

# Research Ethics Board Directive on Research Involving Human Participants During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Updated: April 2, 2020

**Directive: 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.**

## Context

KPU's Research Ethics Board (REB) is concerned about the health and safety of both research participants and researchers. Before issuing this COVID-19 directive, the REB examined advice from public health officials, the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (*SOP 501.003: REB Review During Publicly Declared Emergencies*), and directives from other Research Ethics Boards including Dalhousie University, McGill University, University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, University of Victoria, and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute. We reviewed relevant policy documents including the *TCPS 2 (2018)* and KPU policy *RS1: Research Involving Human Participation*. We also note that the Government of British Columbia declared COVID-19 to be a public health emergency. For these reasons the REB is issuing the directive that all 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. Exceptions may be authorized as identified below.

## Business Continuity and Updates

During this emergency, the REB will continue to operate, answer questions, and conduct reviews using various communications technologies. The COVID-19 situation is fluid so REB directives and advice may change. For up-to-date notifications, check the REB's website: <https://www.kpu.ca/research/research-ethics>

## Face-to-Face Data Collection Methods are Suspended

Data collection and recruitment methods involving face-to-face interactions are suspended until further notice. These methods include lab visits, interviews, focus groups, visits to workplaces or other proximate settings.

## Technologically Distanced Data Collection Methods are Acceptable

Data collection methods not involving face-to-face interactions are acceptable. These methods include software-enabled surveys, questionnaires, inventories, or other activities using online platforms such as Qualtrics, reddit, Facebook, and MTurk. All such methods should comply with provincial privacy laws. Regular mail and telephone-based methods are also acceptable.

## What Should I do if My Research is Currently Underway?

1. If your research currently involves data collection using face-to-face methods with participants, and you cannot transition to alternate methods, then you should suspend data collection and inform the REB.

2. If your research is underway but no longer involves collecting data or meeting participants face-to-face, you do not need to notify the REB. Continue with your research.

3. If your research can transition to alternate, distanced methods, begin doing so immediately. You do not need prior REB approval to make this transition; however, after making the transition, submit an amendment describing the change and upload any modified forms such as the Consent Form or data collection forms [[How to Submit an Amendment](#)]. Contact [reb@kpu.ca](mailto:reb@kpu.ca) if you require assistance. Amendments should be submitted by Friday April 3, 2020.

### **What Should I do if My Research is Currently Under Review?**

For applications currently under review, and that proposed face-to-face interactions, please submit an amendment describing how your research has been modified to avoid face-to-face contact [[How to Submit an Amendment](#)]. There is no deadline for this amendment; however, the sooner you submit, the sooner we can review your project. Contact [reb@kpu.ca](mailto:reb@kpu.ca) if you require assistance.

### **Exceptions**

Exceptions to the above directive may be made for special reasons such as research involving COVID-19 or where stopping the research could put participants at risk. Contact the REB Chair to discuss.

### **Fast Track Review 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.

### **Questions about Research Ethics**

Dr. Farhad Dastur, REB Chair, [farhad.dastur@kpu.ca](mailto:farhad.dastur@kpu.ca) or 778-987-6515

### **Questions about Amendments or ROMEQ**

Foluso Fagbamiye, Research Ethics Coordinator, [reb@kpu.ca](mailto:reb@kpu.ca) or 604-599-3163

### **Questions about Research or Research grants**

Catherine Parlee, Research Services Coordinator, [ors@kpu.ca](mailto:ors@kpu.ca) or 604-599-3028