

# Research Ethics Board Annual Report to the BCIT Board of Governors (2021)

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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 2021, The BCIT REB reviewed 35 applications. This represented a 106% increase over our historical (2005-2015) average of 17 applications, due in large part to additional student 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 where BCIT was the primary board were reviewed by a delegated review panel of two REB members. All 35 applications reviewed were deemed to be of minimal risk by the chair in consultation with the board and other REBs. Student projects (12) were reviewed by the chair and open to the full REB for comments.

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 35/35 (100%) of studies were approved.

22/35 (63%) 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 13 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 in 2021 (harmonized studies) included 12 studies (34%) 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 came primarily from student projects with faculty/staff submitting 23 studies (66%; pre-2015, 17 studies) and students submitting 12 (34%; pre-2015, none). The four student groups submitting studies this year were Environmental Health (7 studies; 58% of student research), Forensics (1 study; 8%), Master of Engineering in Building Science (1 study; 8%), with student projects every year, and Prosthetics and Orthotics (3 studies; 8%), with projects every other year. An additional thirteen student studies were deferred from December 2021 to January 2022 due to a change in student submission process and will be reflected in the 2022 report.

## **Other business**

Approximately 22 additional requests were received for information on REB application, including meetings with prospective applicants. 20 studies from the current year or previous years were renewed or amended. Research Ethics BC administrators continued regular group meetings every three weeks with member REBs to coordinate response to COVID-19-related research and the impact of the pandemic on research studies.

## **Reviewing REB Policy and Procedures**

Application, informed consent, member guides, and policy are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. As need for changes arose, the PDF application form was updated in collaboration with Bev Hunter in BCIT Imaging, the ShareSpace archive and review workflow system was revised with Andrew Jackson in ITS, and the BCIT REB website was updated in collaboration with Joe Boyd in Applied Research.<sup>(3)</sup> REB member, Meena Amlani, volunteered to create an REB application course on LearningHub to walk students and faculty/staff through the process, adding to the suite of REB portals.

## **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, two members attended the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (CAREB) meeting virtually.

## REB Membership

The members of the REB at the close of 2021 were: Meena Amlani (Faculty, Medical Radiography Technology), Michael Bourke (*Member knowledgeable in ethics*; Program Head, Liberal Studies), Vasco Castela (*Member knowledgeable in ethics*; Faculty, Liberal Studies Department), Roger Gale (Instructor, Computer Information Systems Administration), Yvette Jones (Project Leader, Applied Research MAKE+), Allison Kirschenmann (Instructor, Basic Health Sciences), Jacob McPhail (*Student member*, Software Developer, Computer Systems), Shiva Mostafavi (Senior Analyst, Institutional Research and Planning), Megan Murphy (*Member knowledgeable in law*; Faculty, Basic Health Sciences), 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/applied-research/research-support/research-ethics/>
- (4) <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>