Bow Valley College

Ethics Guidelines and Tools for Course-Based Research

Introduction

This document provides a general overview of the ethics guidelines that need to be followed for course-based research. It also provides tools that students and instructors can use to ensure ethics standards. The document is meant to be used in addition to the guidelines laid out in the Tri Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS2.

What is course-based research?

Course-based research may include:

- research activities that are designed by the instructor where all students use the same methodology and procedures developed by the instructor,

or

- research activities that are guided by the instructor where all students have different methods.

Course-Based Research Activities Designed by Instructor

If the instructor designs the entire research project, and requires all the students in the class to complete the same project, using the same data collection methods, the instructor will need to complete the Course-Based Ethics Screening Form and submit it to REB (researchethics@bowvalleycollege.ca) to determine if the research activity requires ethics approval.

The decision is based on the nature of the research activity and the associated level of risk. If ethics approval is needed, REB will ask the instructor to complete the Course-Based Application form. If ethics approval is not required, the instructor can proceed with the project but must still adhere to the guidelines set out in the TCSP 2 and college research policy and procedures. REB can provide guidance with these upon request.

Important ethics issues to address when doing a course-based research activity include but are not limited to conflict of interest, informed consent, risk of harm, anonymity and confidentiality including data storage. The Research Ethics Information page on the college website provides information on these issues.

Course-Based Research Activities Guided by Instructor

When the activity requires students to design their own data collection methods, but the instructor provides guidelines for recruitment, procedures, data storage and disposal, and reporting of results, the instructor will need to complete the Course-Based Research Application Form and submit it to REB for review. Note that the application must be submitted at least one month prior to the start of the term.

The instructor will be responsible for ensuring that research ethics is incorporated into the design of the students' projects. The instructor will also be responsible for overseeing that the students follow the ethics guidelines as laid out in the Tri Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS 2.

REB provides some tools to assist with this process. This booklet contains a Self-Assessment tool, Ethics Workplan, and Consent form template (Appendix). Students will need to complete these documents and submit them to the instructor for review. This booklet also contains a simple checklist instructors can use to determine if a student's research activity requires additional REB approval (Appendix).

What are the essential guidelines that must be followed when there is a component of research involved in a course?

The instructor will need to follow these essential guidelines:

1. The details of the assignment are included in the Course Outline. The importance of adhering to research ethics needs to be highlighted.
2. Instructors complete the TCPS 2 CORE Tutorial (latest version).
3. Instructors oversee students during the project and require students to complete a self-assessment and an ethics workplan (Appendix A).
    - Note: The ethics workplan is a tool that helps highlight the importance of the students' responsibilities to research ethics. It also serves to help demonstrate the students' understanding of these responsibilities to their instructors.
4. If an REB review application is required, it must be submitted and approved at least one month before the beginning of the term.

5. Any consultations with the REB pertaining to the project/assignment need to be completed before the project is assigned to students.
6. The consent form includes all the necessary information as per this template. (Appendix)
7. Once the course-based application has been reviewed and formal research ethics approval has been granted for a specific assignment/project, the instructor will not have to apply again every term. Approval is granted for one year and can be renewed unless substantive changes are made to the activity.
8. If there are several instructors teaching the same course and administering the same research activity, they will not have to apply for course-based research ethics approval once the approval has been granted for the research activity.
9. If any changes are made to the project after the REB approval or consultations, the details of the changes need to be communicated to the REB by completing and submitting a modification form. The changes will need to be approved by the REB.
10. When the project is completed by the students, the instructor will submit an end-of-project report by email to inform the REB of any issues that may have arisen from data collection, data storage, confidentiality, and participant consent. If no issues were encountered, the email should state this.

How do you determine if your student's research activity requires additional REB review?

The instructor is responsible for supervising any student activity that involves research, but there may be some projects that warrant additional review by the REB. If additional review by the REB is required, student workplans will also need to be forwarded to the REB. Refer to the information below to help determine when student activity workplans should be sent to REB for review, and when student activity workplans only require instructor review.

Follow these steps:

1. Determine if the activity constitutes research.
   - Will students collect primary data from human subjects and organize and analyze the data for sharing in any form? (Examples of primary data collection may include lab/field experiments, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and/or observation.)

- Will students use research to explore/compare/expand on existing theories, concepts, practices, techniques?

2. If the answer is no to all the questions in Step 1, no further action is required. However, it is the responsibility of the instructor to make sure that students are aware that no changes should be made to the activity.
3. If the answer is yes to any of the questions in Step 1, the student activity involves research.

