

# The REB at Sault College

R ESEARCH  
E THICS  
B OARD



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# AGENDA



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## This presentation aims to:

- provide essential information regarding the REB's mandate and functions;
- elucidate the historical and institutional context that justifies its existence;
- shows the organizational structure, normative framework, and procedures that support the REB;
- responds to frequently asked questions re: ethics approval.

# What is the R.E.B.?

- This acronym stands for **Research Ethics Board**.
- It is a mandatory committee that has existed in the College since 2011 to comply with the federal policies that regulate the ethically responsive conduct of research set up by the **TCPS2** that Sault College has committed to follow.
- Meets once per month at 8:00 am, from Sept. to June.
- It includes internal members with experience in research and volunteer external members. All with diverse professional backgrounds.
- It reports to the Applied Research Office, which is directly connected to the Office of Vice President Academic.
- Mandate of the REB:
  - 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**.

# What is the R.E.B.? (cont'd)

These are the current REB members at Sault College

- Florencia Carlino (Chair)
- Mary Anne Shannon (Co-chair and member)
- Elisa Muto
- Brent Pusch
- Kay Vallee
- Casey Burgess
- Connie Free
- Mikayla Fahrer
- Mandy Jean Masse

**Academic Assistant:** Dina Guido

# What is the TCPS2?

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

Sets the ethical standards that researchers and institutions need to comply with to guarantee that every time that research gathers data from humans, it does in such a way that there is ethical protection of those humans.

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

Has been created by the 3 Federal Agencies/Councils that promote and support research:

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

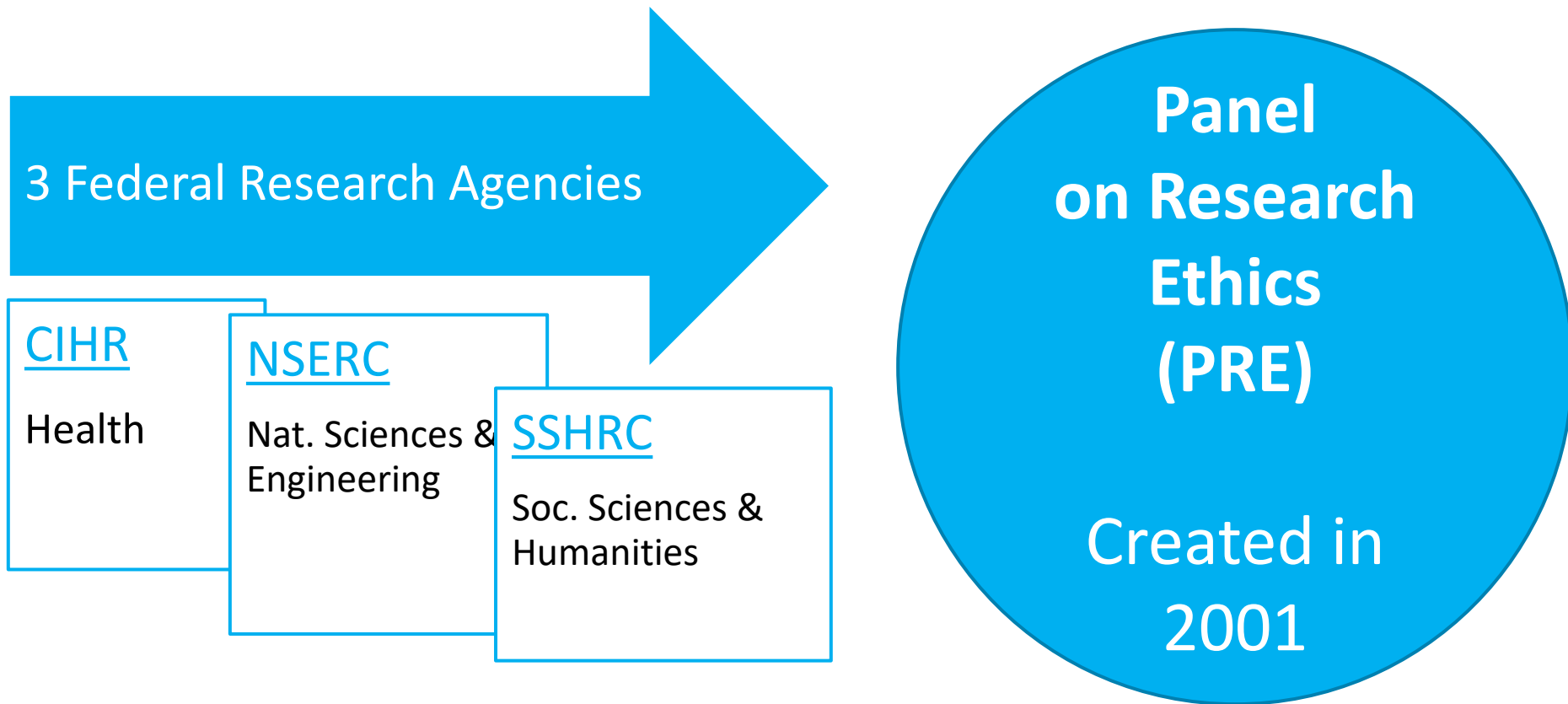
Even though it is like a “bible” for REBs in the sense that it sets the principles, scope and limits of REB’s intervention, it is also a **living document** that is updated periodically to ensure that its content remains current and clearly communicated, based on the feedback of Canada’s research community.

