

The REB at Sault College

R ESEARCH
E THICS
B OARD





This presentation aims to provide essential information about:

- REB's mandate and functions;
- the development of the college research system;
- the organizational structure, normative framework, and procedures that support the REB;
- when and how to seek for REB review;
- frequently asked questions.

What is the R.E.B.?

- **Research Ethics Board.**
- Mandatory committee created in 2011 to comply with the federal policies that regulate the ethically responsive conduct of research set up by the **TCPS2**.
- Reports to Jason Bird, Director of Library Services and Research, since 2024.
- Meets once per month for around 1 hour, 7-9 times/year, from Sept. to June.
- Its mandate is:
 - To ensure that all applied research projects **that involve humans** and affect SC personnel (as participants or researchers) comply with the ethical standards set by the **TCPS2**.

Who are part of this board?

Acting Chair: Erin Ratelle (faculty, School of Business)

REB support officer: TBA

Members with research expertise:

- Ashley Bernardo (faculty, School of Health)
- Theresa Mudge (faculty, School of Business)
- Elisa Muto (faculty, SONY)

Members with ethics expertise:

- Erin Ratelle (faculty, School of Business)
- Suzanne Webb (faculty, School of Business)
- Andrew Metcalfe (faculty, School of Health)
- Community members:
 - Amanda Caputo (Librarian, Sault Area Hospital)

Members with legal background:

- Rishabh Bhardwaj (Alumnus of Algoma University's Law and Justice Studies)
- Mikayla Fahrer (Alumna of Algoma University's Law and Justice)

Consultants: Jason Bird (Director, Library Services and Research) and Florencia Carlino (faculty, School of Community Services and Interdisciplinary Studies)

What is the TCPS2?

Stands for the **Tri-Council Policy Statement, second edition.**

Sets the ethical standards that researchers and REBs need to comply with to guarantee that every time that research gathers data from humans, it does in such a way that the ethical rights of those humans are protect.

Published in 1998 (the original Policy) and updated in 2010, giving birth to the second edition.

This Policy was created by the 3 Federal research councils:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)



It is a **living document**, updated every 4th. year to ensure that its content remains current and clearly communicated, based on the feedback of Canada's research community.

Most recent version of this Policy: 2022 (available online):

https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html



Federal Research Agencies that regulate the TCPS2

3 Federal Research Agencies
(councils)

CIHR

Health

NSERC

Nat. Sciences &
Engineering

SSHRC

Soc. Sciences &
Humanities

Panel
on Research
Ethics
(P.R.E.)

Created in
2001



Do you want to serve as an REB member?

- Members are selected by their research experience (preferred) or previous familiarity with the research process.
- Membership is a commitment for 3 years:
 - After 3 years, members can take a year off and continue serving for another 3-year period, if there is a vacancy.
- Categories of membership (research expertise, community members, etc.) must be observed to comply with the TCPS2 mandate.
- Senior administrators cannot serve as REB members:
 - Article 6.4 (under Research Ethics Board Composition), it is stated: “To ensure the independence of REB decision making, institutional senior administrators shall not serve on the REB” (TCPS2, page 97).
- If you are qualified and want to join the REB, talk to Florencia or Jason.

The development of research in the College system

- Early 21st millennium: research at the College system in Ontario emerged, supported by legislation:
 - the Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act (2000)
 - the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (2002)
- These Acts enabled Colleges to **grant bachelor degrees** in applied areas of study and allowed them to **pursue applied research**.
- CAATs begin to contribute to the economic goals related to research and innovation.
- A survey launched in 2011-2012 to 103 institutions (ACCC, 2013 & 2014), revealed a significant increase in applied research across Canada.
- Impact:
 - more faculty, staff, and students engaged in research,
 - new applied research partners with industry and the community,
 - increasing areas of research expertise,
 - research facilities and research networks.

Why do Colleges have REBs?

- Most Ontario colleges adhere to the principles of the TCPS2.
- As a condition of funding, the 3 Federal Agencies require that researchers and their institutions be guided by the application of the ethical standards created by the TCPS2:
 - “Institutions must therefore ensure that research conducted under their auspices complies with this Policy. Researchers are expected, as a condition of funding, to adhere to the TCPS. Institutions should support their efforts to do so. Failure to fulfill the requirements of the TCPS, by the researcher or the institution, may result in recourse by the Agencies, as set out in the *Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research*.” (TCPS2, Introduction).
- By adhering to these principles, CAATS commit themselves to create and support their respective REBs and respect their decisions.
- In return, Colleges are “under the auspices” of the Tri-Council Panel, i.e., they are eligible for the Tri-Council funding to support Colleges’ applied research endeavors.