4. When the student activity involves research, the next step will be to determine if the student activity requires REB review. For this, it will be important to first determine if the research meets any of the criteria for exemption and assess the risk level.

   Use the checklist below to determine if an REB review is required when the activity is considered research and to determine what action is needed:

☐ The activity meets the criteria for exemption and is minimal risk.	**Action:** The student can proceed under supervision of instructor still following ethics guidelines.
☐The activity does not meet the criteria for exemption and is more than minimal risk.	**Action:** REB reviews the student's workplan and advises how to proceed. Instructors provide further supervision to ensure the student follows the guidelines/procedures from REB.
☐The activity meets the criteria for exemption but is more than minimal risk.	**Action:** REB reviews the student's workplan and advises how to proceed. Instructors provide further supervision to ensure the student follows the guidelines/procedures from REB.

Notes:

- There is always the potential that human participants and other parties involved may be harmed in some way during the research. The risks of such harm will need to be considered very carefully. Even when the risk level is deemed to be minimal, an ethics review will be needed. According to TCPS2, minimal risk is defined as, “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research are no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research” (p. 25).
- When the research involves Indigenous or vulnerable populations, there risks will need to be considered very carefully. (Some examples of vulnerable populations are students, people with limited financial resources, people from traditionally undervalued social groups, and people who are unable to provide voluntary, informed consent.)

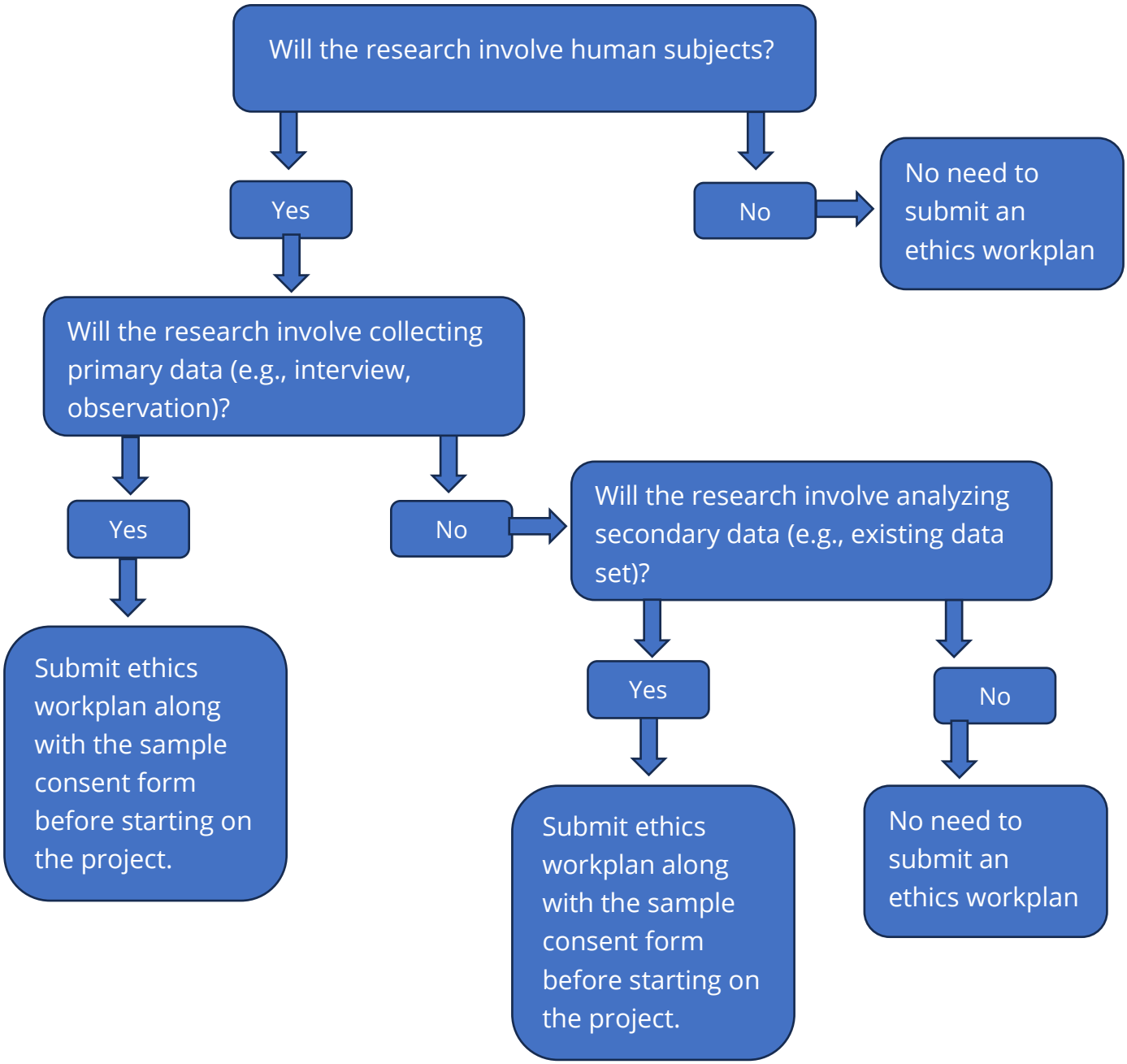
- Even when secondary data is used in the research, it will be important to involve the REB for oversight and demonstrate ethical practices in:
    - Interpretation
    - Confidentiality and anonymity
    - Data storage
    - Consent
    - Sensitivity of data

