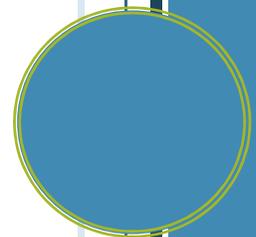


RESEARCH ETHICS ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19

Research Ethics, Dalhousie University

Research Ethics advances Dalhousie's research initiatives by providing knowledgeable guidance and timely research ethics review and oversight of research involving humans.



Annual Report 2018/19

Research Ethics, Dalhousie University

Fast Facts

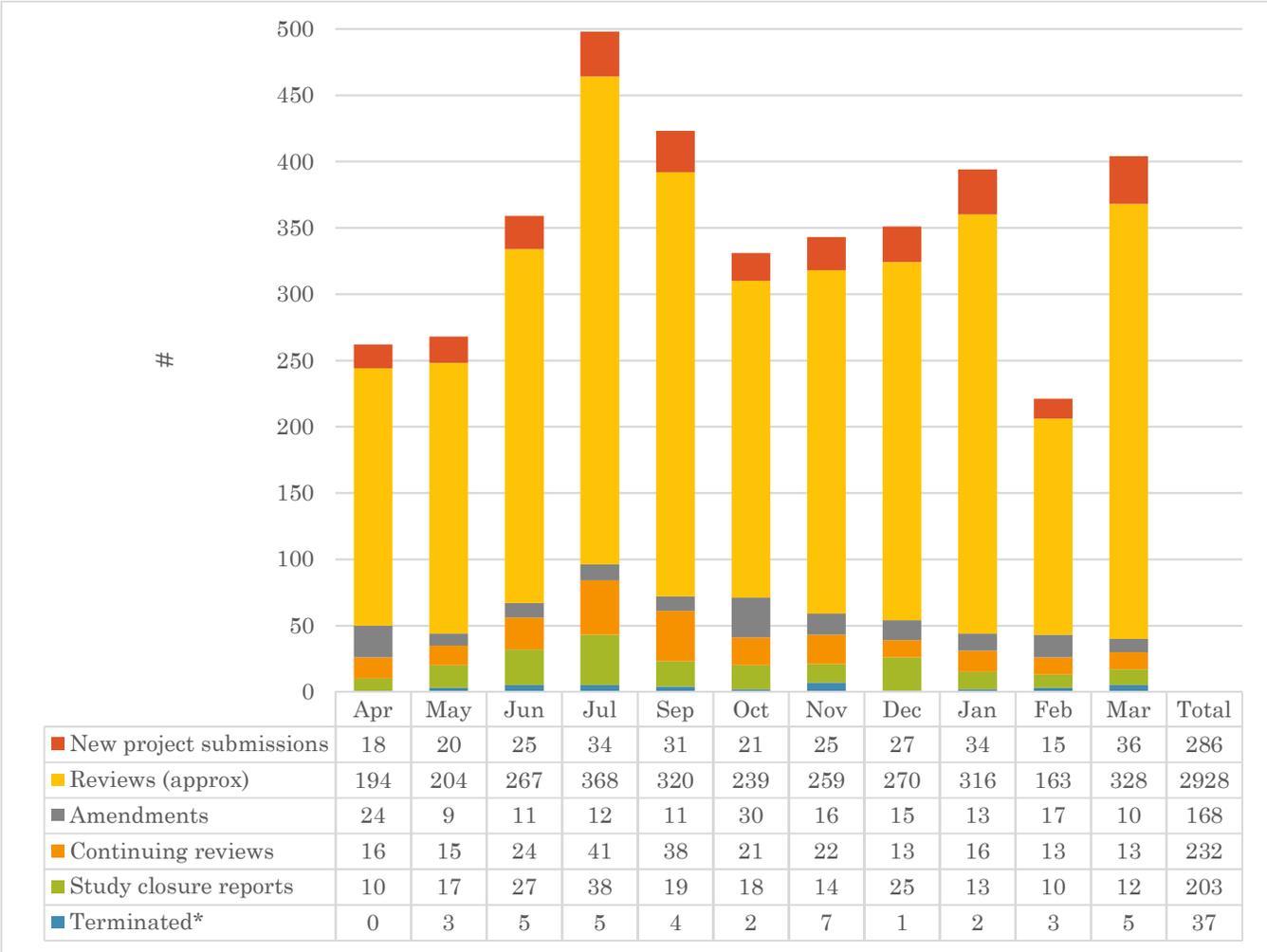
- 2,900+ reviews of research involving humans conducted by Research Ethics Boards and staff.
- 286 new project submissions.
- 19 work day average turnaround time for initial REB review to researchers for new project submissions.
- Other ethical reviews included 168 amendments, 232 continuing reviews, 203 final reports. Ethical approvals were terminated for 37 projects for non-compliance with continuing review reporting requirements.
- 2 Research Ethics Boards (Health Sciences, Social Sciences & Humanities).
- 22 Board meetings per year.
- 30 Board members (average of 2 new projects/month assigned to each member as a primary reviewer as well as 2 new projects/month to review at REB meetings).
- 1,172 researchers completed the TCPS online course on research ethics.
- 33% of new projects reviewed were funded research (15% were tri-agency funded).
- 92% of new submissions involved prospective research; 8% of new submissions were exclusively secondary use of information for research.
- 15% of new submissions to the University REBs required REB review at more than one institution (multi-jurisdictional).

