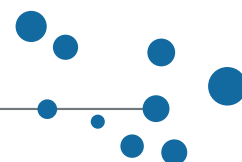




2008

Annual Report of the Research Ethics Board

George Brown College
Research Ethics Board
June 2009

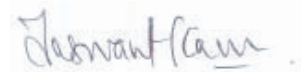


A Message from the Chair of the Research Ethics Board

I am pleased to present the second annual report of the Research Ethics Board at George Brown College. This report reflects the activities of the Board and the consolidation of the review process from February 1st, 2008 to January 31st, 2009, its second year of operations. This year's achievements are considerable and many more promising opportunities remain on the horizon. A highlight of the year was working with Ryerson University and Centennial College to develop a collaborative research ethics review process for the Collaborative Nursing Program research protocols which involve participants at all three sites. This will reduce duplication, lessen waiting time and eliminate inconsistencies involved in multi-centered ethics review to facilitate the work of the researchers.

As we wrap up our second year of operations, I'd like to thank the Research Ethics Board members for their continued hard work and commitment, and the Research and Innovation office for its ongoing support. The GBC REB members are experienced researchers and ethicists and our goal has been to ensure that all protocols submitted to the REB are rigorously reviewed and adhere to the highest standards of participant protection. I thank all of them for their dedicated service in 2008-2009, and extend special thanks to the office of Applied Research and Innovation for their administrative support.

The Research Ethics Board is always eager for stakeholder feedback, and welcomes your thoughts on our work and the contents of this report.



Jaswant Kaur, Ph.D.
Chair, 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 about 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 activities for 2009-2010.

Overview of Research Ethics at George Brown College

GBC is committed to the highest ethical and academic excellence 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 upholding 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 Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) as a guide. In the event of a problem or discrepancy with a research protocol, researchers and the REB consult the TCPS.

George Brown College's Research Ethics Policy

GBC's research ethics policy, Ethics Guidelines & Review Process for Research Involving Human Subject, 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 subjects conforms to the ethical standards outlined in the College policy. In reviewing each research protocol the Board ensures compliance by articulation of TCPS guidelines; measures for adherence to those principles; anticipation of consequences; respect for individual and collective human rights; identification and reporting of code violations; and broad dissemination of a code. The core guiding principles outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement include:

- Respect for human dignity,
- Respect for free and informed consent,
- Respect for vulnerable persons,
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality,
- Respect for justice and inclusiveness,
- Balancing harms and benefits,
- Minimizing harm,
- Maximizing benefit.

The Research Ethics Board

The REB functions with the commitment and hard work of all its members, who each have experience with the due diligence involved in human research. The Board has shown continued commitment to meet the challenges and ensure consistent conformity to the TCPS ethical guidelines.

Three members who served in 2007-08 continued to serve this year. Paula Johnson Tew, who had been an alternate member, became a full member of the board. Mariana Ionescu completed her term on the REB and the Board would like to thank Mariana for her service.

REB Members

Jaswant Kaur, Ph.D.

Chair, Research Ethics Board
Center for Preparatory and Liberal Studies

P. Christopher Timusk, Ph.D. (Civ.Eng.), M.Sc.F.

Center for Construction and Engineering Technologies

Sarah Evans RN, MN

Centre for Community and Health Sciences

Paula Johnson Tew, M.B.A., Ph.D. (On Leave)

Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts

Alternate Members

Rose-Marie Nigli

Student Affairs

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

A. Total Research Ethics Submissions

Table 1 displays the total number of new research applications, annual renewal applications and study completion reports received by the REB from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009. On average the REB reviewed 2.67 new REB protocol applications per month. Although this is fewer than were reviewed last year, there were many more annual renewals and study completion reports for review.

	New Research Protocols	Annual Renewals	Study Completion Reports
Total	32	9	14

Table 1. Total number of REB applications, renewals and study completion reports from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

B. Type of Research Ethics Submission

Ninety-seven percent of ethics protocols from February 2008 to January 2009 were reviewed by the expedited process. An expedited 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 expedited process. The Tri-Council Policy Statement states that: “if potential subjects 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 expedited 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.
- 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

C. Institutional Origin of Research Submissions

Nearly eighty percent of all proposals reviewed by the REB this year were submitted by GBC faculty with no other institutional collaboration (Figure 1). The next-highest number of submissions came from researchers based at other institutions. One application was for a collaborative project between a GBC researcher and a researcher from another institution

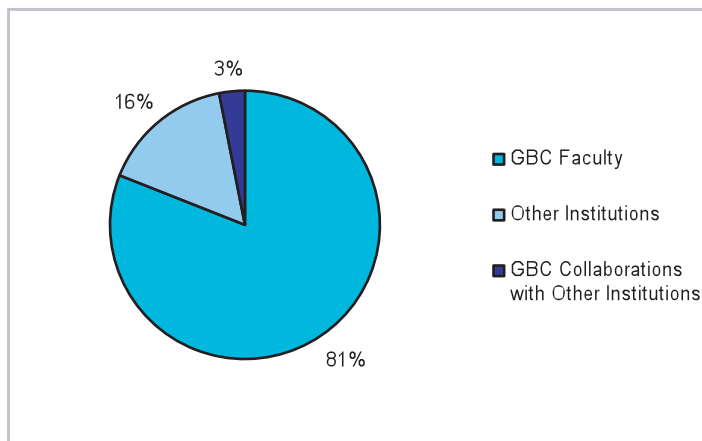


Figure 1. Institutional origin of REB applications from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

D. Breakdown of REB Submissions by GBC Centre

Although many of the GBC centres were active in research this year, more applications came from the Community Services and Health Sciences centre and the Immigrant Education office than any other (Figure 2).

