DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY Postgraduate Medical Education **Access to Residents for Research Guidelines**	*Policy Sponsor:* Faculty of Medicine	*Approval Date:* *December 11, 2025*
	Responsible Unit: Postgraduate Medical Education	*Amendments:*

Purpose

Medical education research is an increasingly recognized area of scholarship. Dalhousie University has a number of medical education investigators and co-sponsors a master's degree in medical education. As such, the Dalhousie community is actively engaged in medical education research activities. To conduct such research on topics in residency education, investigators sometimes seek to access residents. In other cases, investigators seek to determine the specific opinions or views of residents on a non- medical education topic. To access residents, the PGME office is approached by investigators and asked to collaborate.

While individual programs and the postgraduate medical education office can provide such access for individual worthwhile projects, some have expressed concern that the information sought and the volume of requests for study participation could pose an undue burden on residents and may represent a violation of their expectation of privacy.

To facilitate medical education research and other types of research involving residents at Dalhousie, provide guidance to investigators who are studying valid and useful educational questions, and provide a degree of assurance to residents and program directors that the residents' privacy will be respected, the following guidelines have been drafted.

Application

These guidelines apply to all research and evaluation projects that seek to 1) recruit residents from multiple (>5) training programs; and/or 2) access residents through the central PGME database. Research and evaluation projects that involve residents in 5 or fewer programs may be approved by individual program director(s). These guidelines do not apply to course evaluations carried out for the purposes of quality assurance/improvement. Research and evaluation projects may be locally initiated or originated outside the institution. They may or may not focus on medical education.

These guidelines do not apply to industry-based research projects seeking to determine the opinion of residents about individual products or product lines for the purpose of marketing. Such projects

are not supported by the PGME office.

Under no circumstances will the PGME office release a list of residents' email addresses directly to investigators. Rather, the PGME office may distribute approved surveys or questionnaires to residents through a weblink. They may also distribute introduction letters inviting residents who are interested in participation to contact the research team themselves. It should be noted that PGME will not be responsible for research participation including compliance with deadlines or follow ups, or receiving back completed surveys.

All approved projects will be required to supply the PGME office with a summary of findings that may be distributed to residents within 3 months of study completion.

Definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines, the PGME Committee refers to the standing committee of Faculty Council on Postgraduate Medical Education. Investigator refers to the person submitting the request for access to the residents.

Procedures

Investigators with a project that requires resident involvement as respondents or participants should submit a proposal to the PGME office to the attention of the Associate Dean. The proposal should be submitted by the 15th day of the month prior to the PGME Committee meeting at which the project is to be discussed. The proposal should follow the approved template for submissions (include link). The names and affiliations of all members of the research team must also be provided. Efforts should be made to submit from September to June, when PGME meetings are held regularly. If approval is required during the months of July and August, when the PGME committee does not meet, the proposal may be submitted directly to the Associate Dean for independent consideration.

Ethics approval is not required prior to an application being submitted. Evaluation projects, for instance, are exempt from ethics review according to the TCPS2 (Tri-Council Policy Statement), Article 2.5. However, in cases where ethics approval is required, investigators must submit proof of ethics approval prior to commencing data collection involving residents. Multi-jurisdictional research and proposals submitted by non-Dalhousie faculty, residents or students must obtain Board of Record Review Acknowledgement from Dalhousie's research ethics office and have a local champion if data collection requires local involvement beyond e-mails to residents.

On receipt of the proposal, the PGME office staff will include it in the PGME agenda materials that are sent to committee members before each meeting. The investigator or his/her representative will be invited to attend the PGME meeting and will have up to 10 minutes to discuss the project and answer questions.

Following a review of the project, the investigator will be excused and the PGME committee will vote to allow or not to allow the PGME office to facilitate access to residents by distributing surveys or invitations to participate electronically. A majority of votes of committee members present will be required to allow the project access to residents. If the vote is yes, then the investigator will work with the Evaluation Specialist in PGME to facilitate resident access. If the vote is no, the PGME office will not facilitate the project. There is no appeal for this decision, but if the project is modified to become more acceptable, it may be resubmitted at a later date.

Within 3 months of study completion, the investigator will work with the Evaluation Specialist to distribute study findings to residents at Dalhousie. Findings need not be published to be circulated; they may be included in a fact sheet, infographic, or other form of summary that demonstrates the contribution made by resident participation in the study.

Please be aware that any electronic survey used to collect data must meet the *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act*.

The following criteria will be used by the Postgraduate Medical Education Committee when assessing research projects for approval:

- Is there a benefit to residents who participate in the study?
- Is there a benefit to future residents or students?
- Is there a risk for residents who participate in the study?
- Is the information obtained from the study likely to be of use to the Faculty of Medicine or the University in program evaluation or future planning