



**2020 Annual Report of the
Research Ethics Board
George Brown College
May 2021**

A Message from the Chair

This year has been full of pivots and changes due to the pandemic. I would like to thank our board members for their expertise in supporting research excellence for our faculty, staff, student, and other researchers and staying on the course steadfastly with resilience and tenacity as we moved from face-to-face interaction to online. The board has provided counsel, structure, stronger familial connection, and levity throughout the year and I thoroughly appreciate their continued support.

I appreciate and thank Rick Huijbregts, Cory Ross, Krista Holmes for their continued guidance. Kudos go to Baaba Lewis for her continued hard work and detailed orientation in ensuring document processes are in place especially for complex applications and REB activities. I would like to thank each of our REB members Sharla Adams, Brooke Ford, Nastaran Dadashi, Barbara Godfrey, Daria Ilkina, Noor Jehan Kabani, Paula Johnson, Przemyslaw Pawluk, Milan Shahani, and Sundeep Sandhu, for their fortitude, their compassion, their research ethics focus, their expertise in REB nuances, and their contagious laughter.

With our multi-cultural, multi-generational GBC family, we continue to be a test bed of quality research as our diverse community provides a good representation of Canada, as a whole. This year, our board have engaged both internally and externally, in various capacities, to over 33 research projects. We also identified our student research projects and this amounted to 4 course-based research approved classes for a total of over 32 student projects this year.

We've set out to continue contributing to GBC's research-focus strategy and this year we ran five (5) research sessions geared for anyone in the GBC family who is interested in conducting research. A total of 28 researchers attended these rich discussion sessions and we have seen an overall quicker processing times as there were less inquiries and errors in applications. We will continue this strategy in the coming year.

Our REB Terms of Reference will be updated as procedural realignment is needed to address our changing landscape at GBC. With the dedication of our REB team, we were able to pivot during the pandemic and it did not impact our approval process as well as other REB activities, but it affected the number of research projects submitted. Although we do not have a dedicated research ethics software solution, we have been able to manage approvals for our

researchers. Our annual Heads of Applied Research (HAR) Subcommittee PD session is delivered online this year with timely topics that is relevant to all researchers.

We are looking forward to the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year as we continue to align our REB strategies with our GBC Research and Innovation department strategies and our GBC Strategy 2022 and Vision 2030. Our REB board will continue to guide and inform the GBC community on our REB processes. With an updated REB application documentation our REB members can streamline their review activities. I thank our board for their continued support and active engagement.

Our REB board is dedicated to continue strengthening our research-practice focus and ensure that our researchers and their research participants are respected, feel safe, and participate in an ethically sound research practice.

Sincerely yours,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin Yap".

Robin Yap, LLB, MSc, DM
Chair, GBC Research Ethics Board

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About this Report

This report is published annually to inform the George Brown College community, research staff and other interested stakeholders of the achievements, forward-looking plans and role of the George Brown College Research Ethics Board (REB). Far more than a summary of the REB's activities, this report documents how various departments and divisions at GBC are engaged in research and are working together to foster and strengthen a rich ethics culture within the College. This report will provide a brief summary of the role, procedures and activities of the REB, as well as outline proposed high-level activities for 2022.

Overview of Research Ethics at George Brown College

GBC is committed to the highest ethical and academic standards for its students, faculty and staff. GBC respects the academic freedom of all research conducted with its support and ensures that this research meets the highest academic standards. The College requires research involving its employees, students and/or equipment and facilities to be conducted using ethical and moral research practices. The conscious commitment of GBC to uphold modern standards of research ethics has led to a policy obliging all research projects conducted under the auspices of the College, irrespective of the source of financial support or location of research, to undergo a research ethics review.

The REB is a vital part of research at the College and reports directly to the President. The primary purpose of the REB is to ensure that ethical principles are applied to research. The REB endorses and uses the Tri-Council Policy 2 (2018) Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS 2 (2018) as a guide. In the event of a problem or discrepancy with a research protocol, researchers and the REB consult the TCPS 2 (2018) and the updates to it.



[George Brown College's Research Ethics Policy](#)

GBC's research ethics policy, Ethics Guidelines & Review Process for Research Involving Human participants applies to all faculty, staff and students regardless of where their research is conducted. The policy states that all research involving humans, even when conducted by researchers who are not affiliated with the College but who may access its resources (either equipment or personnel), falls within the jurisdiction of the GBC REB. The policy clearly states that no research on human participants shall be undertaken without the prior approval of the REB.