- It will be important to involve the REB for review in any of the following circumstances:
    - When the observation involves any form of interaction with the participants and/or interventions of any kind
    - When the individuals are being observed in places where they have a reasonable expectation of privacy
    - When individuals being observed might be at risk of being identified in the research results/findings

When additional REB ethics review is required. Submit this application to the REB researchethics@bowvalleycollege.ca. Student plans will also need to be submitted.

Appendix

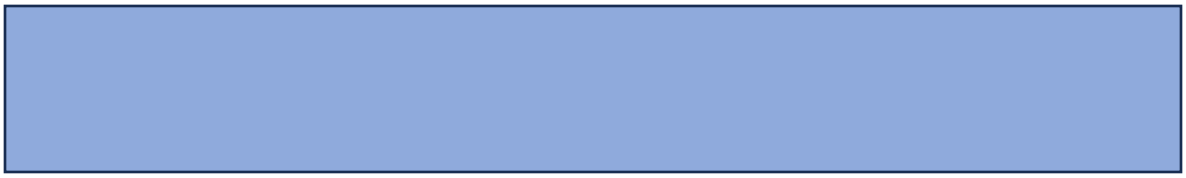
Self-Assessment Tool



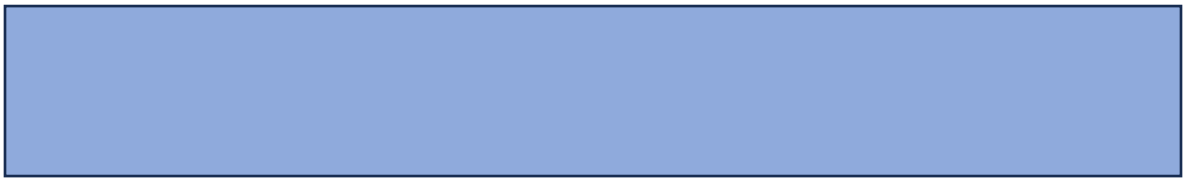
Ethics Workplan Template

This plan needs to be submitted in full before you start on the course project/assignment. The purpose of this plan is to demonstrate your awareness of the ethical issues involved when you are working on the project/assignment.

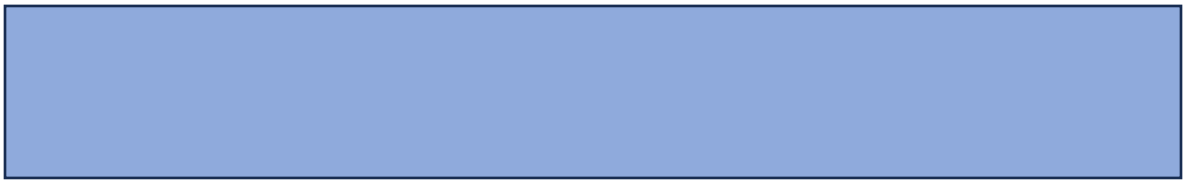
1. Describe your research objective in a maximum of 100 words.



