



Research Ethics Board

Annual Report Sept 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020

Research Ethics Board

KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY | 12666-72 AVENUE SURREY, BC V3W 2M8



TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY AND PROCEDURE	2
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2
EDUCATION OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION.....	2
THE REB'S COVID-19 DIRECTIVE SUSPENDING IN-PERSON RESEARCH	3
FAST TRACK REVIEW FOR TIME-SENSITIVE COVID-19-RELATED RESEARCH	3
KPU JOINS BC ETHICS HARMONIZATION INITIATIVE	3
REB MEMBERSHIP 2019-20.....	3
MEETINGS	4
RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW SUMMARY	4
APPROVED ETHICS APPLICATIONS BY DEPARTMENT	5
CLINICAL APPLICATIONS.....	6
ADVERSE EVENTS.....	6
ADVERSE EVENTS REPORTING PROCEDURE	6
SERVICE STANDARDS	6
COMMENTS FROM REB MEMBERS	6
CHALLENGES	8
FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES	8



RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The REB's mission and mandate are governed by internal policies and procedures (e.g., RS1: Research Involving Human Participants) and relevant external policies, laws, and ethical frameworks (e.g., the Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2018)).

In March 2019, the Associate Vice-President of Research (Dr. Deepak Gupta) and the REB Chair (Dr. Farhad Dastur) co-chaired a task force for the revision of the RS1: Research Involving Human Participants policy and procedures. The task force was comprised of faculty representatives from Biology (Paul Adams), Interior Design (Stephanie St. Loe), Psychology (Farhad Dastur), and Health Sciences (Sundeep Varaich). Other members included a student representative from Health Sciences (Michael Ke) and administrative contributions from the Office of Provost and Vice President, Academic (Josephine Chan), and the Office of Research Services (Foluso Fagbamiye). The task force completed a draft document. Further work continues but has been delayed due to COVID-19-related disruptions.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The REB completed two internal professional development (PD) activities of REB members. The first was led by REB member Dr. Katie Warfield titled, "How to do digital research without inadvertently being a really big jerk." This workshop included an accompanying YouTube video as well as thought questions. The second PD workshop was led by REB member Dr. Dave Lyon and was titled, "Causation in breach of fiduciary duty case." Resources for both workshops were saved for the training of future REB members (e.g., videos, PPTs, and thought questions). External professional development opportunities for REB members normally include attendance at regional (e.g., REB West) and national conferences (e.g., the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards). However, COVID-19-related travel and gathering restrictions prevented REB members from attending those PD opportunities. The REB Chair and the REB Coordinator attended several online meetings organized by Research Ethics BC regarding the BC harmonization of ethics review initiative and COVID-19 impacts on research.

EDUCATION OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION

The REB Chair engaged in education outreach regarding research ethics and the role of the REB. Presentations were made to the following groups: *Social Justice & Diversity in Education* (EDUC 3240), the Criminology and Psychology Honours classes, and the Leadership Team of the Dean's Office, Faculty of Arts. To support communication between the REB and KPU's community of researchers, the REB Chair requested presentation time and the submission of a standing report at the monthly meetings of the Senate Standing Committee on Research & Graduate Studies. Reports were submitted at the May and June 2020 meetings. The REB intended to host workshops and panel discussions at KPU events such as the annual *Teaching, Learning, Scholarship, and Research Symposium*. Again, COVID-19 disruptions prevented this from happening.



THE REB'S COVID-19 DIRECTIVE SUSPENDING IN-PERSON RESEARCH

On March 22, 2020, the REB issued the following directive suspending in-person research by KPU researchers:

“Unless expressly approved as an exception, human participant research involving face-to-face recruitment or data collection methods must transition to distanced methods or, if that is not possible, must be suspended until further notice.”