Summary

Research Ethics at Dalhousie University was managed with 2 full-time permanent staff positions: a director and a manager. Temporary, part-time (60%) administrative assistance was provided until September 2018; temporary, part-time student assistance was provided between October 2018 and early January 2019; a permanent, part-time (80%) ethics support specialist was hired in January 2019. The staff coordinated and supported the work of two Research Ethics Boards: Health Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities. There were 22 Board meetings scheduled and 30 Board members (25 of whom were members of the University; 5 were community members). The Research Ethics Boards and staff conducted over 2,900 reviews, including review of 286 new research projects, 168 amendments, 232 continuing reviews, 203 final reports and 37 ethical approval terminations for non-compliance with continuing review reporting requirements, quarterly reports from research ethics boards at affiliated hospitals (IWK Health Centre, Nova Scotia Health Authority and Horizon Health) and annual reports from unit-level research ethics committees. Research Ethics authorized release of funds agreements with researchers to permit research-related activity to proceed prior to the requirement for research ethics review; the office also coordinated the peer review process on behalf of the University Committee on Laboratory Animals.

This report offers an overview of the activity of Research Ethics for the period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

Research Ethics - Activity Cycle



* REB approval terminated for non-compliance with continuing review reporting requirements

Appointments

There was no change in the leadership of the Boards. Dr. **Tannis Jurgens** (College of Pharmacy) continued as chair of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board and Dr. **Karen Beazley** (School for Resource and Environmental Studies) continued as chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board.

The research ethics office was staffed by Catherine Connors (director) and Angela Hersey (manager). Temporary, part-time (60%) administrative assistance was provided by Amanda Leslie until September 2018; temporary, part-time student assistance was provided between October 2018 and early January 2019. Nardeen Grace (ethics support specialist, 80% FTE) was hired in January 2019.

In addition to administrative staffing challenges during the year, Board membership faced shortfalls; one Faculty was not able to meet its membership obligations.

Accomplishments & Initiatives

Research ethics working group ● REB chairs and staff participated in a **working group** led by the AVP (research), tasked with identifying strategies to advance the long-term sustainability of the research ethics review system in light of increasing demands and limited resources while providing high quality and timely ethical review (initiated Feb 2019).

Naalak Gathering ● The SSH REB chair and director attended a two-day SSHRC-supported workshop called the ***Naalak Gathering: A regional dialogue on Indigenous Research Governance*** to participate in a conversation between REBs and Indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada to address the policy-to-practice gap identified by researchers, Indigenous communities, and REBs themselves (March 2019).

Interactive user guide launched ● An interactive **user guide** was launched to help instructors interested in conducting scholarship of learning and teaching research navigate the ethical issues (June 2018). The user guide can be found in the Resources section of the Research Ethics website.

Community members ● A search was undertaken for new **community and legal members** for the research ethics boards (initiated November 2018)

Updated REB terms of reference ● Updated **terms of reference** for REBs were approved (spring 2018); subsequently revoked (December 2018) due to lack of capacity to support membership requirements.

