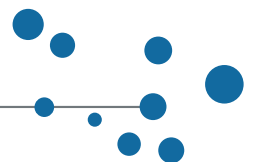




2009

Annual Report of the Research Ethics Board

George Brown College
Research Ethics Board
June 2010



A Message from the Chair of the Research Ethics Board

I am pleased to introduce the third Annual Report of George Brown College's Research Ethics Board. It reflects the activities of the Board from February 2009 to January 2010. George Brown College's Research Ethics Board (REB) continues to fulfill its primary responsibility to protect the safety and rights of human research participants while fostering a culture of ethical practice in conducting research. As a Board, we have demonstrated both prudence and institutional maturity in reviewing and implementing ethical practices in research.

During this year, we have achieved our key goals outlined in the last report. Our operational focus this year was on reviewing processes and procedures. This year we also marked significant milestones, such as the acquisition of an electronic application submission system to streamline the review process. We have negotiated release time for faculty to perform ethics related responsibilities and established a formalized agreement with Ryerson University and Centennial College to simplify the review process for applications within the Collaborative Nursing Degree Program.

A gratifying feature this year has been the ability within the Board to address some of the more distinctive ethical issues presented by researchers. These opportunities enhanced the Board's capacity. This year we also witnessed the transition of some ongoing projects, subject to review and renewed approval, out of research and into routine practice that has proven effective and valuable. In the coming year, we look forward to increasing the Board's capacity to process a growing number of protocols, launching the online submission system, creating partnerships with other Ontario colleges and advancing professional development to support new and current members.

This year we will engage in succession planning for the board. I will be leaving the Research Ethics Board as the Chair after completing two terms in February 2011 and

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A Message from the Chair of the Research Ethics Board

the new Chair will assume the responsibility. I have greatly enjoyed the privilege, opportunity and friendship of working with my fellow colleagues on the Board as the Chair. I thank them for their admirably accomplished support. I am proud of what the REB has achieved since February 2007, and anticipate the Board's continuing advance under the experienced leadership, vision and wisdom that a future Chair will bring

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to our extraordinarily dedicated and diligent Board members, who have worked tirelessly and shown commitment to fulfill this duty along with other responsibilities. This year we had four new members joining the board. We welcome Allison Patrick and Jenny Yeow as full members; and Miranda Oliver and Csilla Reszegi as alternate members to the Research Ethics Board. Members of the Board are, as ever, grateful for the facilitative support provided by the Applied Research Office, Dr. Robert Luke and Meadow Larkins.

I look forward to your support and encouragement.

Dr. Jaswant Kaur Bajwa
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 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 activities for 2010.

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 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 Subjects, 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's 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 persons,
- Concern for Welfare,
- Justice.

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.

Following are the members for the coming year:

REB Members

Jaswant Kaur Bajwa, Ph.D.

Chair, Research Ethics Board
Center for Preparatory and Liberal Studies

Sarah Evans, RN, MN

Centre for Community and Health Sciences

Paula Johnson Tew, M.B.A., Ph.D

Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts

Allison Patrick, RN, PhD

School of Nursing

Jenny Yeow, M.Sc., M.B.A.

Ryerson University Alternate Members

Alternate Members

Rose-Marie Nigli

Student Affairs

Miranda Oliver, M.Ed., TESL

Academic Excellence

Csilla Reszegi, Doctor Pharm., M.B.A.

General Education and Access

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, 2009 to January 31, 2010. On average the REB reviewed 2.6 new REB protocol applications per month. This excludes July and August, when the REB is on summer break

Table 1. Total number of REB applications, renewals and study completion reports from February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

	New Research Protocols	Annual Renewals	Study Completion Reports
Total	31	9	30

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

B. Type of Research Ethics Submission

All but one ethics protocol from February 2009 to January 2010 were reviewed by 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 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 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.
- 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

Sixty-four percent of all proposals reviewed by the REB this year were submitted by GBC staff with no other institutional collaboration (Figure 1). The next-highest number of submissions came from researchers based at other institutions. Three applications were for collaborative projects between a GBC researcher and a researcher from another institution.

