

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

TERMS OF REFERENCE



PURPOSE:

The Red Deer College (RDC) Research Ethics Board (REB) governs the ethical conduct of research involving human participants and ensures that all such research complies with the most recent version of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS), the RDC Research Involving Humans Policy, and OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) Principles, and relevant legislation. All research involving human participants requires REB review and approval before any activity commences.

The jurisdiction of RDC's REB covers all research involving human participants:

- conducted by members of the RDC community;
- undertaken under the auspices of, or in official affiliation with, RDC; or
- that uses College equipment, facilities, space, resources, employees, or students.

Student course-based research also falls within the scope of REB review.

Although RDC's Research Involving Humans Policy does not preclude the existence of more than one REB, currently only one has been established.

MANDATE:

The REB was established by the authority of RDC's President. It is mandated to review the ethical acceptability of research involving human participants. In order to safeguard the integrity of the research ethics review process and public trust in that process, the College accords the REB the freedom to act independently in its decision making.

1. Review Decisions

The REB has decision authority to review, approve, or reject any proposed research involving human participants. It may also require modifications to or terminate ongoing research. Its decisions are communicated in writing and are accompanied by clear rationale.

2. Policy Formation

The REB is the principal authority for establishing policies, procedures, and processes for the ethical conduct of research involving humans at RDC and for ensuring that such research complies with the TCPS, RDC policy, OCAP® Principles, and relevant legislation.

3. Protection of Participants

The REB has shared responsibility with researchers in safeguarding the welfare of research participants by ensuring: a) no research commences without prior REB approval, b) data collection and use are ethical and secure, c) participant privacy and confidentiality are respected, and d) researchers obtain the free, informed, and ongoing consent of participants. In sum, the REB works with researchers to ensure that participants are protected through the careful and thorough application of the TCPS and RDC policy.

4. Ethics Education

The REB has shared responsibility with researchers in ensuring they are familiar with the applicable Tri-Council and RDC policies. It responds to inquiries about ethical issues in research involving human participants, advises the College, its members, and the public on research ethics, and promotes ethics education for those involved in the research enterprise at RDC.

5. Coordination

The REB coordinates its review process (timing and capacity) and training initiatives with RDC's research and scholarly activities.

6. Collaboration with Other REBs or Community Organizations

The REB may enter into agreements with other accredited Canadian post-secondary institutions to act as their REB or appeal board or to request that they act as the appeal board for RDC. The RDC REB will conduct ethics reviews as a courtesy to community organizations when capacity allows.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COMMITTEES:

Since the REB must act independently of the College, it is independent from other RDC committees and councils.

COMPOSITION:

The composition of RDC's REB complies with the requirements of the TCPS.

1. Its membership shall consist of at least five members of whom:
 - 1.1. at least two members have expertise in relevant research disciplines, fields and methodologies covered by the REB;
 - 1.2. at least one member is knowledgeable in ethics;
 - 1.3. at least one member is knowledgeable in the relevant law; and
 - 1.4. at least one community member who has no affiliation with the institution.
2. Although not a TCPS requirement, the RDC REB will continue, in so far as possible, to function with a majority of faculty members plus one student and one support staff member (CUPE, AUPE, or exempt staff outside of senior administrative positions).
3. To ensure the independence of REB decision making, senior administrators neither serve on the REB nor attend REB meetings dedicated to ethics reviews.
4. All members are voting members and act as reviewers.
5. Membership is as demographically diverse as possible, with particular attention to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives.
6. In the event that the REB is reviewing a project that requires particular community or participant representation or specific disciplinary or methodological expertise not available from its members, the REB may consult ad hoc advisors for a specific research ethics review and for the duration of that review.
7. All REB members shall have or acquire knowledge regarding research ethics involving humans.

- 7.1. At a minimum, they shall be knowledgeable about the TCPS and shall complete the TCPS Tutorial.
 - 7.2. They shall make constant efforts to remain current in an evolving research ethics environment.
8. The term of membership is normally two (2) years, except for student members who may serve one-year terms.
 - 8.1. Membership terms are staggered to ensure continuity. Normally, not more than one-half of the REB members change on a yearly basis.
 - 8.2. In so far as possible, while still providing for the required expertise and representation, members may not serve more than three (3) consecutive terms or six (6) consecutive years, but are eligible for reappointment after a one year interval.
 - 8.3. Term renewal is not automatic, but based upon recommendation of the continuing members of the REB.
9. When it is anticipated that the REB will require new members, the Chair will inform the RDC community of the need for members and the expertise to be filled on the REB.
 - 9.1. After receiving expressions of interest or nominations, the Chair and the existing REB members will review them and select individuals who meet the relevant expertise requirements.
 - 9.2. The Chair then informs the President, via the Executive Director, Strategic Planning Analysis, of the names of the individuals accepted as new members of the REB.
10. One faculty member is appointed to serve as the REB Chair.
 - 10.1. The REB Chair shall be selected by and from the membership of the REB.
 - 10.2. Due to workload issues, the REB may function with two co-chairs, both of whom are faculty members.
 - 10.3. Normally, the Chair has a minimum of two (2) years of experience on the REB and is appointed for a three-year term. This term is renewable once, upon recommendation of the Board, for a maximum of six (6) years as Chair and a combined maximum as Chair and regular REB member of no more than ten (10) years.
 - 10.4. The Chair ensures that the REB review process conforms to the requirements of the TCPS and RDC policy, provides overall leadership for the REB, and facilitates the review process by:
 - 10.4.1. calling and chairing regular meetings of the REB and other meetings as required,
 - 10.4.2. determining, in consultation with REB members, whether a research proposal requires full or delegated review,
 - 10.4.3. communicating decisions to researchers, in writing, within 15 working days of the scheduled review date, and
 - 10.4.4. ensuring that all REB meetings and decisions and all communications with researchers are documented and that these records are filed with the Strategic Planning and Analysis department.