The REB ensures that the highest ethical standards are met and maintained from the time the research proposal is submitted, throughout the data collection stage, to the dissemination of results. The Board is accountable to ensure that all research involving human participants conforms to the ethical standards outlined in the College's policy. In reviewing each research protocol, the Board ensures compliance by articulation of TCPS 2 (2018) guidelines and updates to the guidelines. The core guiding principles outlined in the Tri-Council Policy 2 (2018) Statement include:

- Respect for Persons
- Concern for Welfare
- Justice

The Research Ethics Board

The REB functions with the commitment and due diligence of all its members, who each have experience in research involving human participants. The Board has shown continued commitment to meet the challenges and ensure consistent conformity to the TCPS 2 (2018) ethical guidelines.

The current board regularly visits its Terms of Reference to ensure we continually align with regulatory mandates and college strategies. We are working on the update of our Terms document this year to align with our college's vision for the future. Our current REB board consists of:

Name	Department/Institution
Robin Yap, MSc, LLB, DM (Chair)	Centre for Business
Sharla Adams, RN, BScN, MN	Centre for Health Sciences
Nastaran Dadashi, PhD	Centre for Arts, Design & Information Tech.
Barbara Godfrey, RN, MScN	Centre for Health Sciences
Noor Jehan Kabani, PhD., RECE	Office of Academic Excellence
Paula Johnson, M.B.A., PhD	Centre for Hospitality & Culinary Arts
Przemyslaw Pawluk, MSc	Centre for Arts, Design & Information Tech.
Milan Shahani B.A, M.F.A.	Centre for Arts, Design & Information Tech.
Brooke Ford, PhD	Centre for Preparatory & Liberal Studies
Juana Gonzalez-Santos	Centre for Preparatory & Liberal Studies
Daria Ilkina, MSc	Community Member
Sundeep Sandhu, LLB	Community Member

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Total Research Ethics Submissions

Table 1 displays the total number of new research applications, amendments, uncertainty, approval in principle, annual renewal applications, and study completion reports received by the REB from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. This number also includes our course-based research which represents student researcher's work conducted at their respective research-based courses.

On average the REB reviewed 3.3 new REB protocol per month. This includes July and August when the REB is on a skeleton crew as some of its members are on their school year break.

Types of application	Total
New research protocol	33
Annual renewal	11
Study completion reports	40
Amendments	16
Uncertainty applications	1
Approval in principle	2
Course-based research	4
• Student Research	32
Total applications	139

Table 1. Total number of REB applications, amendments, uncertainties, approval in principle, annual renewals and study completion reports from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Yearly Research Ethics Submissions Data

Figure 1 displays applications submitted from 2007 to 2021. Due to the 2019 pandemic, the total number of REB submissions plateaued but the forecast is promising in the coming year.