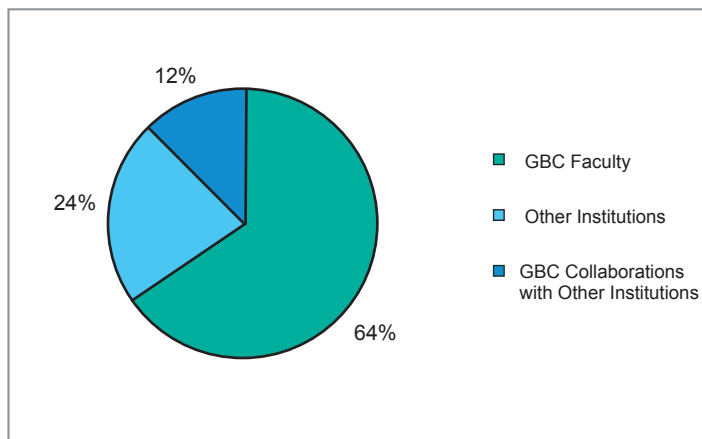


Figure 1. Institutional origin of REB applications from February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

D. Breakdown of REB Submissions by GBC Centre

Although many of the GBC centers were active in research this year, more applications came from the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts and the School of Nursing than any other (Figure 2).

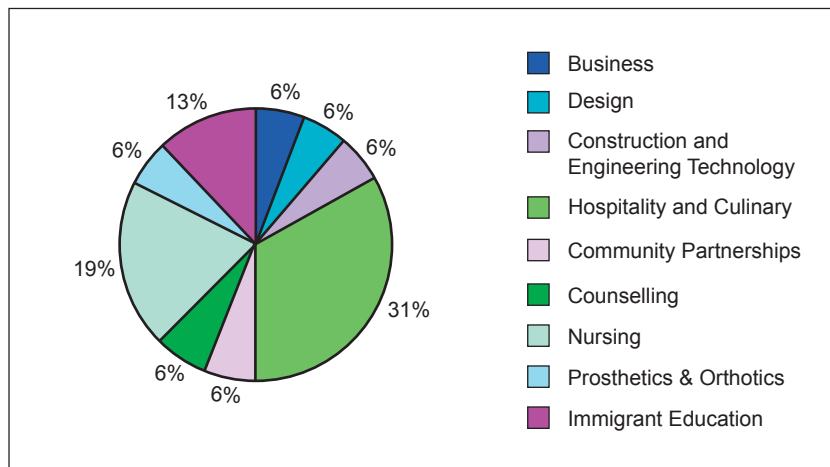


Figure 2. Breakdown of REB submissions by GBC centre from February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010 in percent.

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, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

Table 2. Average turn-around time for REB protocols from February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

Type of Research Protocol	Average Turn-Around Time
Full Review	18 days*
Expedited Review	26 days

*only one full review application received

Some of the common reasons that delayed the review process and added to turn-around time include:

- Incomplete or poorly written protocols,
- Inconsistencies within the application,
- Inaccessible language of the consent form and information letter,
- Inconsistencies with the TCPS guidelines.
- Submission timing; applications received just before the summer break may be delayed.

All these require additional rounds of revisions by the researcher and review by the board. 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 receiving responses to reviewers' comments in order to make any clarifications that might help the protocol to be processed for approval.

Achievements in 2009-10

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

- Purchased an on-line REB submission and review tool which will allow applicants to submit REB protocols on-line. The Board will be able to enter comments and produce correspondence within the system.
- Provided opportunities for the REB members to attend Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (CAREB) professional development events.
- Reviewed our research ethics policy and application forms in light of the draft 2nd edition TCPS. Changes to the policy and procedures will not take effect until the final version of the TCPS is available.
- Finalized Memorandum of Understanding between Ryerson University, Centennial College and George Brown College for the provision of REB services for the collaborative nursing program.

Goals for 2010-2011

Our goals for the coming year are to:

- Facilitate and enhance ethics review processes by recruiting experts from within and outside 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 and OISE Ph.D. program.
- Work to further optimize the ethics review processes through implementation of standard operating procedures and implement the electronic data management system.
- Sustain efforts to update the skills of all REB members by arranging for them to attend conferences hosted by the National Council on Ethics in Human Research and the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards;
- Participate in external committees to contribute to discussions of matters including REB governance
- Document succession planning and recruit new members.
- Implement Romeo, an on-line REB system purchased in 2009.
- Undertake a survey of researchers who submitted protocols to the REB between 2007 and 2009. The researchers will be requested to comment on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board, of the research ethics review processes and of the performance of the REB in providing guidance and timely service.

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 2010-2011 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.