REPORTING:

The REB Chair submits an annual activity report to the President of RDC and the Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Analysis. At a minimum, the report shall contain: the name of committee, reporting period, membership, activities, and accomplishments.

RESPONSIBILITY:

The Chair of the REB ensures that the REB leadership, membership, and these terms of reference meet the requirements of the most recent TCPS and RDC policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:

Strategic Planning and Analysis (SPA) provides administrative support and maintains the records of the REB. SPA's Administrative Assistant serves as the REB secretary and its Planning and Policy Manager serves as a resource person. Neither is a voting member of the REB.

OPERATING PROCEDURES:

1. Full REB Review Meetings

- 1.1 The REB normally meets once a month, except during July and August, unless there are insufficient agenda items to warrant a meeting. When necessary, these monthly meetings are used to conduct full reviews of ethics applications.
- 1.2 When there is less than full attendance at a monthly meeting, decisions requiring full review are adopted only if there is quorum and if the board members in attendance possess the necessary range of background and expertise (knowledge of ethics, relevant law, and of the research field under review).
- 1.3 Quorum is at least one-half of the REB membership including the Chair.
- 1.4 The REB will normally attempt to make decisions by consensus and will work with researchers to attempt to resolve any perceived shortcomings in the research protocol. If disagreement persists, majority vote will prevail with the Chair's vote serving as a tie-breaker.
- 1.5 Attendance at regular REB meetings is necessary to ensure effective communication and decision-making. Under unexpected circumstances, such as emergencies, member participation through technology is acceptable.
- 1.6 Members must notify the Chair, as far in advance as possible, if they anticipate being unable to attend any meeting.
- 1.7 Frequent, unexplained absences will be construed as notice of resignation.

2. Delegated REB Reviews

- 2.1 Proposed research projects that require only delegated review because they involve minimal risk to participants are reviewed by at least two members of the REB with expertise relevant to the project in question.
- 2.2 Delegated review is conducted through ad hoc meetings between the REB members delegated to conduct the review. These meetings are organized as applications come in and in such a way as to render a decision as quickly as possible (normally within 15 working days of receipt of the review application).

3. General REB Meetings

- 3.1 The REB's regular monthly meetings also serve as general meetings where members:
 - 3.1.1 discuss any general issues arising from REB activities,
 - 3.1.2 revise policies, procedures, processes, or forms,
 - 3.1.3 enhance the operation of the REB,
 - 3.1.4 participate in professional development, and/or
 - 3.1.5 conduct other business relevant to the REB mandate.
- 3.2 Researchers and faculty members seeking ethics review and approval may attend meetings of the REB either at their own request or at the request of the REB. However, only REB members may be present for decision-making on applications under review.
- 3.3 The Chair sets the agenda for each meeting in consultation with other members of the REB.
- 3.4 Quorum is required for any decisions related to policies and procedures.

4. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- 4.1 RDC's REB prepares and maintains adequate documentation of its activities including the following:
 - 4.1.1 minutes of REB review meetings documenting decisions, their rationale, and any dissenting opinions;
 - 4.1.2 minutes of general meetings summarizing discussions, decisions, action items, and assignments;
 - 4.1.3 copies of all research proposals reviewed, certificates of approval, approved sample consent forms, progress reports and incident reports submitted by researchers;
 - 4.1.4 records of continuing review activities;
 - 4.1.5 copies of all correspondence between the REB and researchers;
 - 4.1.6 a list of REB members and contact information; and
 - 4.1.7 written procedures for the REB.
- 4.2 All REB records are filed with SPA, where they are maintained in accordance with RDC's Information Access and Protection of Privacy Policy and relevant provincial and federal legislation.

5. Conduct, Confidentiality, and Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1 The REB shall function impartially, provide a fair hearing to those involved in reviews, and provide reasoned and appropriately documented opinions and decisions.
- 5.2 The REB and its members perform reviews in strict confidence in order to protect and respect the rights and intellectual property of both researchers and participants.

- 5.3 REB members have an obligation to ensure that the fairness and transparency of research ethics review are not compromised by real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest with any researcher, research team, or research proposal submission. Disclosure of conflicts of interest shall comply with RDC's Conflicts of Interest and Mandatory Disclosure Policy.

6. Process for Modifying the Terms of Reference

- 6.1 These Terms of Reference will be re-examined every two years, or with any relevant Tri-Council or RDC policy revision, whichever occurs first.
- 6.2 The Chair of the REB ensures that any modifications meet the requirements of the most recent version of the TCPS and RDC policy.

Levels of Authority for Decision Making:

Decision authority: The right to make a decision or create a policy without consultation with other individuals or groups.

Principal authority: The right to make a decision or create a policy with input and recommendations from other groups or individuals; such input may be accepted or rejected. Principal authority allows for the right to make decisions and create policy which is forwarded to another body for action. Decisions or policies may be forwarded to another group or individual for approval where such approval would not be unreasonably denied. Principal authority also permits policy creation within the guidelines established by another group or individual. Finally, principal authority accommodates decision-making or policy creation within the parameters set by another body.

Shared authority: Authority to make decisions or create policy that is delegated equally to two or more groups or individuals where all parties are required to approve the decision or policy.

Recommending authority: The right to make recommendations for approval by another group or individual, where the final decision may approve, reject, or amend the recommendations. Recommending authority specifies the requirement that the recommendations be received by the decision making group or individual before a final decision is made.

Advising authority: The right to provide advice on a decision or policy created by another group or individual. The final decision may include or reject the advice provided. The group or individual making the decision in this case would be considered the principal authority.