Quick reference guide ● The reference guide for **protecting electronically-stored personally identifiable research data** was updated for researchers and posted on the website (January 2019).

Template assent form ● A template **assent form** was updated as a resource for researchers (November 2018).

VPR initiatives ● Research ethics staff participated in initiatives of the offices of research services and the vice president research and innovation including: **researcher portal** planning, **integrated health research and innovation strategy** research ethics working group, responsible conduct of research (**RCR**) **education portfolio**, **search committee** for the ethics support specialist and administrative assistant. The research ethics **office moved** from the Collaborative Health Education Building to the Hicks Building (December 2018).

Compliance ● The director engaged in the following activity to ensure the University remained in compliance with national and international criteria:

- Submission of updates for institutional review board registration to the Office of Human Research Protections, US Department of Health and Human Services.
- Clinicaltrials.gov – oversight of registration site.
- Compliance review of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and the *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* to provide an

assessment whether Dalhousie University would comply as a signatory on an agreement (that would then permit a Dalhousie researcher to collaborate with an Australian research project (April 2018).

Educational Activity

Dalhousie supported educational opportunities for Board members and staff. The Research Ethics Board chairs and staff were involved in presentations and discussions regarding research ethics principles and the review process with members of the University research community, especially students as well at regional ethics events.

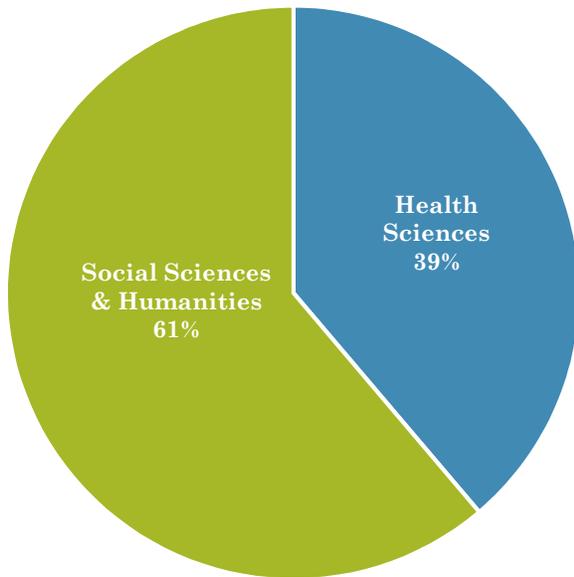
Educational activities included:

- Research Ethics Boards chairs and staff attended the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards national conference (April 2018).
- Research Ethics staff attended the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards regional conference (December 2018). Angela Hersey co-presented a session on *Managing Human Research Data: a "how we did it" primer*.
- Invited guest speaker (Susan Kirkland) attended the Health Sciences REB meeting to provide a mid-project update on the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging at the 10 year mark of 20 year study (November 2018)
- Staff attended a workshop on *FOIPOP & Personal Information De-identification (Pseudonymization)*, Carla Heggie, Dalhousie University (April 2018)
- Director attended Health Data Nova Scotia Open House (October 2018)
- Director provided orientation to incoming research ethics officer at the Faculty of Management
- REB orientation program for incoming members (January 2019).
- Director worked with the Early Social Development Lab, Psychology and Neuroscience to develop their Participant Database Protocols (June 2018).
- Director consulted with School of Nursing on unit-level review process development (January 2019).
- Researchers were encouraged to complete the TCPS online *Course on Research Ethics*; 1,172 Dalhousie researchers completed the course over the year; 7,159 researchers completed the tutorial since its inception in June 2011.

