

# Research Ethics Board Annual Report to the BCIT Board of Governors (2019)

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## Introduction

BCIT's Research Ethics Board (REB) operates under BCIT Policy 6500.<sup>(1,2)</sup> All research projects involving human participants or human biological materials undertaken by members of the BCIT community fall within the jurisdiction of the BCIT REB. Projects conducted by researchers from outside the BCIT community who access Institute resources (equipment, facilities, personnel, or participants) also fall within the jurisdiction of the BCIT REB when those projects involve human participants or human biological materials. The REB reports directly to the Board of Governors and is administratively responsible to the Vice President, Academic.

In carrying out its responsibility to review and approve research projects, the REB ensures that research involving human participants under the auspices of BCIT is done with due regard for ethical principles. BCIT's REB adheres to the principles set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)<sup>(4)</sup> which sets the national standards that are followed across Canada. REB members are aware that research done under the auspices of BCIT carries an implied liability, and must therefore meet the highest ethical standards.

Besides protecting the interests of human participants, REB review enables BCIT researchers to maintain their eligibility for national and international research funding. In addition, the REB contributes to education in research ethics for faculty, staff and students.

## Reviewing Applications

In 2019, The BCIT REB reviewed 46 applications. This represented a 171% increase over our historical (2005-2015) average of 17 applications. Applicants seeking ethics approval completed a comprehensive application form<sup>(3)</sup> and submitted all relevant supporting documentation.

The review process involved first determining whether the project was "minimal risk." To be deemed minimal risk the project exposed the participants to no greater harm than they would normally encounter in their daily lives. Projects that exceeded minimal risk were reviewed by the full REB, whereas minimal risk projects were reviewed by a delegated review panel of two REB members. Forty-five of the applications reviewed were deemed to be of minimal risk by the Chair in consultation with the board and other REBs. One application was determined to be above minimal risk and reviewed by the full board. All student projects (22) were circulated to the full REB for feedback.

Following REB review, applicants were informed of any revisions required, once revisions were made, projects were approved for a period of one year. In total 39/46 (85%) studies were approved. Of the seven remaining studies that were not approved, five were found to be exempt from review (no human participants), and two were not revised or resubmitted by the investigator following review.

36/46 (78%) of the applicants were from BCIT. BCIT applicants were members of faculty conducting research, students, faculty and staff working towards postgraduate degrees at other institutions, and researchers in Applied Research conducting contract research projects for external clients. The remaining ten outside applications came from researchers completing graduate work at other institutions and others conducting research involving students or faculty as participants.

Faculty and student collaborative research grew in 2019 with twelve studies (26%) submitted through the *Research Ethics BC* platform hosted by UBC (RISe/PREP). Applicants completed one online application, which was reviewed in parallel by the participating REBs—simplifying approval for REBs and researchers.

The increase in applications this year came primarily from student projects with faculty/staff submitting 14 studies (39%) and students 22 (61%). The four student groups submitting studies this year were Environmental Health (10 studies; 45% of student research), Forensics (8 studies; 36%), who both have student projects every year, Prosthetics and Orthotics (2 studies; 9%), and Building Science Graduate Program (2 studies; 9%).

## Other business

Approximately 31 additional requests were received for information on REB application, including meetings with prospective applicants. Thirteen studies from the current year or previous years were renewed or amended. The Chair gave an overview of research ethics to Environmental Health students and provided guidelines for capstone projects to School of Business faculty.

## Reviewing REB Policy and Procedures

TCPS2 was updated in August 2019 by the Panel on Research Ethics and the Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research. Changes to the policy were reviewed and BCIT documents updated to reflect the changes. The applicant-facing forms and instructions can be found on our website.<sup>(3)</sup>

## Continuing education

To keep the board's knowledge of privacy and research ethics current, one or more board members are given the opportunity to attend national or regional ethics meetings and report back to the board. This year, one member attended the national Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (CAREB) meeting and one member attended the meeting of regional ethics boards (REB West), organized jointly by UBC and SFU.

## REB Membership

The members of the REB at the close of 2019 were: Meena Amlani (Faculty, Medical Radiography Technology), Francine Anselmo (Faculty, Medical Radiography Technology), Michael Bourke (*Member knowledgeable in ethics*; Program Head, Liberal Studies), Ron Correll (*Member knowledgeable in law*;

Instructor, Department of Business Administration), Funda Isbuga Erel (Research and Information Analyst, Institutional Planning & Analysis), Roger Gale (Instructor, Computer Information Systems Administration), Katherine Golder (Instructor, Communication), Yvette Jones (Project Leader, Applied Research MAKE+), Allison Kirschenmann (Instructor, Basic Health Sciences), Jacob McPhail (*Student member*, Software Developer, Computer Systems), Borna Nouredin (Faculty, Computer Systems & Network Fundamentals), Glynda Rees (Instructor, Bachelor of Science Nursing Program), Hal Weinberg, OBC (*Community member*). The board is supported by Jenna Clews, ARLO-Administrative Assistant Liaison Office/REB administrator and Joe Boyd, Research Liaison, Applied Research Liaison Office, who updates our website on the Applied Research pages.

The REB meets regularly every second month. Minutes of the meetings are kept.

## Signed

Allison Kirschenmann  
BCIT REB Chair

## References

- (1) <http://www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/6500.pdf>
- (2) [https://www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/6500\\_pr1.pdf](https://www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/6500_pr1.pdf)
- (3) <https://www.bcit.ca/appliedresearch/ethics/>
- (4) <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>