



POLICY

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Board Approved: BM# 27: 2020 -2021 approved via email March 5, 2021

NAME: Responsible Conduct of Research

Reference: University of Regina and Great Plains College Agreement on Research Ethics Review
Great Plains College Privacy Policy

Great Plains College shall engage in, oversee and monitor all research, including research involving humans, consistent with guidelines as specified in the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research. Great Plains College (the College) has engaged in a partnership with the University of Regina (U of R) for submission and approval of research proposals through this university's Research Ethics Board (REB). All proposals submitted by the College will comply with the U of R's REB policies as well as its policies on the conduct of research. Readers should consult the "Agreement on Research Ethics Review" for reference. All research proposed by the College and submitted to the University's REB will align with the current Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

For more information on the U of R's policies on research and their REB, see www.uregina.ca. For information on the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research, see [here](#). For information on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, see [here](#).

Purpose

Great Plains College recognizes the importance of research to educational progress. The primary concern of the College when humans or human data are used during research or other related activities, is that the rights of the participants are respected and protected and that the procedures followed comply with ethical, professional, methodological, medical, and legal standards. The College has a responsibility to ensure that the activities it supports meet expected professional guidelines and respect the rights of the public it serves.

This policy outlines the College's position on research involving humans. The procedural guidelines outlined below are offered to assist the College and the researcher in:

- Determining whether contemplated research requires ethical review; and
- Assisting the U of R REB in identifying any adverse effects from research involving human subjects.

It is the intention of Great Plains College, where research activities involving human subjects are carried out under the purview of the College, to ensure that:

- Safety, welfare, and rights of research subjects (including cultural groups) are adequately protected;
- Information communicated to subjects is appropriate to ensure an informed consent is obtained;
- Subjects are made aware that their participation is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the research or study at any time;
- Steps are taken to ensure confidentiality; and
- No coercion, constraint, or undue inducement to participate takes place.

Definitions

Human subject: any person who is a source of raw or unformulated research data and who is not acting as, or assisting, the principal investigator.

- This term refers to living individuals and also to groups of living individuals (for example, social, ethnic, religious, or economic groups).
- Research involving human subjects means the collection or analysis of information or data that are obtained from or about human subjects. This includes physical, biological, sociological, or
- psychological tests and procedures involving individuals or groups, and also the study of records obtained as a result of such studies, or from archival or public records, in which it is possible to identify living individuals.
- Should the College or an individual researcher employed by the College have concerns about whether a given research project involving human subjects requires an ethics review, the U of R REB will be consulted.

Captive Populations and Dependent Populations: individuals or groups where a power differential between researcher and respondent could operate to the disadvantage of populations or subjects (e.g., students, minors, prisoners, employees, military personnel, minority groups, incapacitated people and the socially deprived). Care should be taken to ensure that consent is not obtained by subtle pressures on captive or dependent subjects.

Deception: a situation in which essential information is withheld from research subjects and/or they are intentionally misled about procedures and purposes.

- Deception is not permitted when there is risk of harm to the subject or when it is not possible to advise subjects subsequently as to the reasons why the deception was necessary.

Before conducting such a study, the investigator has a special responsibility to determine whether the use of such techniques is justified. Special conditions apply in the use of deception in social science and scientific methodology. Readers are encouraged to consult the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans for more detail.

Informed consent: The principles of informed consent can be found in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Chapter 3 (2018). In general, research is viewed as a partnership between the researcher and the research participants.

Informed consent concerning a subject's participation in research includes, but may not be limited to, the following guidelines:

- Consent shall be provided voluntarily.
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the research process.
- Consent is based on full disclosure of all information including the nature and expected outcomes of the research and available alternatives.
- Consent is attained without the influence of power differential, force, fraud, deceit, duress or other forms of constraint or coercion.
- Consent must be attained from all participants, or authorized third parties if applicable, before research commences.
- Consent from an authorized third party is typically required for research involving participants who lack capacity to decide whether to participate in a study. Special conditions apply in such cases and the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2) should be consulted (see TCPS2, 2018, p. 38).

- Evidence of informed consent should be recorded in written format, using a consent form, and filed and stored for future reference.

Confidentiality: Establishing and maintaining confidentiality is, in most research cases, a basic centre-piece to ethical research conduct, effective methodology, and valid research findings. The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2018) defines confidentiality, in part, as follows:

The ethical duty of confidentiality refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to safeguard entrusted information. The ethical duty of confidentiality includes obligations to protect information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss or theft. Fulfilling the ethical duty of confidentiality is essential to the trust relationship between researcher and participant, and to the integrity of the research project (p. 58).

For more detail on various conditions pertaining to privacy and confidentiality when submitting research proposals to a REB, see the TCPS2, Chapter 5 located [here](#).

Roles and Responsibilities of the College

Great Plains College is responsible for providing the support, education, and training required for all members of the College's research community to develop and maintain the highest standards of ethics, integrity, accountability, and responsibility.

Members of the College research community are responsible for reporting all instances of research ethics misconduct and for cooperating fully in an inquiry or investigation into an allegation of research ethics misconduct.

Those in supervisory positions within the College's research community are responsible for ensuring everyone who works under their supervision, directly or indirectly, understands and complies with all relevant research policies and practices.

The College, aided by the University of Regina, will conduct an inquiry and, if necessary, an investigation of every allegation of research ethics misconduct. Where research ethics misconduct is judged to have occurred, the College will apply remedies consistent with the seriousness of the misconduct, and consistent with the College's Collective Bargaining Agreement and Staff Association Agreement.

The President & CEO will notify the appropriate funding agencies and professional associations as required.

Guidelines

Research Subject to Ethics Review

Information on ethics review is also searchable on the University of Regina website [here](#) and those policies supersede guidelines within in this document.

Unless specifically excluded under Research not subject to ethical review by a REB described below, all research involving human subjects, performed by any paid employee of Great Plains College or by outside educational institutions, communities or agencies in partnership with Great Plains College, requires an ethics review.

All student research that meets any one of the following criteria will require an ethics review:

- If it is not part of a course requirement;
- If it involves deception; or
- Is beyond 'minimal risk', defined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement, (2010) as, "Research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in the aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research" (p. 194).

See Guidelines for Course-Based Research Projects on the University of Regina website for more details.

Action Research, which is a form of self-inquiry designed to improve the understanding and conduct of one's practice in a human service profession such as education, social work, or nursing, may or may not require REB review. See Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct and Review of Action Research on the University of Regina website.

Research Not Subject to Ethics Review

While still being required to adhere to these policy guidelines, the following research is exempt from the need for ethical review by a REB:

- Research or other study of the published writing or other public utterances of human subjects.
- Questionnaires concerning teaching performance or course content distributed to a class by instructors, coordinators, managers, or others.
- Research conducted by Great Plains College to meet external reporting requirements or to facilitate and inform the management of the institution, typically referred to as institutional research.
- Natural observation of participants in, for example, political rallies, demonstrations, or public meetings where it can be expected that participants are seeking public visibility.
- Research about a living individual involved in the public arena, based exclusively on publicly available information, documents, records, works, performances, archival materials, or third-party interviews, is not required to undergo ethical review.

Protocol for Ethics Review

The researcher or institution must follow all guidelines provided by the current U of R [ethics review policy and procedures](#). It is the responsibility of the College to ensure the most current policy, forms and templates are being used.

Once an application is submitted, the REB shall take one of the following actions:

- Approve the proposal,
- Approve the proposal with minor revisions,
- Approve the proposal with major revisions,
- Reject the proposal, or
- Forward the proposal to a partnering Saskatchewan university Research Ethics Review Board.

The Chair of the REB will communicate a decision on the request for approval in writing to the College director in charge as quickly as possible.

The REB has the responsibility to review ongoing research. Normally, continuing review should consist of submission of an annual status report to the REB in addition to reporting requirements of the Tri-Council granting agency.

Please note: The REB has discretion to terminate research and may withdraw ethical approval for ongoing research in case of any issue or event that may increase the level of risk to participants or has other ethical implications that may affect participants' welfare.

The REB must review all substantive changes from approved research that affect participants at any stage of the process including, but not limited to, changes to the consent form, changes to the tasks or interventions involved in the research, or changes to measures that protect privacy and confidentiality. Any substantive change to the research should not be implemented without documented approval by the REB, except when necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participants.

Protocol for Alleged Breach of Ethics in Research

In conducting applied research and in the administration of Agency grants supporting applied research, it is the College's responsibility to develop policy which responds to allegations of any type of policy breach by researcher, or the institution itself, in the conduct of research which falls under the auspices or jurisdiction of the College. The following guidelines present a framework for researchers and the College, in cases of such allegations.