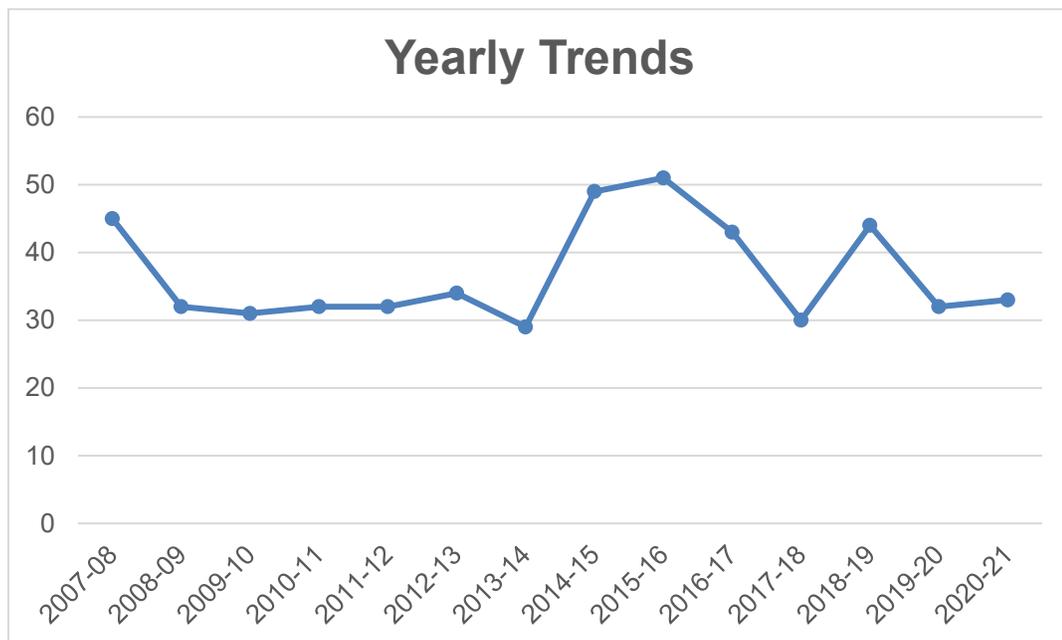


Figure 1.
Applications submitted from 2007 to 2021.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Type of Research Ethics Submission

Ontario colleges accept the multi-site application to streamline ethics application process in member colleges. The REB received one application requiring full board review; all other applications were reviewed under the delegated process. A delegated review is conducted by one member of the REB and the Chair. Risk is the primary criterion used to determine if a protocol may be reviewed through the delegated process rather than by the full Board. The Tri-Council 2 (2018) Policy Statement states that: “if potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research, then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.” Reviews may also be delegated if:

- The review is an annual renewal of a project previously approved by the REB, and the “open file” is up to date.
- The research involves only review of patient records by hospital personnel; or
- The Principal Researcher submits a letter of affirmation confirming that conditions laid down by the REB have already been approved by another institution or funding agency.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Institutional Origin of Research Submissions

GBC staff submitted 30% of all proposals reviewed by the REB at George Brown College this year (see Figure 2). The above figure breaks down to 1 (one) student, 18 (eighteen) faculty, 2 (two) administrative, and 1 (one) support staff. Another 37% of GBC staff submitted joint REB applications to George Brown College and other institutions.

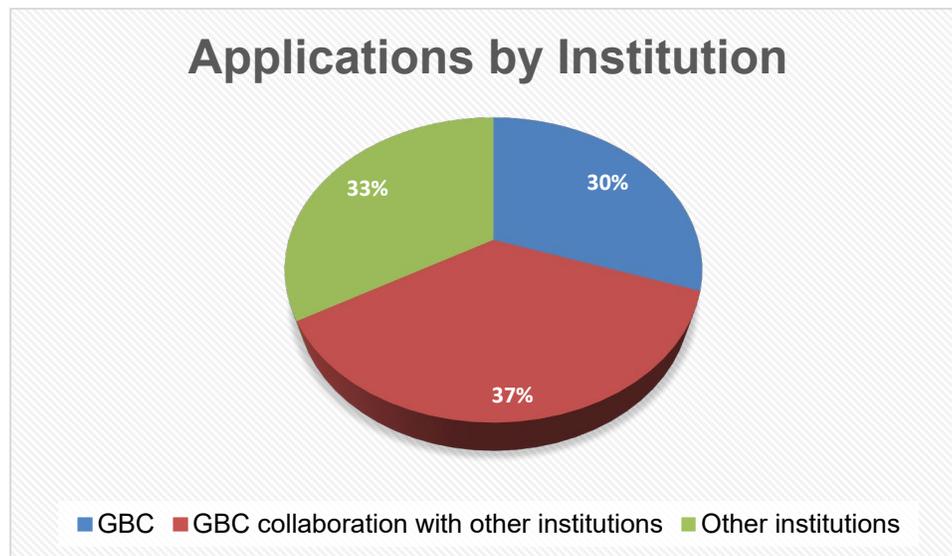


Figure 2.

Institutional origin of REB applications from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Breakdown of REB Submissions by GBC Centre

This year Community Services & Early Childhood submitted the highest number of applications (Figure 3). It is important to note that all divisions have submitted applications suggesting the widespread need for support and representation throughout the college.