Latest version of this Policy dates to 2018 (available online):

<https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2018-en-interactive-final.pdf>



# What is the TCPS2? (Cont'd)



The above 3 Agencies formed the PRE in 2001. Together with the **Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research**, PRE has adopted the TCPS Policy as a benchmark for the ethical conduct of research involving humans.

# The development of the College research system

- This development responds to the transition from an industrial-based society to a knowledge-based economy around the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> millennium.
- It has been supported by the Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act (2000) and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (2002) in response to the demands of global competitiveness.
- These Acts enabled Colleges to grant bachelor degrees in applied areas of study and allowed them to pursue applied research with the aim that CAATs begin to contribute to the economic goals related to research and innovation.
- While 1990-2000 was a decade of research capacity building for Colleges, in 2000-2010 applied research become essential part of college programming.
- According to a survey launched in 2011-2012 to 103 institutions (ACCC, 2013 & 2014), increased in applied research across Canada was evident. This growth was translated into the development of administrative structures to support research projects, more faculty, staff, and students engaged in research, more applied research partners with industry and community members, 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. Sault College is one of them.
- As a condition of funding, the 3 Agencies require that researchers and their institutions be guided by the application of the ethical principles 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, Colleges of Arts and Technology 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?

Yes, they are indeed. The following associations/groups make this connection and networking possible:

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

- John Coccimiglio (Manager of Applied Research) has represented SC at HAR since 2010.

**HAR-Ethics subcommittee** has been created in 2015 to promote training, policy update, exchange of resources, and mutual support among provincial REBs. The subcommittee organizes an annual symposium that provides PD to REBs.

- Florencia Carlino (REB Chair) has represented SC in this subcommittee since 2017; in 2020 she assumed the role of Secretary of the Board.

# Are different REBs connected? (Cont'd)

**Multi-Site Expert Panel:** In 2016, an Ontario multi-site review process was launched to speed up the ethics review process of studies that target various colleges in the province. Signing colleges conform a consortium that follows the procedures and uses the forms of the Multi-site application review.

- SC is part of this Consortium since its inception.
- Florencia has served in the Expert Panel since 2017, representing SC and the Northern Region.

**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?

- One of the first decisions researchers need to make is where they are gathering the information from.
- A study can focus on:
  - things or artifacts,
  - ideas and cultural beliefs,
  - laws,
  - animals,
  - plants,
  - **people.**
- If your study is going to gather information from people (human subjects), that people are considered the **research participants.**

## When to approach the REB?

You **must** approach the REB and complete a form **before** initiating your project in the following 2 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 participants** affiliated or not affiliated at SC;
2. you've been contacted by an external stakeholder to facilitate their access to SC records/people.

# What forms are to be completed to request ethics review?

There are two possible scenarios:

1. Complete the short **form for data gathering projects**, if you are uncertain about whether your project qualifies as research according to the TCPS2 or not (example: course-based research or quality improvement surveys/ questionnaires).

**OR**

2. Complete the **Multi-site application form** if you are sure that your project is research. This form needs to be completed once the institutional approval has been granted.

- Both forms, plus the **Institutional Approval Form**, can be downloaded from the REB website under the menu item: “Forms”.