Are different REBs connected provincially?

HAR (Heads of Applied Research) is the organization that connects managers/chairs of Applied Research across Ontario colleges.

SC's reps:

- 2010 and 2023: John Coccimiglio (Manager of Applied Research) represented SC at HAR.
- Since 2023, Jason Bird (Director, Library Services and Research) represents SC at HAR.

Are different REBs connected? (Cont'd)

Multi-Site Expert Panel (2016-2024):

In 2016, a multi-site review process was launched in Ontario to make the ethics review process more cohesive and unified among colleges. Signing colleges conformed a consortium that followed the procedures and used the forms of the Multi-site application review. The expert panel was integrated by REB chairs representing different provincial regions.

- Florencia served in the Expert Panel since 2017, representing SC and the Northern Region.
- Link to the Expert Panel: <https://www.fanshawec.ca/partnerships/research-innovation/research-resources/board/expert-panel-application#>
- The panel dissolved in 2024. An active group of REB chairs are now discussing how to remain connected and deal with pressing issues.

CAREB/ACCER is the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards, dedicated to the promotion of professionalism of its members by providing education, resources, PDs and showcasing “best practices” within the field needed to enhance members’ effectiveness and efficiency in executing their roles.

(Cf. <https://careb-accer.org/professional-development-section/virtual-reb/>)

- SC has not been affiliated to this organization yet.

Who are the **participants** of a study?

- If your study is going to gather information from people (human subjects) through interviews, observations, surveys or other research methods, that people are considered the **research participants**.
- In that case, your study needs REB approval before you start it.
- If using other sources of research information you don't need REB approval; for example, if you extract data exclusively from:
 - things or artifacts,
 - laws,
 - animals,
 - plants,
 - public domains (such as digital sites) with no expectation of privacy, as long as the research is non-obtrusive.
 - already existent and published data (secondary data).
 - In the last 2 cases, we recommend you consulting the REB to make sure there are no **personal identifiers** (visible or hidden) involved. (TCPS2, 2022, p. 17-19).

When to approach the REB?

You **must** approach the REB and complete a form **before** initiating your project in the following 3 scenarios:

You are **faculty, staff, or admin** affiliated at Sault College and:

1. You are planning to conduct **research** or different forms of **data gathering involving human subjects as participants** affiliated or not affiliated at SC.
2. You've been contacted by an external stakeholder, and you plan to facilitate their access to SC records/people.
3. You teach a course that includes a research component, and you want your students to gather data from human subjects

When and how to request ethics review?

Scenario 1	What form to complete:	To be emailed to:
<p>You are uncertain about whether your project qualifies as research according to the TCPS2 but you need data from human subjects from the College.</p> <p>Example: your office is planning to survey students to understand their housing needs. You suspects this is a quality assurance type of study.</p>	<p>Research status determination</p>	<p>Director, Library Services and Research (Jason Bird)</p>

When and how to request ethics review?

Scenario 2	What form to complete:	To be emailed to:
<p>You want to conduct research that relays on data from any College's faculty, students, and/ or staff</p> <p>Example 1: you are doing research for your Masters or PhD and need to interview students and admin from Sault College.</p> <p>Example 2: you are a professor at a Canadian university conducting research about the college system.</p>	<p>You need to pass through 2 layers of approval:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Institutional Approval form 2) Multi-site form <p>(the second form will be addressed once you receive the institutional approval)</p>	<p>Director, Library Services and Research (Jason Bird).</p>

When and how to request ethics review?

Scenario 3	What form to complete	To be emailed to
<p>Your students are going to conduct a short research study as a course assignment. Your goal is to teach them some aspects of research. Your students' study involves human participants.</p> <p>Example 1: capstone course.</p> <p>Example 2: research course.</p>	<p>CB (course-based) form.</p> <p>One per study.</p>	<p>Director, Library Services and Research (Jason Bird).</p>

When is REB review not necessary?

1. **No human subjects involved** in your study:

- Example: you will observe vehicles, plants, animals, or stones.

2. **Secondary use of data:** You are planning to use only information stored and displayed in official documents, publications or records which may or may not include identifiable information but the individuals they refer to have no expectation of privacy regarding that information **(TCPS2, Article 2.2)**.

- Example data from Statistics Canada; registries of death; court judgements; public archives.