This directive was issued five days after the government of British Columbia declared a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency on March 17, 2020. The authorization for such a directive derived from the TCPS 2, Chapter 6, Section D: [Research Ethics Review during Publicly Declared Emergencies](#). The directive, developed in coordination with Dr. Deepak Gupta (AVP, Research), was issued out of concern for the health of research participants, researchers, and the broader public. The directive was posted on the REB's website, the Office of Research Services website, and the “COVID-19 Coronavirus: Information and KPU's Response” page on KPU's website. The directive was also communicated to the broader KPU community via *Today@KPU*, a university-wide email communicator. The directive permitted exceptions for special reasons such as research involving COVID-19 or where stopping the research could put participants at risk. As of August 31, 2020, no requests for exceptions were submitted to the REB.

FAST TRACK REVIEW FOR TIME-SENSITIVE COVID-19-RELATED RESEARCH

At the same time as the COVID-19 Directive was issued, the REB created the following fast track review process for time-sensitive COVID-19-related research:

“Researchers who submit time-sensitive COVID-19-related applications may request a Fast Track review. If approved, the REB will aim to have a 1 week turn-around between receiving a research application and providing the PI with feedback. After that, the review will depend on how fast the PI responds to the REB's concerns. This fast track process does not lower the standards of ethical review in any way.”

KPU JOINS BC ETHICS HARMONIZATION INITIATIVE

In 2020, the REB signed on to a province-wide, harmonized system of ethics review supported by Research Ethics BC. KPU joined 18 other academic institutions and health authorities who have agreed to streamline the ethics review and approval process for multi-jurisdictional projects. This process is facilitated by the use of the Provincial Research Ethics Platform ([PREP](#)), housed within UBC's RISE system. The REB Chair provided a statement about KPU's partnership in the June 2020 newsletter of the BC Academic Health Science Network (mailchi.mp/bcahsn/news-june-2020).

REB MEMBERSHIP 2019-20

The REB's membership was compliant with the [TCPS 2 Article 6.4](#). Members represented a range of disciplines and areas of expertise. Members were appointed by the President following an openly advertised competition. The REB is permitted to consult with *ad hoc* advisors in the event it lacks the expertise or knowledge to review a particular application (see [TCPS 2 Article 6.5](#)).



Faculty Members	Department	Term Ends
Farhad Dastur (Chair)	Psychology	August 31, 2020
Karen Davison	Biology	August 31, 2020
Ari Goelman	Business	August 31, 2020
Dave Lyon	Criminology	August 31, 2021
Tara Lyon	Criminology	August 31, 2020
Katie Warfield	Journalism	August 31, 2021

Student Member

Nicole Green	Sociology	October 31, 2020
--------------	-----------	------------------

Community Members

John Anderson	August 31, 2020
Joan Posivy	August 31, 2020

REB Coordinator

Foluso Fagbamiye

MEETINGS

In the 2019 – 2020 academic year, the REB held 10 business meetings. In 2019, the REB met on Sept. 28, Oct. 25, and Nov. 22. In 2020, the REB met on Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 27, April 24, May 29, June 19, and August 28. For those months without meetings, ethics reviews continued online and without interruption. Beginning on March 27, 2020, the REB held its meetings virtually using the institutionally licenced *Microsoft Teams* video conferencing platform. This was due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person meetings. All meeting dates were published on the [REB's website](#).

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW SUMMARY

Seventy-one REB applications were reviewed, the majority of which were submitted by KPU faculty researchers. Most of these applications were minimal risk and were reviewed by the Chair and two other REB members with expertise in the area being reviewed. The REB Chair and the REB coordinator held weekly meetings regarding reviews. These meetings were used to identify the risk level for each application, to identify reviewers, to coordinate any communications with principal investigators, and to discuss other relevant details about applications. One application was deemed above minimal risk and was reviewed by the full board. The REB Coordinator sent email reminders to Principal Investigators about their progress or completion reports.

