

St. Thomas University
Research Ethics Board
Annual Report 2018-2019

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Research Ethics Board Annual Report 2018-2019

Table of contents

Research Ethics Board Annual Report 2018-2019:	
Responsibilities of the Research Ethics Board	3
Research Ethics Board Members, 2018-2019	3
General Information	4
The TCPS2 (2014): Professional Development	5
Plans for REB in 2019-2020	6
Educational Activities & Professional Development	6
REB Administration	7
 Appendix A:	
Research Ethics Board Policy	8

1. Responsibilities of the Research Ethics Board

Consistent with the responsibility requirements established in the Research Ethics Board Policy (approved by Senate, 2016), this report summarizes the responsibilities and activities of the REB from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

The responsibilities of the St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board (REB) are outlined in Article 1.2 of the St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board Policy (see Appendix A). It reads as follows:

“The St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board (REB) is responsible to the President through the Associate Vice-President (Research) of St. Thomas University for:

- developing policies regarding ethical issues relating to the use of human participants in research;
- reviewing all protocols requiring the participation of human participants for ethical approval;
- reviewing annually all policies regarding ethical issues relating to the use of human participants in research projects to ensure that policies remain current;
- dealing with matters concerned with human-based research referred to the REB by the President or their designate of STU;
- monitoring ongoing research and terminating any project that does not conform to ethical standards;
- responding to inquiries from external agencies with responsibility to monitor ethics review procedures at the University;
- preparing an annual report for submission to the President or their designate;
- participating in continuing education matters relating to ethics and the use of human participants;
- organizing educational outreach opportunities for members of the STU community in matters relating to research ethics.

The policies and practices adopted by the STU REB will be consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (current version).”

2. Research Ethics Board Members, 2018-2019

Member	Representation	Expiration of Appointment
Mihailo Perunovic	Psychology	June 30, 2021
Martin Kutnowski	Fine Arts	June 30, 2021
Beth Lyons	Community Rep	June 30, 2020
Donna Curtis Maillet	External	September 30, 2021
Stephen Pidwysocky	Criminology/Criminal Justice	April 30, 2022
Lindsay Bowman	Legal	June 30, 2019 (resigned)

Raluca Bejan	Social Work	April 30, 2022
Nancy Higgins	Psychology	March 2019 (resigned)
Clive Baldwin, Chair	Social Work	June 30, 2021
Nicholas Sehl	Community Rep	Sept 30, 2020

2.1 New Members as of April, 2019:

Donna Curtis Maillet– for a three-year term expiring June 30, 2022

Stephen Pidwysocky (Criminology and Criminal Justice) – for a three-year term expiring April 30, 2022

Raluca Bejan (Social Work) – for a three-year term expiring April 30, 2022

2.2 Departing members

Two REB members resigned this year, Dr Nancy Higgins in March 2019, and Lindsay Bowman in June 2019. Dr Higgins was replaced by Raluca Bejan. A call for interest to replace Lindsay Bowman will be made in the Fall.

3 General information

The University endorses the ethical principles cited in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and has mandated its Research Ethics Board (REB) to ensure that all research investigations involving human participants are in compliance with the Statement.

3.1 Scope of REB Review

The STU REB has jurisdiction over all STU Research involving human participants. As per the REB Policy (see Preamble), “STU Research” is that which is conducted:

by members of the STU community (including faculty, students, and staff)

by researchers in formal collaboration with STU members (e.g. co-investigator from another university or organization); or

at STU or otherwise through the STU community (e.g. recruitment from STU community)

All STU Research which involves human participants must have ethical approval from the REB prior to commencement. In the case of undergraduate research that does not pose more than minimum risk to participants, ethics approval may be granted by a research ethics committee at the departmental or program level, as per Section 2.7 of the REB Senate Policy (2016).

Planned amendments to the TCPS2 have resulted in a number of Canadian university REBs implementing an exemption from REB review for student course-based research activities that are conducted solely as a teaching exercise (Panel on Research Ethics, October 2016 at: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2->

[2016/Proposed Revision EN.pdf](#)). The STU REB also began to implement this exemption during the 2017-2018 year and will continue to do so 2018-2019.

