

December 2020

Dear research community,

The Ontario Tech Research Ethics Board (REB) is pleased to share with you important notifications about the REB:

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### *Peak REB submission period during COVID-19 pandemic*

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The REB is still experiencing a high number of submissions. REB membership and staffing levels may be reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may result in extended review turnaround times. During this time, researchers are strongly encouraged to submit their applications early to minimize unforeseen delays.

If you require assistance with your submission or would like to receive a consultation, please feel free to [contact the Research Ethics office](#) to book a virtual appointment.

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### *Changes to modified review procedures for COVID-19 related studies*

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Due to the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the REB has changed the criteria for rapid reviews related to COVID-19 projects. The REB will conduct rapid reviews for COVID-19-related studies with topics that are necessary and essential to **prevent, reduce or mitigate** serious harm resulting from the pandemic (e.g. patient care and/or diagnostics; equipment/devices related to personal protective equipment). The REB will review all other studies after the essential COVID-19-related studies.

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### *Applications for research projects involving in-person contact*

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The REB is currently accepting submissions for research with in-person contact so long as the proper health and safety directives from Public Health and the university are followed, and all attributable risks to study participation are carefully considered and conveyed to study participants.

It is important to note that all submissions for in-person research must:

1. Undergo a REB consultation **prior** to submission.
2. Undergo a full board review at monthly REB meeting.

3. Include evidence of institutional approval for on-campus research.
4. Use the REB's new [Guidance on Ethical Considerations for Research Conduct during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) to ensure all requirements are embedded in the application and that the risks to in-person research are adequately described in the participant consent form.

The REB meeting dates and submission deadlines can be found on the [REB's website](#).

Given the dynamic nature of this pandemic and the growing number of COVID-19 cases, researchers are advised that public health and/or the University may issue directives to discontinue in person research taking place on campus with short notice. Researchers must ensure that there is a plan in place to ramp down or discontinue in-person research activities without compromising the safety of study participants while maintaining the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS 2). As part of the ramp down/discontinuation of research, researchers must conduct the following:

1. Determine if research protocols can:
  - a. be modified or delayed to limit unnecessary personal contacts;
  - b. reduce in-person participant interactions and replace with telephone or online communication; and
  - c. postpones in-person study visits, focus groups, interviews, and/or conducted on-line/virtual format.
2. Data and files are accessible remotely while respecting privacy legislations, requirements of the TCPS 2 and data management plan as outlined in the REB application.
3. Arrange installation of any specific computer applications required to complete work remotely.
4. **Inform the REB of any changes that have been made to the protocol and revisions to the informed consent form that may impact a participant's decision to continue with the research.** This must be submitted to the REB through a change request application.

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***Board of Record Research Ethics Review Agreement with Lakeridge Health REB***

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The Ontario Tech and Lakeridge Health (LH) Board of Record (BOR) agreement is now active. The BOR review process will streamline ethics review between LH and the university so that an ethics submission is only required at one institution. To learn more about the BOR review

process, download the [Standard Operating Procedure document](#) related to this agreement, or [contact the Research Ethics office](#).

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### *Pre-approvals for standing practices in research projects*

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The REB is currently accepting submissions for researchers seeking pre-approval for a standard research procedure that can be applied across similar studies (e.g. in the case of multi-research studies that conduct standard research procedures involving specialized equipment, recruitment of a unique population, and/or standard data collection procedures). Download the related [Standard Operating Procedures document](#) to learn more.

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### *Ongoing recruitment of new REB members*

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REB members play a critical role in ensuring the success of timely and ethically sound research ethic reviews. The REB continually seeks expressions of interest for appointment to the REB for general memberships (three-year term, renewable). Applicants must have knowledge of the TCPS 2 (2018) and current research experience involving human participants.

Interested applicants should send a current CV (condensed) to [researchethics@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:researchethics@ontariotechu.ca).

We are currently seeking members from the faculties of Business and Information Technology, and Health Sciences.

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### *Services and education:*

#### *REB consultations*

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In-person or remote consultations are available to all researchers and students who need help with their REB submissions. REB consultations include discussions on:

- How to submit to the REB.
- Human ethics advice.
- Interpreting the content of the REB application.
- Applicable legislation.
- Procedures and/or policies.
- 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; researchers are encouraged to seek a consultation before applying to the REB.

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*Research ethics education*

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REB representatives are available to give presentations or facilitate class discussions about research ethics. Contact the Research Ethics office to set up a time.

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

Sincerely,

Ontario Tech REB  
[researchethics@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:researchethics@ontariotechu.ca)