

February XX, 2020

Dear research community,

The Ontario Tech Research Ethics Board (REB) is pleased to share with you updates on new initiatives to streamline and facilitate with the ethics review process, and to provide important notifications about the REB.

In this issue, you will find:

# Important Notifications:

1. Non-peak REB submission period
2. 2018-2018 REB annual report available.
3. Reminder: Updated Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, 2018, TCPS (2018),
4. Major change: New requirements for research consent forms,
5. New submission tools for researchers,
6. Ongoing recruitment of new REB members,
7. New REB Twitter account,
8. New Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Process for Consideration or Appeal of Decisions of the REB,
9. IRIS user resources and training.

# New Initiatives:

1. REB application,
2. Pre-approvals for standing practices in research projects,
3. Board of Record Research Ethics Review Agreement with Ontario Shores and Lakeridge Health.

# Services and Education Available:

1. REB consultations,
2. Research ethics education,
3. New education eModule on Vulnerable Circumstances.

## Important Notifications

1. **Non-peak REB submission period**

The REB encourages early planning of REB submissions to minimize unforeseen delays with project start-ups. If you are planning to submit an application to the REB, this is a good time to do so as the REB is undergoing a non-peak submission period.

It is important to note that the standard time for communicating results about the review are within **20 to 30 business days upon acceptance of the original ethics application**. However, some applications may take longer due to the additional information or clarifications that the Board may require. Another important note is that **peak REB submission periods are from July to November**, which may result in extended review turnaround times. Therefore the REB strongly encourages researchers to utilize the non-peak submission period to apply to the REB.

1. **2018-2018 REB annual report available**

The REB publishes a report annually to inform the Ontario Tech University members, research staff and other interested groups of the REB’s activities throughout the year. This report covers the REB’s activities from July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, fiscal year.

The report is available on the REB’s website at: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/reb/resources-and-policy/annual_reports.php>

1. **Reminder: Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, 2018, TCPS (2018**)

As of June 2019, Canada’s Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research released the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, 2018, TCPS (2018), which replaced TCPS (2014) as the official research ethics policy of the federal research agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC). The REB encourages researchers to consult with the new version of the TCPS2 when creating REB submissions.

Read more about this release at: [http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/nr-cp\_2019-06-](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/nr-cp_2019-06-05.html) [05.html](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/nr-cp_2019-06-05.html).

A summary of the revisions that were published in TCPS (2018) is available in the Highlights of Changes found here: [http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_changes.html) [politique\_tcps2-eptc2\_changes.html](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_changes.html).

1. **MAJOR CHANGE: New requirements for research consent forms**

In October 2019, the REB consent form was revised and available for use on the REB website. Since October, the consent form was piloted in a number of new REB submissions and feedback was acquired from research users on the new form. Based on the feedback, further refinements to the consent form have been made. In addition, the consent form was revised to meet the standards set out by the current guidelines, policies, regulations and research ethics best practices.

Effective [date of this letter], all REB submissions where Ontario Tech will lead the research activities (i.e. data collection, recruitment of study participants), must use the new consent form template which can be found on the REB homepage. As an example, when Ontario Tech will lead research recruitment activities or when the primary study population is recruited from Ontario Tech, the new consent form template must be used. In cases where departures from the consent form template are required, the spirit of the template can be followed and the consent principles outlined in the TCPS2 must be considered for alterations to the consent requirements. However, all other studies must use the new template for all submissions when Ontario Tech will lead the primary research activities.

The consent form template is currently available for use on the REB’s website under Resources: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/reb/tips-and-samples/index.php>

1. **New submission tools for researchers**

The REB continues to make available the Ethical Merit Assessment Form and the IRIS pre-submission REB application checklist on the REB homepage. Researchers can use these highly useful tools to guide their research ethics submissions. In particular, researchers can use the Ethical Merit Assessment Form to self-assess their submissions to ensure that the research ethics themes

and principles of the TCPS2 are considered in their ethics applications to facilitate with the review and approval.

In addition, researchers are highly encouraged to use the IRIS pre-submission REB application checklist to ensure that REB applications are complete before submitting to the REB.

These submission tools are available on the REB website under Resources: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/reb/tips-and-samples/index.php>

1. **Ongoing recruitment of new REB members**

The REB members are critical to ensure the success of timely and ethically sound research ethic reviews. For this reason, the REB continually seeks expressions of interest for appointment to the REB for general memberships (3-year term, renewable). Applicants must have knowledge of the TCPS (2018) and current research experience involving human participants.

Interested applicants are asked to email researchethics@uoit.ca a current CV (condensed). Questions about the REB, or the position, can also be emailed to the Research Ethics Office at researchethics@uoit.ca or call (905) 721-8668 extension 3693.

1. **REB Twitter**

The Ontario Tech REB is on Twitter. Researchers and other members from the research community can follow @OntarioTechREB for news, announcements, events, and developments surrounding research ethics at Ontario Tech.

1. **New Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Process for Consideration or Appeal of Decisions of the REB**

A new SOP on the Process for Consideration or Appeal of Decisions of the REB is available on the REB’s website. This SOP describes the reconsideration and appeal process of the REB for unfavorable decisions rendered by the REB on proposals involving human participants or human biological materials. This procedure has been set out in accordance with the Tri-Council Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2018).

