



Guidelines for Ethics Review of Course-Based Research Projects

Overview

The University of Manitoba encourages course-based research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels for the purpose of developing research skills. These projects may be carried out by individual students, small groups, or as a single class project.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and the University of Manitoba Ethics of Research Involving Humans Policy require that projects involving human participants undergo review and approval by the appropriate research ethics board before the project can begin.

The Application section of Article 2.1 states:

The scope of REB review is limited to those activities defined in this Policy as “research” involving “human participants.” **It includes course-based research activities, the primary purpose of which is pedagogical**, because of the possible risks to those recruited to participate in such activities, and the fact that, from their perspective, such activities may appear indistinguishable from those that meet this Policy’s definition of research.

The TCPS 2022 Interpretations document also addresses the issue of whether course-based activities intended for pedagogical purposes fall under REB jurisdiction.

Course-based research activities intended primarily for pedagogical purposes fall within the jurisdiction of the REB (Application of Article 2.1 and Article 6.12). Such research activities are assigned to students for the purpose of teaching them how to conduct research in a structured educational context. This includes, for example, asking students to conduct interviews to collect data to be used in a course assignment, or to practice interviewing techniques. Participants in the activities may be exposed to risks (normally minimal risk) as a result of their participation and may not distinguish these activities from others that meet the definition of research in TCPS (Application of Article 2.1).

Distinguishing Research Activities from Professional Skills Development

In some classes, students are expected to use information gathering procedures and practices to assist them in the development of professional skills. Such activities are common in professional faculties where students may, for example, conduct interviews as part of skill development or individual knowledge acquisition unrelated to building their research skills. These types of information gathering projects are not subject to REB review. They may, however, be required to align with applicable professional standards or codes of conduct and other types of review may be required as determined by the department, college, or faculty.

The following table provides additional distinctions between information gathering activities that would require REB approval as they are classified as research and information gathering activities that would not require REB approval as they would be deemed as professional skills development.

Information gathering activities classified as research	Information gathering activities are classified as professional education or development
Educating students on research processes used to explore and expand existing theories and conceptual knowledge	Using the information to provide advice, diagnose, and/or identify appropriate interventions, or provide general advice for a client or colleague
Comparing new techniques, practices, and programs with standard approaches to determine which is more effective	Developing skills which are considered standard practice within a profession (e.g., observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing)
Preparing written results or findings (e.g. from a survey) in a format that would be acceptable for a research journal or academic conference presentation	Gathering information as part of the normal relationship between the student and the participants (e.g., classroom teacher and students, nurse and patient, lawyer and client, business owner and consultant)
Collecting and organizing primary data for analysis and distribution/dissemination	

The above table is not intended to encompass all possible scenarios. Instructors who are unsure about whether REB review and approval is required should contact humanethics@umanitoba.ca for advice.

The REB Process

Projects that require REB approval may follow two different processes, depending on the project(s) being proposed:

1. If an instructor intends to have students collect data for a single project, where each student is asking the same research question(s) and using the same methodology, the instructor should submit a single ethics protocol for review. The instructor may submit an attachment containing the following information:
 - the names of each student associated with the project
 - CORE certificates for each student
 - Evidence of completion of UM's privacy training for researchers for each student
 - Oaths of Confidentiality for each student.

This is the most efficient way of managing REB approval. Instructors should be prepared to submit their protocols well in advance of data collection to ensure their project receives approval in a timely manner. If not all students are known at the time of submission or there are changes to the students participating in the project, an amendment can be submitted to accommodate those changes. It is not necessary to add each student as a member of the research team on the tab within RAS where research team members are identified.

2. If students intend to undertake separate projects for the course (asking different research question(s) and/or using different methodologies), each student must submit their own project for REB review and approval. Instructors are encouraged to take this into consideration when developing their course. Timelines for approval of these protocols might not be feasible within the length of a single semester course, even for projects that are determined to be minimal risk.

Notwithstanding REB approval, any projects requiring approval from outside organizations, institutions, communities, groups, etc. cannot begin until all approvals are in place.