



Student-Based Human Research Ethics Guidelines

Introduction:

Many undergraduate courses at Mount Royal University (MRU) include projects designed to develop students' research skills. These research projects may be carried out by individual students, small groups or as a whole class project. MRU would like to encourage these projects and the learning of various research methods. Not all research projects in the classroom require ethics approval. However, the primary concern for research ethics boards is the risk to the participants in these projects. The Tri-Council Policy Statement indicates that the use of human participants in research requires an examination of protocol and consent information to be viewed and assessed by a research ethics board (TCPS2 Article 2.1).

What is Student-based Research Ethics?

This application is only to apply for course based ethics approval of student research projects. It is meant as a group approval for student research projects occurring WITHIN the scope of a course. These guidelines are meant for instructors of courses where the assignment(s) might include the use of human participants and where the projects are limited to minimal risk studies. According to the 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. 22).

Instructor's Responsibilities

For all course-based applications, the instructor takes on the responsibility of "principal investigator" and submits a single application for the activities/assignments in the course. The instructor is responsible for ensuring they are familiar and comply with the TCPS2. Failure to submit SHREC applications for course-based studies could result in the suspension of current applications, be subject to continuing ethics review, and/or investigation by the Responsible Conduct of Research Committee (RCRC).

Instructors should apply through the Student Human Research Ethics Committee (SHREC) and take on the role of overseeing all projects within their courses (and if they are applying for multiple sections – they are responsible for all projects' ethical considerations). Ethical approval for undergraduate class projects is valid for up to one (1) year if there are no changes to the course assignment(s). If instructors wish to repeat the assignment the following year, a "declaration of continuance" and summary of topics completed in the class forms can be used to reapply. If a revised or different assignment is used, a new SHREC application is required. If a course currently has SHREC approval, but a new instructor will be teaching it, a modification request can be submitted to change the PI. The new instructor will be responsible for ensuring that the research activities meet the TCPS2 requirements.

Outlined below are details surrounding the type of research ethics instructors might need in the classroom. If unsure, contact the Research Compliance Officer (hreb@mtroyal.ca) for clarification.

Projects that require SHREC approval

- Primary data collection on human participants whereby the intent is to educate students on research processes used to explore and expand theories and conceptual knowledge.
- Comparing new techniques, practices, and/or programs with standard approaches to determine which is more effective.
- Research with human subjects which might be disseminated to an audience within the Mount Royal University community (e.g. Research Days).
- Primary data are collected and organized for analysis and dissemination within the course structure (e.g., oral presentations to course members, written research paper or report to the course instructor).

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

- Research must be no more than minimal risk.
- Research participants must be drawn from the adult general population capable of providing free and informed consent to participate and over 18 years of age.
- Student projects must not involve any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics/questions that could put participants at risk.
- Dissemination must not occur outside the institution; for online courses, dissemination must not occur outside the online course.
- The student projects must not manipulate participant behaviour or engage in deception.
- Human participants must be made fully aware that their participation is for the sole purpose of course-based learning on behalf of the students, participants will be informed that their information will be de-identified or de-anonymized.
- In keeping with the above limitations, secondary use of the data generated through a course-based research application for future research will not be permissible.

Two examples of course based student research:

- Conducting interviews or administering surveys outside of the classroom to develop interview or survey design skills and which will be analyzed and presented or disseminated at Research Days.
- Conducting small research projects where students pose research questions, gather data from human participants, and analyze the data for presentation or dissemination within the classroom.

Research listed below requires completion of the HREB Application. This application can be found on the ROMEIO system. Please see link for accessing ROMEIO:

<https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/ConductYourResearch/romeio.htm>

Student projects that require regular HREB approval (under the close supervision of a faculty mentor)

- Honours theses or independent study research projects.

- Research intended to extend knowledge and thus may be disseminated outside of the MRU community (e.g., national or international conferences).
- Research directly related to the extension of the course instructor's own research.
- Research which involves **more** than minimal risk.
- Research which involves any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions which could put the participants or researcher(s) at risk;
- Research which involves deception;
- Research which involves manipulation of the behaviour of participants beyond the range of normal.
- Research which is physically invasive.
- Research that falls under the Health Information Act.

Projects that do NOT Require Ethics Approval

- Projects where students are practicing research techniques such as data collection on each other during class time for pedagogical purposes of illustration which are minimal risk and for which there is no dissemination.
- Projects involving the use of records or information that is in the public domain, including the use of anonymous secondary data.
- Projects with the intent to use information to provide advice, identification of appropriate interventions or advice for a client;
- Research involving naturalistic observation in public places where no intervention is staged by the researcher, where individuals would have no expectation of privacy, and where results would not allow identification of specific individuals.
- Practicum or job training projects where no research is involved.
- Quality assurance projects which gather minimal risk information in order to improve services for the clientele using a service and only shared with clientele.

NOTE: If any conditions exist to increase the level of risk involved, these examples may require HREB approval. See the "[Guidelines for differentiating between quality assurance \(or program review\) and research](#)" document. If the project is considered "research" vs. quality assurance, an ethics application is required (SHREC or HREB depending on the level of risk, purpose of the research and dissemination plans).