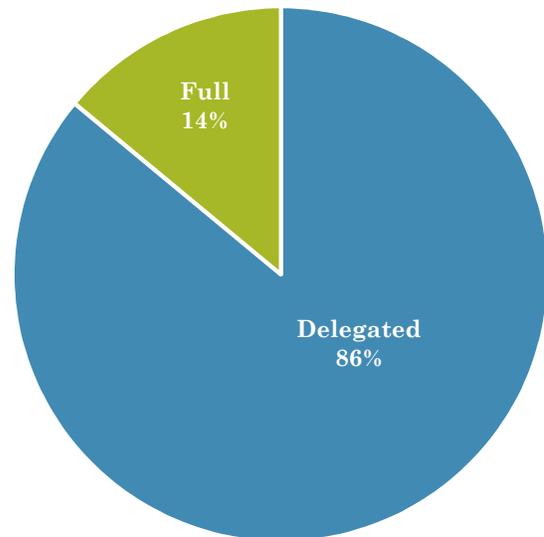
Quite independent from this particular submission, allow me to say how great it is to see this kind of pre-review that streamlines the process down the road. I'm sure it's a lot of work ... on a short turnaround, but I hope you find comfort that it pays dividends in saving hours and hours of time down the road by catching these things before they reach the REB!"
(Associate Dean Research and student supervisor)

Profile of New Research Ethics Submissions

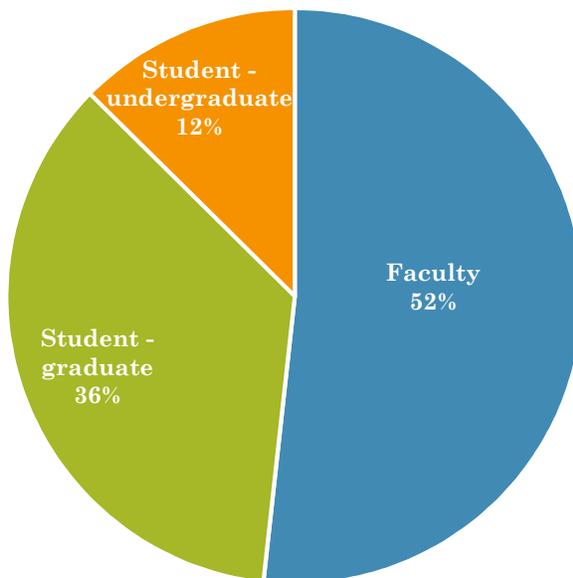
Board Assignment



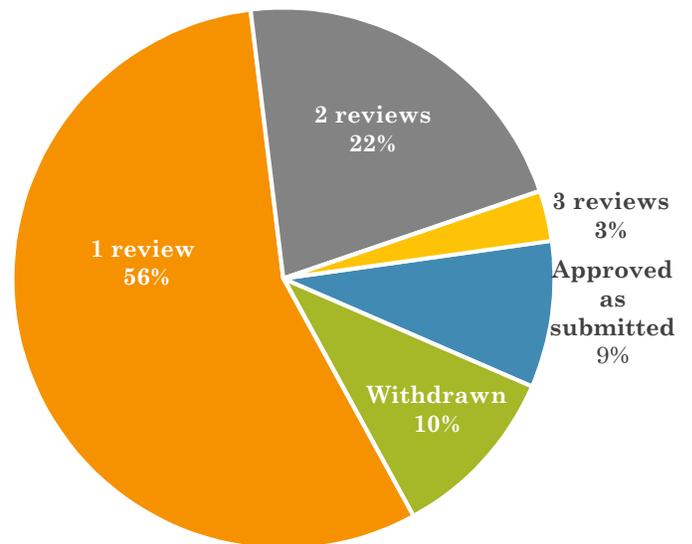
Proportionate Review
(full board vs delegated)



