

**Reporting of Unit-level<sup>1</sup> Research Ethics Review**  
**Minimal Risk, Course-based (non-thesis) Research**  
Research Ethics, Dalhousie University

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The Tri-Council Policy Statement *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) requires that unit-level research ethics reviews are documented and reported in a timely manner. This document describes the requirements and process by which unit-level research ethics activity must be documented and reported to the Research Ethics Boards for minimal risk, course-based (non-thesis) research.

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Academic units in which students engage in course-based research are expected to implement unit-level research ethics review of minimal risk, course-based (non-thesis) research (Dalhousie University *Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans* (section 5.2.4)).

Consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (article 6.12) and the Dalhousie University *Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans* (section 5.2.4), it is expected that the unit-level research ethics committee or research ethics representative will:

- i. Be a standing committee or representative that will function throughout the academic year (and in spring and summer terms where applicable);
- ii. Have the appropriate experience, expertise, training and resources required to review the ethical acceptability of all aspects of the research proposal in accordance with the TCPS (6.12). At a minimum, it is expected that research ethics committee members or research ethics officers will have completed the national Panel on Research Ethics online tutorial, Course on Research Ethics (CORE).
- iii. Ensure the appropriate management of real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest (TCPS 7.3). For example, a research ethics committee member may not review the research of a student with whom s/he has a supervisory relationship.
- iv. Document and report the actions and decisions of the unit-level reviews in a timely and appropriate manner (TCPS 6.12). The research ethics committee chair or research ethics officer must submit a written report each year to the Associate Dean (Research) for their Faculty, who will in turn submit the report to the Director, Research Ethics. The report must include the following information:
  - a. Membership of the research ethics committee (or review officer(s)) and qualifications (including a notation of completion of the CORE online tutorial);
  - b. Research ethics committee terms of reference and/or review process documents;
  - c. Meeting and/or decision dates, including the status of all research reviewed in the reporting period, including:
    - i. Course name/number and instructor name
    - ii. Title of research

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<sup>1</sup> Unit-level includes Faculty-level or department/school-level

- iii. Student name(s)
  - iv. Ethical status of research (e.g. under review, approved, closed) and associated dates (e.g. date submission reviewed, date submission approved, date closed, etc).
  - v. Summary of incident reports, unanticipated issues and/or participant complaints.
- d. Meeting and/or decision dates for undergraduate thesis review at the unit-level before forwarding to the University-level Research Ethics Board.
- v. Redirect researchers to University-level research ethics review for research that is not eligible for unit-level review. This includes:
    - a. Research that is not course-based, specifically thesis research;
    - b. Research that is more than minimal risk (TCPS p.23). This includes research that is invasive, that involves a vulnerable population, that uses deception or that gathers information about topics likely to be sensitive, embarrassing or harmful to participants or others;
    - c. Research that involves ethical issues that the unit-level review cannot resolve.

Research Ethics will remind Faculties of the reporting obligation each spring through the Associate Deans (Research) or designate.