# What types of projects are exempt from REB review?

According to Chapter 2, of the TCPS2, the following 5 data collection activities are not considered research and can be conducted without REB approval:

(Cf. [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2\\_2018\\_chapter2-chapitre2.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter2-chapitre2.html) )

1. Data collection that relies exclusively on information that is already available, and it is stored in official documents, publications or records which may or may not include identifiable information:
  - publicly available through a mechanism set out by legislation or regulation and that is protected by law; or
  - in the public domain and the individuals to whom the information refers have no reasonable expectation of privacy.

**(Article 2.2)**

2. Observation of people in public places where:
  - it does not involve any intervention staged by the researcher, or direct interaction with the individuals or groups;
  - individuals or groups targeted for observation have no reasonable expectation of privacy; and
  - any dissemination of research results does not allow identification of specific individuals.

**(Article 2.3)**

3. REB review is not required for research that relies exclusively on 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. **(Article 2.4)**

# What types of projects are exempt from REB review? (cont'd)

4. 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 improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review. **(Article 2.5)**

5. Creative practice activities, in and of themselves, do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review. **(Article 2.6)**



# Why REBs (and not researchers) must decide what projects are 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's members are specifically trained to do so. If they are hesitant, there are official channels where to get professional advice and guidance (e.g. HAR-Ethics subcommittee colleagues; Multi-Site Expert Panel; Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research; CAREB). In these consultations, REB members always ensure that the specifics 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

In the next slides we provide a straight-forward answer to the following common questions that researchers or people interest in pursuing research or interested in research you might have:

- *When do I have to seek REB's approval for my research/data gathering project?*
- *I'm planning to conduct research that involves humans. How do I proceed to apply for REB's review?*
- *Can I do research about my courses or ask my students to do research in my classes?*
- *If my office/division needs to collect data from students/graduates/employers or other stakeholders, do we have to seek REB's approval?*
- *I work at Sault College, but I am planning to do research in other Ontario colleges, how do I apply for REB review?*
- *Can I serve as an REB member?*

# *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.
- Whether or not you'll do it at SC or elsewhere (because you are a SC employee).
- Approval is sought **before** starting your study.

# *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 Applied Research Application Form and submit it to: [John.Coccimiglio@saultcollege.ca](mailto:John.Coccimiglio@saultcollege.ca) (Manager of Applied Research).
- 2. Seek REB Approval:** Once you receive the approval from John Coccimiglio, complete and submit the Ontario College Multi-Site Application Form to John Coccimiglio as well. He will then forward your completed form to our REB.
3. Wait until the REB contacts you with the results of the review.

## **IMPORTANT:**

- Research cannot begin until REB approval is granted.
- Both forms and these instructions are posted in the REB website under "Forms".

# *Can I do research about my courses or ask my students to do research in my classes?*

- Yes, you can. It is called **course-based research**.
- In that case, before starting your project, you'll have to complete the **data-gathering activity form** and report it to the REB.
- The REB will determine if further steps are to be followed.

## **IMPORTANT:**

**Even when the REB determines that there is no need to complete the Multi-site form, the core principles of the ethically responsive research on humans need to be respected.**

# *If my office/division needs to collect data from students/graduates/employers, 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 one more 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.

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

- SC together with other 21 Ontario colleges is part of a provincial consortium of colleges that use the same multi-site REB application form since 2016.
- You can download the multi-site form from our website, complete it and then submit it directly to the REB of the college you are planning to gather the data from.
- If you are planning to do research at various colleges, you can also submit the multi-site application form by email directly to this provincial Consortium's Expert Panel Lead. Contact the REB chair to learn who this person is and how to reach them.

## *Can I serve as an REB member?*

- If you are faculty, staff or community member and have previous experience conducting research, YES, send us an email expressing your interest in becoming an REB member.
- Full time faculty receive some SWF time to serve in this committee.
- All REB members need to complete the TCPS2 mandatory tutorial before being able to review REB applications. They are expected to receive ongoing training to progressively understand how the college research system works and how to assess the ethical acceptability of research applications.
- Senior administrators cannot serve as REB members (according to the TCPS2, Art. 7.3) to guarantee the independence of the committee and to avoid any possible conflict of interests or undue influence in the REB's decisions. But they can serve as a resource to provide support, orientation, and advice.



# Questions/Comments?



# References

- ACCC (2014). College and institutes of applied research 2012-2013: Innovation for small businesses and communities, cited by Holmes, K. (2016), p. 23-24
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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.

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



**If you want to follow up, please contact  
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