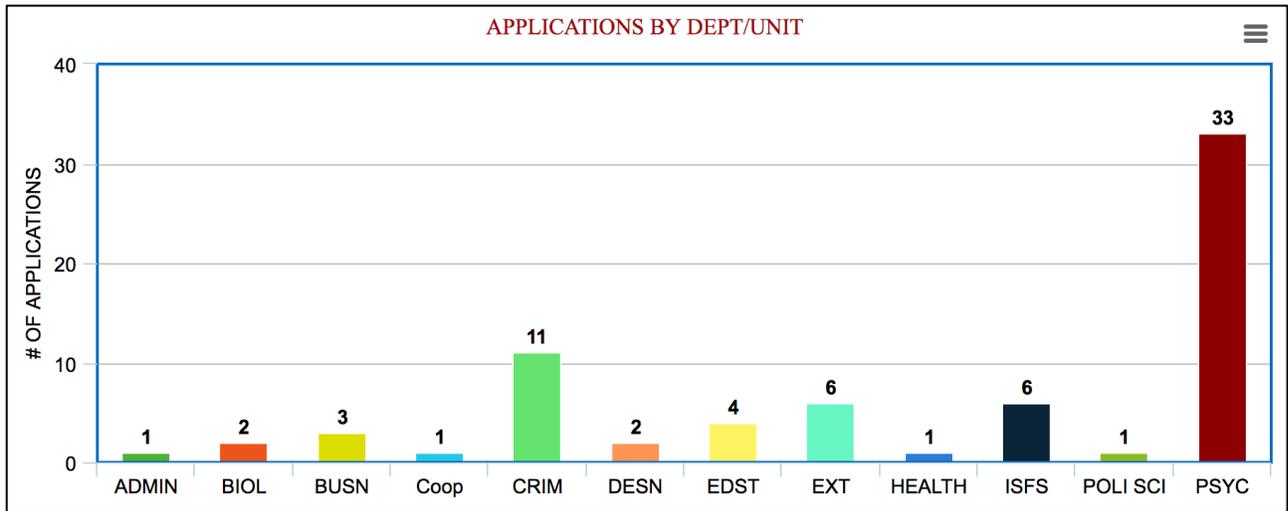


APPROVED ETHICS APPLICATIONS BY DEPARTMENT

APPLICATION TYPE	No
Faculty	36
Honours/Student	19
External	6
Course Based Research (renewal of existing approvals)	5
Exempt	3
Multi-jurisdictional (national/international)	2
TOTAL	71

AMENDMENTS/RENEWALS/ END OF PROJECT REPORTS	No
Amendments and Renewals	49
End of project reports	36
TOTAL	85

APPLICATION BY DEPT / UNIT	No
KPU Administration	1
Biology	2
Business	3
Coop Education & Career Services	1
Criminology	11
Design	2
External	6
Educational Studies (1 withdrawn)	4
Health (1 clinical)	1
Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (2 multijurisdictional)	6
Political Science	1
Psychology (1 withdrawn and resubmitted)	33
TOTAL	71



CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

There was one clinical application this year. The REB instituted a new procedure requiring clinical applications to be registered in a registry of clinical trials prior to ethics approval (e.g., [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov)).

ADVERSE EVENTS

One event was reported to the REB in January 2020. The issue concerned a member of the public communicating to a researcher their concerns that a particular study’s exclusionary criteria might be too restrictive. The researcher responded to the person and no further issues arose. While the researchers reported this as an adverse event, it did not quite rise to that standard, especially since the complainant was not a research participant.

ADVERSE EVENTS REPORTING PROCEDURE

There are currently no formal incident reporting forms or guidelines in place, beyond email reporting and follow up by the REB. The REB Coordinator is taking the lead on filling this gap in coordination with the RS1 procedures that are under revision.

SERVICE STANDARDS

The review timeline increased from 2-3 weeks for minimal risk applications to approximately 4 weeks, depending on the complexity of the application.

COMMENTS FROM REB MEMBERS

REB members were invited to provide comments about their experiences on the REB and to offer constructive feedback. The following quotations illustrate the range of comments:

“I commend both Drs. Freeman and Dastur for successfully guiding the REB through this year and fostering the collegial atmosphere that exists within the REB and which I believe is critical for ensuring full and frank discussions of the ethical issues that come before it.”



“[the REB] began integrating a specific educational component into the monthly REB meetings which proved to be valuable and, in my opinion, should be continued in the future. I think it is worth considering whether it is best to embed these sessions within the existing monthly meetings of the REB or instead to schedule them periodically as stand-alone sessions throughout the year.”