Differentiating Research from Professional Skills Development

Professional skills development is required in many areas of the academy. These skills are usually not embedded within a research framework but are required exclusively for learning purposes. A typical example would be students conducting interviews as part of skills development or knowledge acquisition. Another might be collection of data about a community or service to improve client care. Course based projects or activities for skill development cannot be disseminated beyond the classroom in any form. Professional skill development is required in many disciplines and is not subject to SHREC or HREB approval. Information gathering projects or activities are considered Skill Development and do not require ethics if:

- Information gathered is for diagnosis, identification of appropriate interventions, or general advice for a client;

- Information gathered is for skill development, which is considered under standard practice within a profession (e.g., observation, interviews, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing); and/or
- The information-gathering processes are part of the normal relationship between the student and the participants (e.g., classroom teacher and students, nurse and patient, lawyer and client).

Information gathering projects or activities become classified as research when the intent to educate students on research processes are used to explore and expand existing theories and conceptual knowledge, students compare new techniques, practices or programs with the approach of determining which is most effective, the results of the project would be acceptable for dissemination in a research journal or presented at a conference, and where primary data are collected for analysis and dissemination.

Guaranteed Review Deadlines:

Deadline for Winter SHREC: December 1

Deadline for Spring SHREC: April 1

Deadline for Fall SHREC: August 15

The dates above are guaranteed deadlines for course-based applications. Submission of applications before or on these dates will be reviewed before classes start. Applicants are welcome to submit any time after the deadlines but please give at least 3-weeks for initial feedback.

After initial screening, which usually takes a week, your application will be sent to a primary reviewer. The primary reviewer will provide feedback and any suggestions for modification to address ethical concerns within two weeks. Once the ethical issues are satisfactorily addressed AND all prerequisite documents are received by the HREB compliance officer, you will receive a letter of approval to proceed with the data collection. Data collection cannot start until after this letter is received.

Examples of Research Needing REB Approval¹

- Surveys, questionnaires (in-person, online, web)
- Interviews (in-person, Skype, phone)
- Group discussions/focus groups
- Observations of people in non-public venues (permission for access required e.g., classrooms, meetings)
- Audio-recording people in non-public venues when observing them (audio recording people while in non-public spaces and events requires an ethics review, regardless of whether the people are identifiable or not)
- Video-recording people in non-public venues when observing them (video-recording people in non-public events and spaces requires an ethics review, regardless of whether the people are identifiable or not)
- Taking observational notes of people in non-public venues
- Engagement with people and their information via Facebook or other non-public social media platforms
- Autobiographical and auto-ethnographic studies, self-reflective studies
- Using protected databases and data where you must apply for access/permission from
- Research using participants under 18.

Examples of Research Not Needing REB Approval

- Literature review (published academic articles)
- Meta-analysis of published research
- Writing a curriculum
- Policy analysis, policy report
- Writing a training manual using published information
- Researching a public figure (e.g. artist, politician, activist) using public documents, published materials
- Documenting a community issue using only public documents, information
- Observations in public venues of public events
- Viewing movies, works of art, listening to radiobroadcasts, podcasts
- Online posts from websites and online groups that DO NOT require a log-in, membership etc. are considered publicly accessible with no reasonable expectation of privacy.

¹ Used with permission from University of Victoria
<https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/Guidelines%20for%20Course-based%20Research.pdf>

References

University of Alberta. *Guidelines on course-based research involving human participants and students as researchers*. Retrieved from: <https://cloudfront.ualberta.ca/-/media/research/reo/human-ethics-files/forms-files/guidelines-for-course-based-research-ethics-review---final.pdf>

University of Manitoba. *Guidelines for ethics review of course based research projects and coursework research review committees*. Retrieved from: [https://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/media/Guidelines for Course-Based Research.pdf](https://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/media/Guidelines%20for%20Course-Based%20Research.pdf)

University of Victoria. *Course-based research ethics guidelines for instructors student research activities within a course*. Retrieved from: <https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/Guidelines%20for%20Course-based%20Research.pdf>

Relevant Documents:

Course based student research ethics (SHREC) application: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/ConductYourResearch/romeo.htm>

Student proposal template: https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/_pdfs/cbsre_stdnt_proj_proposal2.pdf

Informed consent guidance document: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/SHREC/Consent/index.htm>

Consent form template: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/SHREC/Consent/index.htm>

Modification request: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/HREB/index.htm>

Completion report (Course based): <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/HREB/index.htm>

Declaration of Continuance: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/SHREC/GuidanceDocumentsForms/index.htm>

Student project summary template for coordinator information (optional): <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/SHREC/GuidanceDocumentsForms/index.htm>

Guidelines for differentiating between Quality Assurance (or Program Review) and research: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/Research/EthicsCompliance/HREB/GuidanceDocuments/index.htm>

Tri Council policy statement (TCPS2) Tutorial: <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome>