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Responsible Unit:	Research Ethics Board
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The Research Ethics Board (REB) exists to ensure that all research conducted at the College meets the highest ethical standard. The REB review process is designed to ensure that:

- research is in compliance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans (TCPS 2)*;
- any real or perceived instances of conflict of interest are appropriately handled in accordance with both the TCPS 2 and the college's policies, particularly those concerning Academic Integrity and Conflict of Interest; and
- the rights and interests of research participants are protected, and
- when necessary, researchers are provided with an opportunity to make their studies more ethically sound.

What research requires ethics review by the REB?

Conestoga College has adopted the policy that all research involving human participants requires ethics review and approval by the REB prior to commencement of the research.

Research involving human remains, cadavers, tissues, biological fluids, embryos or fetuses, or records from human subjects (chart review; use of data for new purposes) also requires ethics review by the REB before any research is conducted.

Research requiring ethics review includes any research that:

- Is conducted by College faculty, staff or students;
- Is conducted on the premises of the College;
- Is conducted with or involves the use of facilities or equipment belonging to the College;
- Involves College students, staff or faculty;
- Is conducted by College students for courses or theses;
- Satisfies a requirement by the College for a certificate, diploma or Applied Degree program or for completion of course of study;
- Is certified by an Associate Vice-President or department Chair to satisfy an obligation of a faculty appointment at the College, or
- Is conducted by or under the direction of any employee or agent of the College in connection with his or her institutional responsibilities.

This policy applies whether:

- The research is funded or not;
- The research is to be published or not;
- A similar project has been approved elsewhere or not;
- The research is a pilot study or a fully developed project;
- The research is primarily for teaching or training purposes or whether the primary purpose is the acquisition of knowledge.

For more information regarding procedures for review of research by the Conestoga College Research Ethics Board, see <http://www.conestogac.on.ca/research/ethics/researchethics.jsp>. For more information on the College policy on ethical conduct in research involving humans, see <http://www.conestogac.on.ca/research/forms/ethicalconductinresearchinvolvinghumans.pdf>. The Tri-Council policy statement on ethical conduct for research involving humans can be viewed at www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm

What inquiry is exempt from ethics review by the REB?

Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the following specific areas are identified by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* as being exempt from ethics review and approval by a Research Ethics Board:

- Quality assurance studies, performance reviews or testing related to assessing performance of employees or students within normal educational or employment requirements provided that the study contains no element of research.
Note: Results of quality assurance studies or performance review are not generally for public release.
- Research about a living individual involved in the public arena, or an artist, when the research is based exclusively on publicly available information, documents, records, works, performances, archival materials or third party interviews. If the individual(s) are approached directly for an interview or for access to private papers, ethics review is required to ensure that the request for the interview or access to the private papers is made in accordance with ethical and professional standards.
- Naturalistic observation of participants where it can be expected that the participants are seeking public visibility, such as political rallies, demonstrations or public meetings.
- Use of public records.
- **Data which is provided by an interaction with individuals who are not themselves the focus of the research in order to obtain information (e.g. people who are authorized to release information in the ordinary course of their employment about organizational policies, procedures, practices or statistical reports).**

Is my project classified as research?

Conestoga College recognizes that using definitions to classify projects as research can be problematic because there are no universal definitions of the terms research, quality improvement, or program evaluation. However, a number of organizations, agencies and governing bodies or associations have developed definitions which are informative and useful and which have been adopted by this college. The following summary outlines these definitions to help researchers and REB members decide whether or not a project is research and would therefore require ethics review by the REB:

Research: An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation (Subgroup on procedural issues for the TCPS (ProGroup), 2008).

Applied Research: Original investigation, undertaken to acquire new knowledge, or to apply existing knowledge in a novel way, directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective. Ideas are developed into operational form to produce new products, devices, processes, systems, and services or to improve substantially those already produced or installed (CCITAL, Applied Research Policy, 2007).

Quality Assurance: Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2004).

Quality assurance is based on established standards and systematic measurement and evaluation against those standards. In academics, this includes measurement against Conestoga College's standards for curriculum documentation and delivery, paying particular attention to ongoing feedback of stakeholders (Conestoga College Strategic Plan, 2005-2010).

Performance Evaluations: Studies related directly to assessing the performance of an organization or its employees or students, within the mandate of the organization or according to the terms and conditions of employment or training (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2004).