As a first step, the REB encourages on-going collegial and collaborative discussions with the Principal Investigator (PI), the REB Chair/Vice-Chair and/or REB administration relating to the submission of research proposals. In the event of a disagreement between the PI and REB over a decision regarding a research proposal that cannot be resolved through collaborative discussions, the PI is entitled to a reconsideration by the REB. If the reconsideration does not resolve the disagreement, the PI may appeal the REB decision in accordance to these procedures (Article 6.19, TCPS2 2018).

The new SOP can be accessed in the REB Documents of the website: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/reb/resources-and-policy/index.php>

1. **IRIS Research Portal user resources and training**

The Office of Research Services (ORS) has created many online resources to assist you with using the IRIS research portal. This includes guidelines on registering for an IRIS account and frequently asked questions about the system. In addition, ORS can provide in-person training sessions and demonstrations on the use of IRIS.

The online resources can be accessed here: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/iris-research-portal/iris-user-resources-and-training/how-do-i/index.php>

To book a training session or demonstration, email the IRIS support administrator at iris@uoit.ca

## New Initiatives

1. **REB website**

The REB has a new look and features up-to-date information about the REB and provides access to the most recent templates for use. The website is accessible at the following link: <https://research.ontariotechu.ca/reb/index.php>.

1. **REB application**

Since October, the REB revised and peer-reviewed a new REB application. The new application includes new questions that are in-line with current standard practices and regulations related to research involving human participants. The REB is currently seeking researchers to pilot the new application for future submissions and to provide feedback on the new application.

The original REB application is still accessible and available for use in the IRIS research portal until the new REB application is finalized, at which point it will serve as a replacement for the original REB application.

1. **Pre-approvals for standing practices in research projects**

The REB is currently working on a pre-approval process that will allow researchers to seek approval for the standard research procedure that can be applied across similar studies. As an example, for multi-research studies that conduct standard research procedures involving specialized equipment, recruitment of a unique population, and/or standard data collection procedures, a pre-approval application

can be submitted for review and approval, in which the approval can be applied to other studies.

The application process will require the completion of a pre-approval application and a stand-alone document (e.g. Standard Operating Procedure or protocol) that will describe in detail the standard research practices. The pre-approval application will undergo a review by the REB. Once approved, researchers can append the approved process as an appendix to other REB applications. This will eliminate redundancies of answering the same questions in the REB application when the methods were approved in previous applications. This process is currently under development and more information will follow by in the next few months.

1. **Board of Record (BoR) Research Ethics Review Agreement with Lakeridge Health (LH) and Ontario Shores (OS) REB**

The Office of Research Services and Ontario Tech REB are in the midst of developing a Board of Record (BoR) agreement and standard operating procedures between Ontario Tech REB and Lakeridge Health (LH) REB, and Ontario Tech REB and Ontario Shores (OS) REB. Under the BOR review process, the ethics review is will streamlined between studies involving Ontario Tech and LH, or Ontario Tech and OS where only one ethics submission is required at one institution. The aim is to have an executed agreement and Standard Operating Procedures finalized by this year. More updates will follow.

## Services and Education Available

1. **REB Consultations**

In-person or remote REB consultations are available to all researchers and students for assistance on their REB submission. To name a few, REB consultations are discussions on how to submit to the REB; human ethics advice; interpreting the content of the REB application; applicable legislations; procedures and/or policies; and assessing the level of risk for your study and determining which REB application to use. REB consultations can facilitate and streamline the ethics review and approval process; therefore, researchers are encouraged to seek a consultation before applying to the REB.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office at researchethics@uoit.ca or 905.721.8668 x. 3693 to schedule a consultation.

1. **Research Ethics Education**

Representatives from the REB are available for a presentation or class discussion about research ethics. Please contact the Research Ethics Office at researchethics@uoit.ca or 905.721.8668 x. 3693 to set up a time.

1. **New education eModule on Vulnerable Circumstances**

Do you experience challenges in understanding and applying the concept of vulnerable circumstances in research contexts?

The concept of vulnerability is central to international and national research ethics guidelines and policies, which help Research Ethics Boards (REBs), determine whether the risks and benefits are appropriately balanced in research proposals.  Research proposals involving vulnerable populations require greater care and attention as their participation in research may lead to vulnerable circumstances such as inadvertent exploitation and/or long-term consequences.

The Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (CAREB-ACCER) created an eModule on vulnerable circumstances that will assist researchers and REB members conceptualize this abstract concept and apply it in real-life research contexts.  In particular, this eModule will help research ethics professionals and researchers:

1. Learn that all human participants are potentially vulnerable either because of the shifting circumstances in which they find themselves in their daily lives or from the risks they may encounter when taking part in research.
2. Explore how the concept of vulnerability has developed in light of historical events and the key research ethics documents such as the Nuremberg Code and others that were created in their wake.
3. Explore the tensions between the concepts of” vulnerable circumstances” and “vulnerable populations” and why it is valuable to struggle with that tension. Including the confrontation of exclusion, paternalism “disablism” due to well-meant intentions.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office at researchethics@uoit.ca or 905-721-8668

ext. 3693 for access to the institutional code for this eModule.

The REB is committed to frequent and open communication with the research community about upcoming initiatives, updates and important notifications. In addition, we welcome any feedback or comments you may have.

Sincerely,

Ontario Tech University REB researchethics@uoit.ca