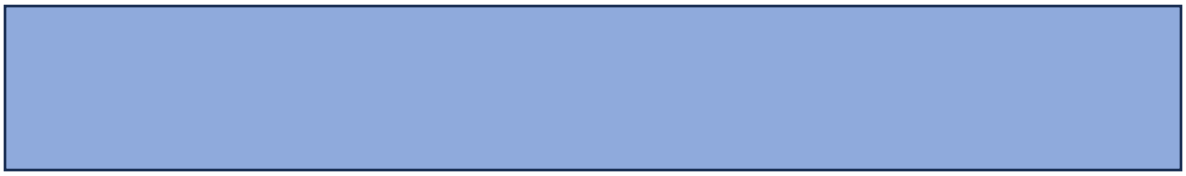
2. Describe the categories of the people from whom you will be getting information. Examples of categories are socio-economic status, gender, etc.



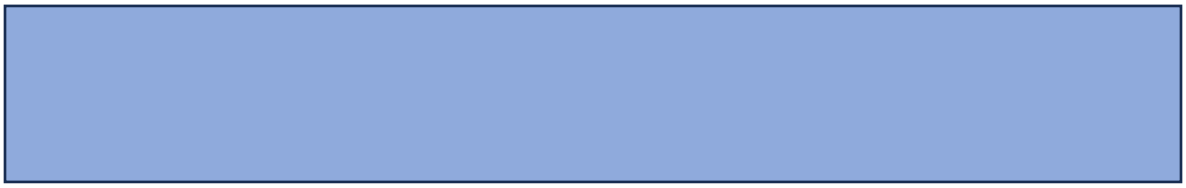
3. Describe the setting where you intend to conduct the research.



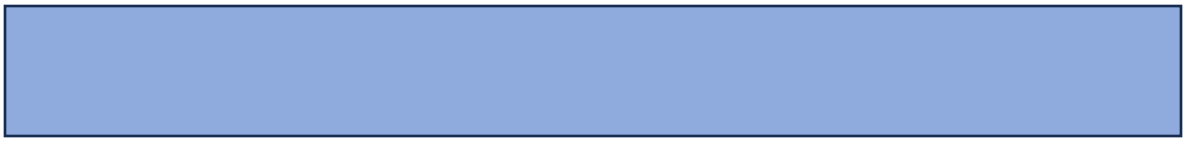
4. Provide a brief summary of the methods you intend to use. Examples of methods are surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations.



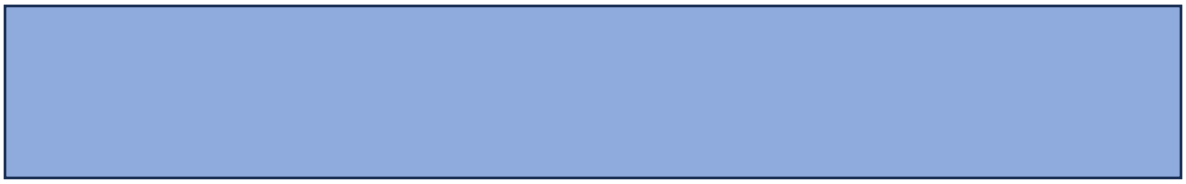
5. How are you going to find the people for your research?



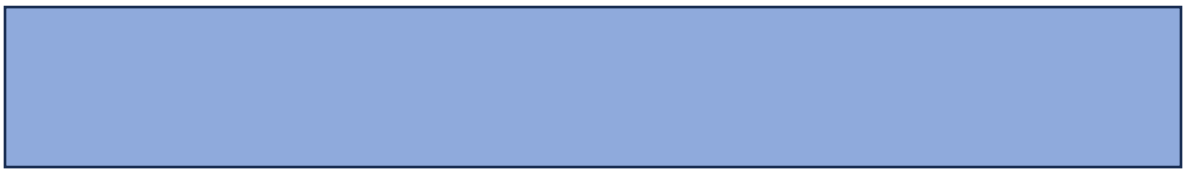
6. Describe any potential risks or harms that you or the participants might encounter. How will you protect against these risks?



7. What are the steps you will take to protect the data you collect and the confidentiality of the participants? Note: Even secondary data will need careful consideration.



8. What is the procedure you will use to make sure that the participants are taking part in the research voluntarily? Attach the consent form you intend to use.



Instructor Checklist

☐Assess if research

Will students collect primary data from human subjects and organize and analyze the data for sharing in any form? (Examples of primary data collection may include lab/field experiments, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and/or observation.)

Or

Will students use research to explore/compare/expand on existing theories, concepts, practices, techniques?

☐No to both questions No further action is required. However, instructor must supervise the students, and the students must be aware that no changes can be made to the activity.