Please note that these definitions are only a guideline. If you are still unsure about whether the project you wish to undertake is research, you are encouraged to contact the REB Chair for further clarification. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that an appropriate decision has been reached with the Chair of the REB in regard to the requirement for Research Ethics Board approval. Failure to do so would be a violation of college policy. Research projects that are found to have been undertaken before receiving REB approval may be suspended.

Questions to ask when determining whether a project requires REB approval:

1. Is the primary aim of the project to produce new knowledge, to expand existing knowledge or theory, or to apply existing knowledge in a novel way?
2. Is there an expectation to share or disseminate results or findings within a professional community through publications or presentations or at conferences?

If the answer to either of these questions is “yes”, it is likely that the project is defined as research and will require REB review.

1. Is the goal of the project to monitor or improve service delivery or program quality as measured by established standards?
2. Is the intent of the project to assess performance of an organization or its employees according to terms and conditions of employment?

If the answer to either of these questions is “yes”, it is likely that the project is defined as quality assurance or performance evaluation and therefore does not require review by the REB.

Notes:

- Intent to publish does not by itself determine the primary purpose of a project.
- Some performance reviews or quality assurance studies do contain an element of research in addition to assessment. These projects do require REB review.
- Some projects that are not categorized as research and therefore do not require review by the REB do present ethical issues. Individuals administering these projects must ensure that ethical standards are maintained. The REB guidelines and TCPS documentation may suggest ethical considerations or options for the project administrator to consider even though the REB has no direct responsibility for these projects.

The intent of some projects changes over time. If the original intent of a project is QA or program evaluation and this changes to research, the project will need to undergo ethics review, even if underway.

Other frequently asked questions about REB review:

My research has already been approved by another REB. Do I still have to apply to Conestoga's REB?

Yes. Conestoga's REB must review and approve all research conducted at the College to ensure that Conestoga's REB remains duly diligent in ensuring that the research supports TCPS principles and the rights of research participants and to ensure that the

research addresses needs and concerns which may be unique to our college or community. You can facilitate the review of your proposed project by submitting to Conestoga's REB copies of all correspondence with other REBs, including certificates of approval and copies of approved consent forms, information letters, etc.

I'm just talking to people. I don't need to apply to the REB, right?

"Just talking to people" might or might not constitute research. If, after reading the guidelines above, you are not sure whether your project is research and therefore requires review by the REB, please contact the Chair of the REB for assistance.

I'm collecting information in order to develop evidence-informed curriculum. That doesn't need ethics review, does it?

If you are supporting curriculum development decisions with information that is publicly available (for example, in published literature) then you are not doing research. If you are gathering information from people in order to create evidence that informs curriculum development, you likely are doing research and will need to submit your project for ethics review.

The managers of a local community agency have asked me to create a continuing education course for their employees. I am planning to conduct a needs assessment with the employees. Is that considered research? Does it require ethics review?

Frequently needs assessments are considered research and therefore do require review. The exception might be if you are monitoring an existing project to see whether it is meeting the needs of stakeholders. If you are unsure, please contact the Chair of the REB for further information.

I gather a lot of information as part of my administrative work. How do I know if this information gathering requires ethics review?

Frequently, administrative information gathering is undertaken for the purpose of assessing student satisfaction, identifying product or service enhancements, providing advice for operation management and so forth. In this context of supporting normal operations of the College, this information gathering would not be considered research requiring REB review. Individuals gathering information in these instances must, however, ensure that highest ethical standards are maintained and anonymity of respondents is protected. (adapted from The University of Manitoba, 2001)

Administrators who are uncertain whether the information gathering procedures require REB review should consult the Chair of the Research Ethics Board.

I'm only having people fill in one short anonymous survey. If they complete it, that indicates their consent. There's no need for review by the REB, is there?

Whether or not your project requires review depends on the subject matter of the survey. For example, if your survey asks participants about their satisfaction with a College course or service, it is likely that your project is quality assurance or program evaluation and does not require REB review. If your survey falls into the category of research as previously described, it must be reviewed and approved by the REB prior to commencement. Assurances of anonymity and voluntary participation do not exempt research projects from ethics review.

Do I still need to apply to the REB for ethics review if my research has no known risks?

Yes, you must still apply to the REB. It is the responsibility of the REB to consider the balance of harms and benefits of a research project in accordance with TCPS guidelines. In keeping with the REB's proportionate approach to research ethics, studies that present minimal risks to participants may be afforded a delegated review rather than review by the full Research Ethics Board. The researcher has a responsibility to respect the human dignity and ensure the welfare and integrity of individuals who participate in research.

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