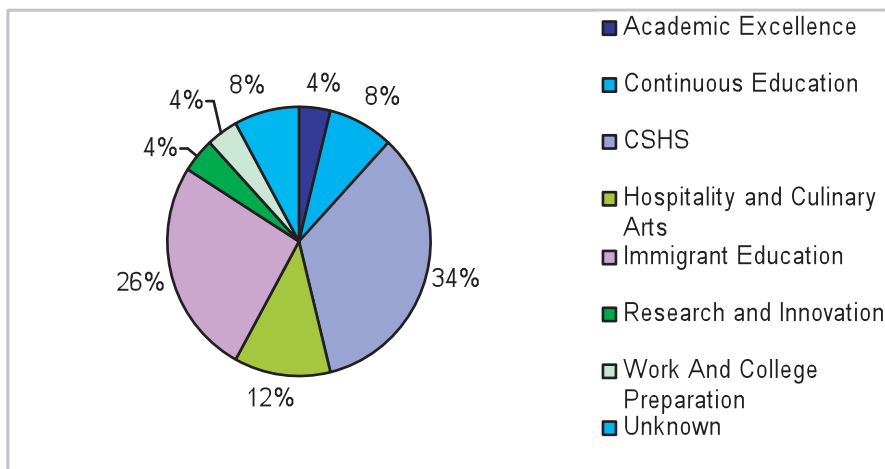


Figure 2. Breakdown of REB submissions by GBC centre from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

E. Turn-Around Time

Turn-around time is the duration between receiving an ethics protocol submission and the final approval of that protocol. Table 1 describes the average turn-around time for full and expedited reviews from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009.

Table 2. Average turn-around time for REB protocols from February 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009.

Type of Research Protocol	Average Turn-Around Time
Full Review	8 days*
Expedited Review	17.94 days

Some of the common setbacks faced by the Board that added to turn-around time and required additional rounds of revisions and review include:

- Incomplete or poorly written protocols,
- Inconsistencies within the application,
- Inaccessible language of the consent form and information letter,
- Inconsistencies with the TCPS guidelines.

To avoid delays and minimize the processing time, the Board recommends that researchers read through the Tri-Council Policy Statement before preparing a protocol submission. The Board would appreciate researcher responses to reviewer comments in order to make any clarifications that might help the protocol to be processed for approval.

Achievements in 2008-09

Having learned much in our first year of operations, the Board was able to dedicate its second year to improving processes. Some of our most important achievements are:

- Developed an agreement with Ryerson University and Centennial College for a more streamlined review of protocols related to the Collaborative Nursing Program and therefore involving participants and/or researchers from all three sites. The agreement will mean quicker protocol reviews but each institution's REB will still have the opportunity to contribute to the review process.
- Creation and implementation of an administrative approval process to provide timely and appropriate access to GBC students, faculty and staff for external researchers. The process is designed to ensure GBC operations are not unduly disrupted and external researchers can access the participant groups most suitable for their studies.
- Negotiated release time for REB members' for REB activities with Deans and Chairs of Divisions and Schools. This demonstrates the college's commitment to research ethics and acknowledgement of the importance of the REB's work.
- The Chair of the REB, in conjunction with the Research and Innovation office, developed and presented a workshop to GBC faculty and staff on the REB. The workshop included an introduction to research ethics and GBC's REB as well as practical guidance on submitting an REB protocol.

Goals for 2009-2010

In the coming year the REB will focus on revising its processes in accordance with the soon to be released 2nd edition of the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Our goals for the coming year are to:

- Facilitate and enhance ethics review processes by recruiting experts from within and out side the college to contribute their knowledge to the review process.
- Provide workshops, lectures and other forms of education to various stakeholders in research including faculty and students intending to engage in research. In particular, the REB will present to GBC staff enrolled in the Central Michigan University master's program.
- Revise and update GBC's research ethics policy and application forms in light of the new Tri-Council Policy Statement.
- Work to further optimize the ethics review processes through implementation of standard operating procedures and the acquisition of an electronic data management system.
- Document succession planning and recruit new members.

Conclusion

Overall, the Board members provided extremely positive feedback about their experiences as members of the REB. We hope that the proposed improvements and activities for 2009-2010, will help educate GBC staff and students about research ethics and further promote the college's research culture. As more researchers become familiar with our process, we are certain that the significance of the REB will be recognized in the College research community. As we move forward, we will renew and strengthen our commitment to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.