“Greater certainty over the institution’s budgetary commitment to the REB will facilitate better, longer-term planning to ensure attendance at these conferences [REB West, CAREB] and other professional development opportunities are rotated through the REB membership in a way that maximizes benefits to individual members and the board as a whole.”

“I think it would be fruitful for the REB to further discuss and set specific service delivery goals (e.g., a specified percentage of projects reviewed and communicated to the principal researcher within a specified timeframe) and generate metrics relating these goals to be reported annually. In particular, it may be insightful to generate metrics for three points in the review process: (a) assignment of reviews to REB members, (b) completion of assigned reviews by REB members, and (c) collation of individual reviews and communication of the results back to the principal researcher.”

“I had the opportunity to mentor--and be mentored by--a new student member on the board. This opportunity allowed me to reflect on the processes I use to assess an application and taught me a swath of new perspectives on my practiced habits.”

“The inclusion of regular professional development opportunities keep the meetings fresh and invigorating.”

“...I am continually impressed by the work and commitment of the REB. There is not a year that I do not feel I learn several valuable lessons on this board.”

“the REB reassessed what type of research was ethical in a time of crisis. The chair did a formidable job pulling together guidelines for research in a time of pandemic. The allowed me as a researcher to reflect on how research processes adapt for situational changes at the global level and how these translate to the local.”

“What worked well was having continuity of membership which meant that REB members were trained and able to review a range of files. The two community members and the student member held important, valuable roles. I was looking forward to the REB West conference to learn more about other REBs and to have more training. Unfortunately, the conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of improvement, I believe the REB could improve by having a faster turn around time. I also believe there are ways to improve communication between the ORS and the REB.”

“If a Community Member (CM) has not in the past been a researcher, there is a steep learning curve. Not only do they need to study TCPS2, but also learn the language unique to researchers and to KPU. Then of course, there’s ROMEO! Consequently, since the number of CM’s has been reduced



from 2 to 1, I would highly recommend that the next CM be hired 3-6 months before the term of the outgoing CM ends to allow time for the new CM to study and learn.”

“I really appreciate and enjoy the respectful manner in which our members discuss applications and issues as they arise. It’s a very collaborative and supportive environment that our members create and nurture.”

CHALLENGES

The REB plays a vital role in ensuring that research meets the highest standards of ethical conduct. The REB sees its role as assisting researchers to think about their projects in a way that is consistent with the core principles of research ethics: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice. The review of applications is made challenging by the complexity of different research methods, the diversity of disciplinary traditions and approaches, and problems posed by new technologies. Another challenge comes from shifting, sometimes contentious, conceptualizations of risk, harm, benefit, informed consent, inclusivity, anonymity, confidentiality, data security, ownership, and cultural sensitivity. The REB must also straddle a delicate balance between being an open and transparent body while at the same time keeping its deliberations confidential and independent. The REB strives to ensure that its policies, procedures, forms, and systems are clear, consistent, usable, and relevant. The REB Coordinator plays a critical role here and provides invaluable support to the REB’s mission and work. This is challenging work especially when some of the systems (e.g., the ROMEO application system) are third-party applications that cannot readily be modified. The REB did receive a usability study analysis on its website and the ROMEO application system. The results of that analysis are helping the REB Coordinator to make changes that will improve the system’s learnability, efficiency, and user experience.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Future opportunities for the REB should focus on supporting a culture of learning and professional development for members. Support from the Office of Research Services has been good in this regard; it is hoped that such support continues or even increases. The REB’s in-house expertise should be shared with the broader KPU community through a greater range of educational outreach activities. This could include guest lectures, panel discussions, workshops, and the development of educational videos and case studies. In terms of policies and procedures, the REB will continue revising the RS1 Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, with special attention to procedures around complaints and concerns.

The REB would like to thank the REB Coordinator, Foluso Fagbamiye for her professionalism and on-going administrative support. Lastly, we thank Dr. Deepak Gupta, AVP, Research, for his on-going support to the REB. Dr. Gupta’s collaborative leadership style, high standards of personal integrity, and commitments to research and research ethics are commendable and welcome.

Submitted by Dr. Farhad Dastur