this policy document.

Research ethics:

Moral principles that govern the planning, conduct, and reporting of research activities.

Respect for persons:

Recognition of the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due.

Risk:

The possibility of the occurrence of harm. The level of conceivable risk posed to participants by their involvement in the project is calculated by considering the magnitude or seriousness of the harm and likelihood that it will occur to either participants or third parties.

Tri-Council:

Refers to three federal agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) that fund research for post-secondary institutions in Canada. The Tri-Council also provides standards governing research at post-secondary institutions, including standards on research ethics through the TCPS2 (2022) referenced throughout this policy.

Data sheet

Accountable officer

The Executive Team member responsible for the Academic Division

Responsible officer

Special Advisor, Academic and Research

Contact area

Special Advisor, Academic and Research

Relevant dates

Approved	Executive Team: EXT20161129-1
Effective	January 26, 2023
Next Review	January 2026
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Verified by	Office of the President, May 2023*
Revision	Rev. 01 (January 2024)

Related policy

Ethical conduct for research involving human participants policy #500-3-2

Associated policy(s), procedure(s), and guideline(s)

Applied research and the promotion of innovation policy #500-3-3

Code of conduct policy #200-1-13

Code of conduct procedure #200-1-13

Integrity in research & scholarly activity policy #500-3-3

Integrity in research & scholarly activity procedure #500-3-3

Learner code of conduct policy #500-1-1

Learner code of conduct procedure #500-1-1

Related legislation

Tri-Council Policy Statement (2022) Ethical Conduct for Research involving Humans

(<https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2022-en.pdf>)

[Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research \(2021\)](https://rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/framework-cadre-2021.html)

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