
Understanding Research Ethics review requirements

Is my research subject to ethics review?

All research involving human participants requires review and approval by Yukon University's Research Ethics Board prior to beginning the research.

For research to be subject to review it must be considered "research" and it must involve "human participants." (See below questions and answers.) However, making the determination as to whether an activity is research that is subject to ethics review is not always clear.

What is research?

"Research" is defined as an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation. [\[TCPS, Article 2.1\]](#).

What is a human participant?

A human participant is defined as "a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains data, either through intervention or interaction with the individual or through identifiable private information."

Research involving human remains, cadavers, tissues, biological fluids, embryos or fetuses are also subject to review by the Research Ethics Board. [\[TCPS, Article 2.1\]](#)

What types of activities require an ethics review?

Researchers should ask the following questions to help determine what kind of activities require an ethics review.

- Does your project involve collecting input and/or information from people – for example, responses, reactions, measurements, opinions or experiences – or input collected by someone else, including in person, online, in writing, over the telephone or by any other means?
 - For example: Does your research involve interviews? Focus groups? Surveys? In person, online, on the phone, via skype?
- Does your project involve the use of human biological materials? Did the sample you are using come from a human body?
- Does your project involve using data about people previously collected by someone else (e.g., student or commercial records)?
- Does your project involve the collection or use of health information?
- Does your project involve animals?
- Are you collaborating with someone who is doing any of the above?

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, then your research is subject to ethics review and approval. If you feel your research is NOT subject to ethics review, please contact the research ethics coordinator (vwalker@yukonu.ca)

Pilot studies, although smaller versions of the main study (fewer participants, shorter duration), still fall within the TCPS2 definition of research requiring REB review. The purpose of pilot studies is to

assess the feasibility and/or inform the design of a subsequent study intended to address a research question. They can facilitate the successful conduct of the main study. ([TCPS 2 Article 6.11](#))

My research is subject to an ethics review, but does it need review from Yukon University's Research Ethics Boards (REBs)?

There may be occasions where it is unclear as to whether or not an ethics review is required via Yukon University's REBs. For example, if you are conducting research off site or in collaboration with another institution where ethics approval is already in place at the other institution. In this case, an ethics review is **still** required via Yukon's REBs.

Researchers should ask the following questions to help determine whether your research must be reviewed by the relevant Yukon REB:

- Is your work conducted by University faculty, staff or students?
- Is your research performed on the premises of the University?
- Is your work performed with or involving the use of facilities or equipment belonging to the University?
- Does your research involve University students, staff or faculty?
- Does your work satisfy a requirement imposed by the University for a program or for completion of course of study?
- Is your research conducted by or under the direction of any employee or agent of the University in connection with his or her institutional responsibilities?

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, then your research is subject to ethics review and approval via Yukon University's REB.

If you feel your research is NOT subject to ethics review, please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator at vwalker@yukonu.ca for further assistance.

Research Exempt from REB Review

Research that relies exclusively on publicly available information does not require REB review when:

- the information is legally accessible to the public and appropriately protected by law; or
- the information is publicly accessible and there is no reasonable expectation of privacy.

[TCPS2 Article 2.2](#)

Research involving the observation of people in public places where:

- it does not involve any intervention staged by the researcher, or direct interaction with the individuals or groups;
- individuals or groups targeted for observation have no reasonable expectation of privacy; and
- any dissemination of research results does not allow identification of specific individuals

[TCPS2 - Article 2.3](#)

Research that relies exclusively on secondary use of anonymous information, or anonymous human biological materials, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information. [TCPS2 - Article 2.4](#)

Activities that do not require REB Review

1. Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review. ([TCPS2 – Article 2.5](#))

These activities *“refer to assessments of the performance of an organization or its employees or students, within the mandate of the organization, or according to the terms and conditions of employment or training. The activities are normally administered in the ordinary course of the operation of an organization where participation is required, for example, as a condition of employment in the case of staff performance reviews, or an evaluation in the course of academic or professional training. Other examples include student course evaluations, or data collection for internal or external organizational reports. Such activities do not normally follow the consent procedures outlined in this Policy.*

Note: If data are collected for the purposes of such activities but later proposed for research purposes, it would be considered secondary use of information not originally intended for research, and at that time may require REB review in accordance with this Policy. Refer to [Section D of Chapter 5](#) for guidance concerning secondary use of identifiable information for research purposes.

2. Creative practice activities, in and of themselves, do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review. ([TCPS2 – Article 2.6](#))
3. Making initial contact with individuals or communities to establish partnerships. Ethics review is not required for the **“initial exploratory phase”** of the research where this phase involves “contact with individual or communities intended to establish research partnerships or the design of a research proposal ([TCPS2 – Article 6.11](#)) **Note:** if you wish to use this information gathered in the exploratory phase as research findings, this intention must be made clear when submitting the application for ethics review, along with the details of how you will get consent from those who provided this information.

Ethical considerations for quality improvement or program evaluation projects

YukonU projects considered to be quality improvement or program evaluation and therefore outside of the REB mandate, should still be conducted with respect for human dignity adhering to ethical standards as defined by TCPS2, as well as any professional or practice standards of conduct. Similar to what is expected in research, surveys and projects that seek human involvement need to be done in ways to protect individuals and groups taking part in the activity from risks and be culturally appropriate. The activity must ensure free and informed consent, voluntary involvement and no exercise of power or authority or any undue influence and must respect privacy and confidentiality of individuals.

NOTE: The final determination as to whether or not an ethics review is required for a study rests with the Research Ethics Board (REB)

If you have any questions or require assistance please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator by email vwalker@yukonu.ca or phone 867-668-8857

To help us determine if your project qualifies for an exemption please provide the following information:

- Brief description of your project
- Its primary purpose
- How it is being funded
- The types of data / information to be used
- How the data / information will be gathered
- Where and from who the data / information is gathered
- Why you think the project should be exempt (citing the supporting section of [TCPS2](#))