Receiving Allegations

- The senior director with oversight for applied research within the College will be first point of contact for inquiries or allegations of ethical breach.
- An anonymous allegation will be considered if information provided is of sufficient depth and breadth for conducting an assessment of the allegation.
- All information related to an allegation will be held in confidence to protect the privacy of those submitting or otherwise involved in allegations (see also the statement on 'Disclosure' below).
- Should an allegation of ethical breach occur, the Tri-Council funding Agency will be notified as soon as possible, and actions will be taken to protect Agency funds or other interests of both parties.
- If a third-party organization is involved in the allegation, the institution receiving the allegation will inform the partner organization on which institution is best placed to conduct an inquiry and communicate to the complainant which institution will be the point of contact.

Investigating Allegations

- The senior director with oversight for applied research, in consultation with the President of the College, will determine if an investigation is required.
- Normally, the director with oversight for applied research will strike an Investigations Committee to review the allegation and determine next steps. Committee members will be selected or seconded with necessary expertise to assist in the assessment, and to eliminate or minimize conflicts of interest. At least one (1) member will be external with no affiliation to the College, complainant or respondent.
- Subsequent steps can include review of documents, testimonies, details of the allegation, including interviews with the complainant and respondent, witnesses, and

other related parties. Complainants and respondents can choose to have representation during interviews.

- When ethical misconduct is judged to have occurred, the College will take actions consistent with the seriousness of the offence, and consistent with the College's Collective Bargaining Unit and Staff Association agreements.
- The respondent, on confirmation of an ethical breach, has the right to appeal the decision of the Investigations Committee to the President and CEO of the College. The President, after consultation with the funding agency and the U of R, will initiate and appeals investigation with oversight provided by external experts.
- Timelines for completing an investigation, communicating its findings and implementing actions shall be consistent with timelines in Article 4.4 of the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research, (2016).
- If allegations are shown to be unfounded, the College will communicate such findings to all parties and make every effort to protect and restore the reputations of those wrongly accused.

Disclosure of Investigation Documents

All documents and statements obtained during the course of the investigation, including the names and copies of witness statements, shall not be disclosed to any person unless required by law. Beyond what is necessary to conduct the investigation, implement actions, or pursue legal remedies, all information pertaining to any investigation will remain confidential.

Rights of Reconsideration and Appeal

Researchers submitting research proposals that are not approved have the right to request a reconsideration of the decision by the full membership of the REB. Researchers may do so by submitting a letter in writing to the Chair of the REB, providing the foundation of their request. If the reconsideration process is exhausted without satisfaction to the researcher an appeal process is available.

The process for appealing a REB decision is provided on the University of Regina Research Office website. The researcher is responsible for ensuring they are utilizing the most current policy, forms and templates.

The decision of the U of R Appeals Committee shall be considered final.

Special Considerations

Research involving Captive and Dependent Populations

The informed consent of each individual subject that will be involved in the research must be obtained. In addition to consent of the subjects themselves, informed consent of the entity or individual seen to exercise authority over the population must be obtained. Where consent of the subjects themselves cannot be obtained, it must be sought from the entity or individual seen to exercise authority over the population, together with the written consent from a person who acts as an independent advocate for the subjects. Captive and dependent subjects must always have the right and power to veto any consent provided by others. See Informed Consent Guidelines on the University of Regina website.

Research Involving Children

Informed consent of the parent or guardians of the child must be obtained before using minors in research. In school, camps, or other group settings, consent of the Principal, Director, or other appropriate authority must also be obtained. Where a child is a ward of the state or of an agency, such as the Ministry of Social Services, informed consent of the agency director, as well as of the person having custody, must be obtained. Children must be individually given the opportunity to refuse to participate or to withdraw. See Child Assent Guidelines on the University of Regina website.

Research involving Indigenous People, other Cultures and Ethnic Groups

Research on individuals and/or communities in culture(s) and ethnic group(s) require careful consideration. Permission or approval by a community or cultural group may be necessary. When researchers outside their own culture are operating from a position of advantage, they have a responsibility to ensure that research subjects shall not be exposed to legal sanctions, ridicule, or danger. As well, researchers have a responsibility to respect and adapt to customs in a sensitive manner.

A communication gap may make informed consent impossible, as the people under study may be unable to estimate the risks to their reputations, or potential damage to their communities. Absence of informed consent places additional responsibility and restrictions on researchers. Researchers must satisfy the ethics review concerning these safeguards in the methodology.

For further guidance on Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples of Canada, refer to Chapter 9 of the most current Tri-Council Policy Statement available [here](#).