Researcher Profile

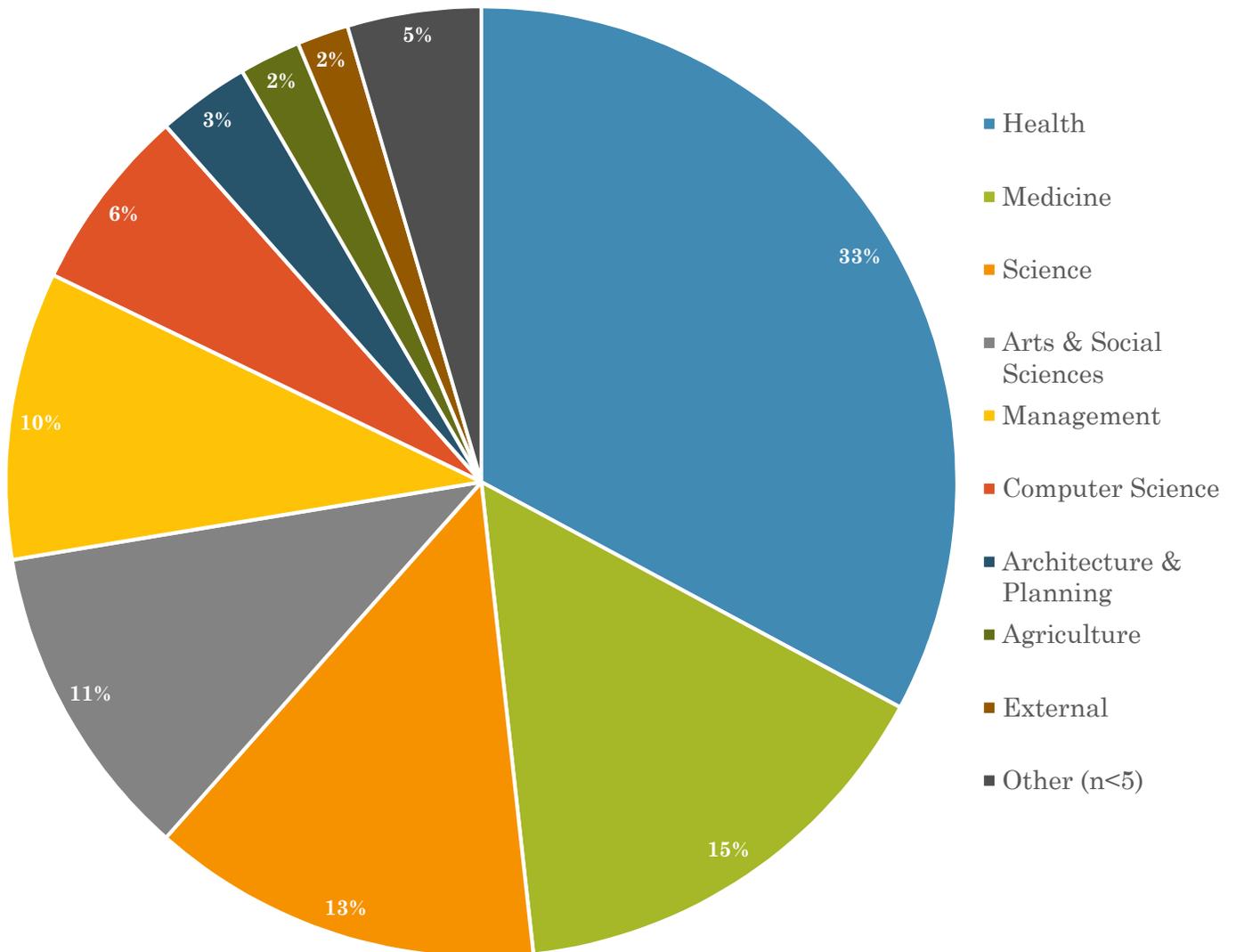


Rounds of Review
(application to approval)



“Thank you so much for your careful review of the proposed study. Your attention to detail and rigour are greatly appreciated in this process.” (Doctoral student)

Submissions by Faculty



“We wanted to follow up and thank you again for your assistance in working with us re: the issue of ongoing consent for our project ... This has been an excellent learning experience and will certainly assist me in thinking about how I do research a little differently in future.” (Faculty member)

Board Membership*

Health Sciences Research Ethics Board

Tannis Jurgens (chair)
Shaun Boe
Martha Brilliant
Merle Emms
Edward Gores

Gordon Gubitz
Melanie Keats
Anna MacLeod
Kathleen MacPherson

Alissa Pencer
Sam Stewart
Lori Weeks

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board

Karen Beazley (chair)
Megan Bailey
Peggy Cunningham
Steven Dukeshire
Jean-Sebastien Guy
Kirstie Hawkey

Dana Kabat-Farr
Jill McSweeney
Aaron Newman
Robin Oakley
Laurene Rehman
Lynn Shaw

Don Sinclair
Tracy Taylor-Helmick
Cathie Watson
Diane Zwicker

Staff*

Catherine Connors (director)
Angela Hersey (manager)
Nardeen Grace (administrative assistant (80%))

*As of March 31, 2019

Core Principles:

Respect for Persons
Concern for Welfare
Justice