3. **Observation in public places** if the following conditions are met **(TCPS2, Article 2.3)**:

- The researcher has no direct interaction with the observed participants.
- The participants have no reasonable expectation of privacy.
- Any dissemination of research results does not allow identification of specific individuals.
- Example marketing research in a grocery store where a camera captures clients' consumption habits according to times of the day.

When is REB review not necessary?(cont'd)

4. Secondary use of anonymous information, or anonymous human biological materials, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information. **(TCPS2, Article 2.4)**

- Example: Ask the Registrar's Office to use students' registration data in an aggregate form for research purposes, as long as those data are provided to the researcher stripped from their personal identifiers.

5. Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or educational improvement purposes. **(TCPS2, Article 2.5)**

- Example: Student feedback questionnaire used for student support or retention purposes.

6. Creative practice activities that are not meant to respond a research question. **(Article 2.6)**

- Example: A play, a concert, an art display or any type of creative public performance.

When in doubt, why should REBs decide if your project is exempt from REB review?

Two main reasons:

- 1. Complexity of the decision:** This decision is not an easy one. The line between what qualifies as research and what not according to the TCPS2 could be fine. There are a few criteria that REBs consider when deciding this. REB members are specifically trained to do so. If they are hesitant, there are official channels where to get professional advice and guidance (e.g. Multi-Site Expert Panel; Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research; CAREB). In these consultations, REB members always ensure that the details of the projects are kept confidential.
- 2. Conflict of interest:** researchers and research sponsors have a specific interest/determination in conducting their research and getting it started ASAP. That may interfere their ability to discern about the nature of the project and if there are ethical risks involved. The wait time to receive ethics approval may be perceived as an obstacle to get their project started.