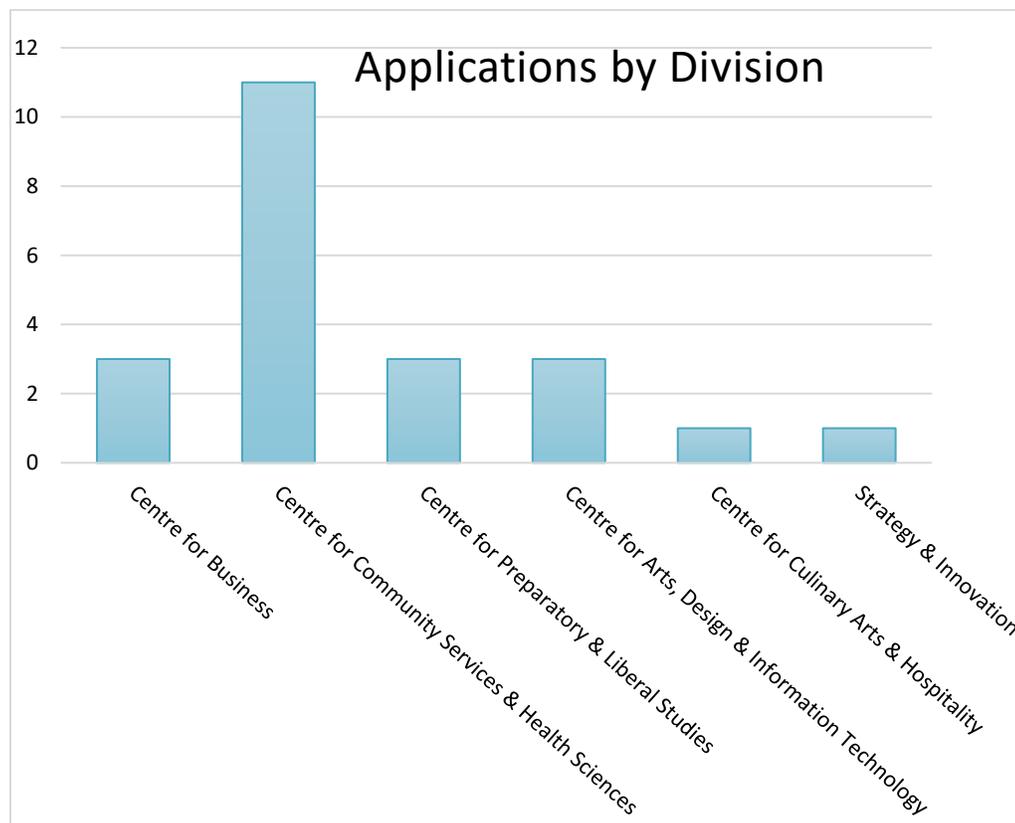


Figure 3.
Breakdown of REB submissions by GBC divisions from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 by numbers.

Achievements in 2020-21

The Board was able to dedicate its 14th year to improving processes. Some of our most important achievements were:

- Updated content and forms on the REB website;
- With the capacity build in the previous year, our REB board this year has worked at full capacity;
- Board members provided potential researchers advice and guidance to strengthen researchers' applications. The pandemic did not slow down this REB work of guidance and advise;
- Promoting positive research ethics culture through the five workshops on fundamentals of research ethics to faculty from different GBC departments;
- Improved protocol for course-based research and revised associated forms;
- Conducted five (5) Foundations of research sessions to potential researchers; and
- Most of the applicants receive feedback within 15 days with a few exceptions.

Goals for 2022

Our goals for the coming year are to:

1. Facilitate PD education on topical issues in research ethics (e.g. power and balance, disability and vulnerable population, antiracism, “responsible research within emerging technologies” like the ACM ethics code);
2. Continue supporting the resolution of any ethical conflicts and answer ethical questions from potential applicants;
3. Continue to track course-based research ethics (CRE) designated classes, their professors and their students conducting research;
4. Providing research ethics support, as needed, between stakeholders;
5. Continue to promote transparency by using the updated research forms in providing feedback to the applicants;
6. Continue the recruitment of REB members to have a future pool of successors;
7. Update the Terms of Reference to further refine parameters for election of chair, succession plan and other REB member processes; and
8. Align with strategic initiatives of the Research and Innovation Office and GBC.

Conclusion

With the recruitment of community and alternate members, the REB has performed as a cohesive whole this year. The stellar feedback from the Board members about their experiences as members of the REB have resulted in a concerted approach to updating REB documents and refining processes. We hope that the proposed improvements and activities this year will help inform GBC staff and students about having a college research ethics culture. With increased exposure to our REB processes, we are certain that the significance of the REB will be recognized in the College research community and at large. As we move forward with the new leadership of our school, we will uphold and strengthen our commitment to ethical standards for research involving human participants.