☐Yes to either question Actions:

☐Assess risk level and assess criteria for exemption.

☐The activity meets the criteria for exemption and is minimal risk.

☐**Action:** The student can proceed under supervision of instructor still following ethics guidelines.

☐The activity does not meet the criteria for exemption and is more than minimal risk.

☐**Action:** REB reviews the student's workplan and advises how to proceed. Instructors provide further supervision to ensure the student follows the guidelines/procedures from REB

☐The activity meets the criteria for exemption but is more than minimal risk.

☐**Action:** REB reviews the student's workplan and advises how to proceed. Instructors provide further supervision to ensure the student follows the guidelines/procedures from REB.

Informed Consent Form Template

This document is a template. The italicized text is instructional. Delete it, including these paragraphs, when writing your consent form.

Supply the information requested under the bolded headings. ***Use plain language, understandable by a layperson (grade 7 level)****.* ***Consider reading the informed consent aloud with the participant to ensure understanding of risk.*** *Add details relevant to your study. Be sure the consent form is written in second person. Please check the correctness of your spelling and grammar.*

Name of Researcher, Department, Telephone & Email:

(*Insert your name and title, and those of your co-researchers)*

Supervisor:

(If the researcher is a student, the supervisor's name and department appears here, otherwise delete) **Title of Project:**

(*The title of the project goes here)*

***Sponsor*:**

(*If the project is funded, identify the funding source here)*

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Researcher to Supply the Following (include the headings below in your consent form)

Purpose of the Study:

Describe the purpose of the study and tell the participant how s/he was chosen as a possible participant, if applicable, invite the individual to be a participant.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

Describe exactly what the participant is expected to do. State (approximately) how much time it will take, include details such as the number of questionnaires or other requirements for their participation. Indicate if there is any follow-up and when.

Indicate that the individual's participation is voluntary, that the individual may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study (if this is acceptable to the research), or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which s/he is otherwise entitled (for example: assistance received through Agency "X" will not be affected).

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

If no personal identifying information is to be collected (e.g. names, social insurance numbers, student ID numbers, etc.), and the participant remains anonymous, use the following statement:

"No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous."

If information such as gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, etc., is collected, provide a description of the type of information you will be collecting. For example, "Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, age and academic major."
If applicable to the research, describe options available to the participant. To do so, it may be useful to create "check boxes" to help enumerate a participant's choices. For example, you might instruct the participant:

"There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:"

I grant permission to be audio taped: *Yes: ___ No: ___*
I grant permission to be videotaped: *Yes: ___ No: ___*
I grant permission to have my company's name used: *Yes: ___ No: ___*
I wish to remain anonymous: *Yes: ___ No: ___*
I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: *Yes: ___ No: ___*
The pseudonym I choose for myself is:
_____

You may quote me and use my name: *Yes: ___ No: ___*

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

List reasonably foreseeable risks, harms, or inconveniences to the participant. If the research necessitates the provision of rescue mechanisms, advise the participant what these are, how to access the support, and whether there is any cost to the individual.

If the research has the potential to reveal information that is required by law to be revealed to a law enforcement or other agency (e.g.: child abuse, suspected danger to self or others), inform your participant of your legal obligations.

If the person will be paid to take part, describe that payment. If they will incur any costs, describe these.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Explain who will have access to the information collected.
State how the participant's contribution will be treated. For example, will pseudonyms or some other means of ensuring anonymity be used? Explain any limitations to the anonymity / confidentiality that you can offer. Tell the participant what will happen to their information if s/he decides to withdraw.

Confidentiality vs. Anonymity

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality of information collected from research participants means that only the investigator(s) or individuals of the research team can identify the responses of individual subjects; however, the researchers must make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the project from connecting individual subjects with their responses.

Anonymity

Providing anonymity of information collected from research participants means that either the project does not collect identifying information of individual subjects (e.g., name, address, Email address, etc.), or the project cannot link individual responses with participants' identities. A study should not collect identifying information of research participants unless it is essential to the study protocol.

For example

"Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers to the questionnaire or the interview tape. There are no names on the questionnaire. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. The questionnaires are kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored for five years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased."

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Dr./Ms./Mr. (Insert name of principal researcher(s),
Department of XXXXXXX
Telephone, email

And (supervisor's name, department telephone number, and email if applicable)

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Bow Valley College Research Ethics Board email at researchethics@bowvalleycollege.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

References

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2022). *Tri-Council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans TCPS2 2022*. https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html