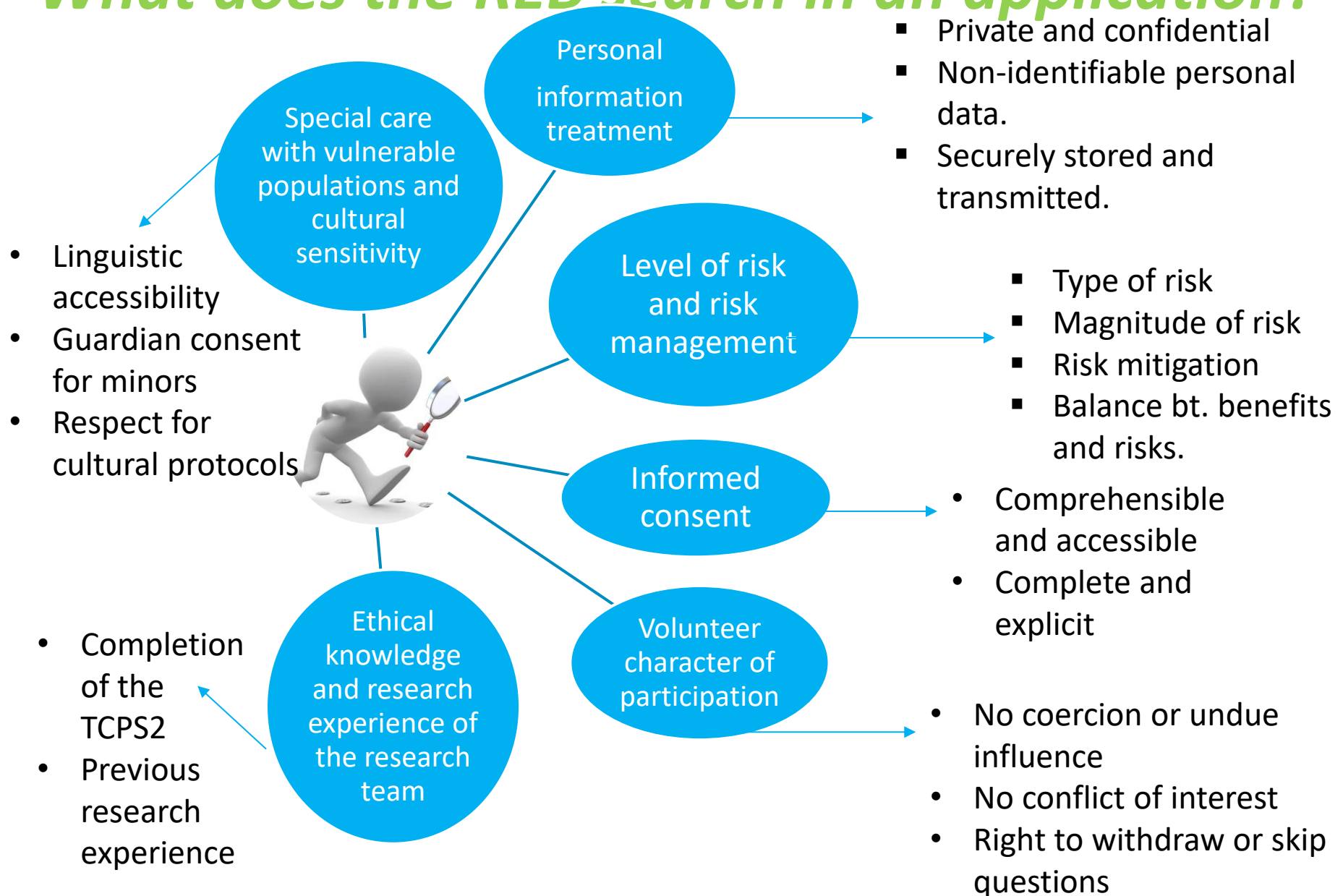
Frequently Asked Questions



When do I have to seek REB's approval for my research/data gathering project?

- Every time you plan to gather information or do research **that involves people** as participants, unless it is a clearly established Quality Assurance project that the College has been done routinely for years.
- Whether you'll do it at SC or elsewhere (because you are a SC employee).
- Approval is sought **before** starting your study.

What does the REB search in an application?



I'm planning to conduct research that involves humans. How do I proceed to apply for REB's review?

1. Seek Institutional Approval: Complete the Institutional Approval Form and submit it to: [Jason. Bird@saultcollege.ca](mailto:Jason.Bird@saultcollege.ca) (Director, Library Services and Research).

2. Seek REB's Approval: Once you receive the approval from Jason, complete and submit the Ontario College Multi-Site Application Form to the REB chair with copy to the REB support officer.

IMPORTANT:

- Research cannot begin until REB's approval is granted. Wait for the letter of approval before starting to gather your data.

Can I ask my students to do research in my classes? If so, how do I proceed?

- Yes, but only if:
 - The purpose of this activity is pedagogical, i.e., you want to train them about how to do research or any aspect of research.
 - You and your students can anticipate that the human participants in their study will face minimal (ethical) risk.
- This type of studies is called **course-based research**.
- In that case, before they start their study, you'll have to complete the CB form and submit it to the REB.
- The REB will determine if further steps are to be followed.

If my office needs to collect data internally, do we have to seek REB's approval?

- **NO** if:

- It does not involve people as participants directly or indirectly AND /OR
- The data collection is another internal procedure done *routinely* by your office to better understand and improve the type of services you need to offer (quality improvement/ assurance).

- **YES** if:

- It involves people as participants AND
- It uses school records or personal/biological/medical records that have been collected in the past with purposes other than your research AND
- The purpose of the data collection is to produce new knowledge to respond to your research question.

Important:

When in doubt, always seek clarification by the REB.

I work at SC but I am planning to do research in other Ontario colleges, how do I apply for REB review?

- Contact those colleges REBs and ask them how to proceed.
- It is very likely that they use the same multi-site REB application form we use at SC.
- All colleges follow the 2-step procedure:
 - 1) Institutional Approval.
 - 2) REB's Approval

How can I train myself in research and ethics?

REB members must complete a free online training offered by the TCPS2. At our REB, new members have 4 months of grace to submit their certificate of completion.

To complete the training and obtain the certification, register here:

<https://tcps2core.ca/register>

Completion of this training is a mandatory requirement to become a voting member of this committee.

In addition to this formal training, attending to REB meetings as a member and participating in the research review process and discussion is the best way to understand the REB's member role and the most frequent ethics grey areas and how to resolve them.

The TCPS2 also offers free webinars on:

- [Multi-Jurisdictional Research in TCPS 2](#)
- [Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#)
- [Qualitative Research](#)
- [Governance of Research Ethics Review](#)
- [Scope of Research Ethics Review](#)

References

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- CAREB: Canadian Association of Research Ethics. <https://careb-accr.org/>
- Holmes, K. (2016). Research Ethics in the Ontario College Sector: An exploratory descriptive study of governance and administrative frameworks. Ph.D. thesis. Toronto: OISE.
https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/73017/1/Holmes_Krista_M_201606_PhD_thesis.pdf
- Sault College REB website: <https://www.saultcollege.ca/research-ethics-board>

**THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND
YOUR INTEREST IN THE REB!!**



For further clarification, please contact
Erin.Ratelle@saultcollege.ca
Jason.Bird@saultcollege.ca



Questions/Comments?