3.2 Activities of the REB: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

3.2.1 Review of research ethics applications and management of active files

A central activity of the REB is reviewing research ethics applications presented by STU researchers and those wishing to conduct research within the STU community. All such research involving human participants must be approved by the REB before it can commence. During the last year, the REB reviewed and approved 23 files, which is noticeably more than the number of files processed last year. 1 application was deemed to not require ethical review. Researchers reported 37 studies concluded and had their files closed and 27 files were renewed for another year. No adverse events were reported though there was one matter regarding an incident on which the REB were consulted. This matter was deemed not to fall under the rubric of research as it was solely a class project designed for pedagogical reasons.

The REB had 49 active research files as of June 30, which includes the administrative work of renewing and closing existing files, as well as ongoing consultation with researchers involved in existing projects.

3.2.2 Delegated review.

STU has reciprocal arrangements with UNB regarding ethical approval of research proposals. This does not extend currently to other Universities. Following multiple requests for ethics approval from researchers from other Universities already with ethics approval from their home institution, the REB decided that such applications need only go to the REB meetings if reviewers identified outstanding ethical issues or STU-related ethical issues.

4 The TCPS2 (2014): Professional Development

As this document guides all activities, policies, and procedures of the REB, measures are taken each year to ensure familiarity and compliance with the Policy Statement. These include:

4.1 CORE Tutorial Certification

Given how essential it is that all REB members become intimately familiar with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, all members of the STU REB are required to complete the TCPS2 CORE (Course on Research Ethics) tutorial and submit completion certificates to the Office of Research Services.

Following, the June 2016 changes to the REB Senate policy that require the closure of all REB files that have been active for five years or more, 2 researchers were contacted and asked to reapply with updated documentation.

4.2 Professional Development

In November the REB Coordinator position was taken over by Lauren Eagle in the ORS. She completed the CORE training online and received her certificate.

The Coordinator and one member of the REB attended CAREB in April in Winnipeg. Feedback was very positive and it is recommended that the Coordinator and another member of the REB attend each year.

5. Plans for REB in 2019-2020

5.1 Review of research ethics applications and management of active files

The REB will continue the work of reviewing research files and consulting with STU researchers. As of July 1, 2018, the position of REB Chair was filled by Dr Clive Baldwin, Social Work.

5.2 Recruitment of a replacement member for the committee.

The Committee is currently dominated by the social sciences. Recruitment for the replacement member will thus focus on the arts and humanities.

5.3 TCPS2 (2014) Compliance

As part of the REB's annual efforts to ensure compliance with the TCPS2 (2014), a number of review and revision processes are planned for the 2019-2020 year. These include the ongoing development and maintenance of the REB website and online application form. Best practices continue to be recorded and developed alongside research ethics resources.

6 Educational Activities & Professional Development

The REB plans to continue to provide opportunities for ethics education for its Board members as well as other members of the STU community through a variety of activities:

6.1 Preparation of Interpretation Documents

In response to frequently asked questions from STU researchers, the REB will continue its efforts to provide online resources for some of the more common terms and questions found concerning the TCPS2 (2014). Resources are posted on the ethics section of the STU website.

6.2 Presentation at 2019-2020 Chairs & Directors and AMC Meetings

It has been regular practice for the past four years for the REB Chair to present to the Departmental Chairs & Directors at one of their monthly meetings (preferably in the Fall term), as well as the administrative teams at an AMC meeting. It is strongly recommended that ongoing efforts are made to continue REB education at the upper administrative and faculty levels.

6.3 Winter REB and STU Researcher Training Workshop

It has also been a regular practice over the past few years for the REB to organize educational seminars and workshops for the STU community. Two such

seminars/workshops are planned – one on data security (an issue that arises with many applications), and one on alternatives in ethical review.

6.4 CAREB and CARA Conferences Attendance

In keeping with past practice, participation at both the regional and national research ethics conferences will be encouraged for the REB Chair, REB Coordinator, and all REB members (funds permitting).

6.5 Modernization and Documentation of REB Processes

Work is continuing with Josh Leslie of Stewardly, a social purpose business in the human subjects research administration field, to streamline the processing and review of submissions. Work with Stewardly has formalized a one-year pilot program for multi-jurisdictional research review to be led by STU, and includes Cape Breton University REB, Health PEI REB, Mount Saint Vincent University REB, and the REB at NBCC (to reduce administrative burden and streamline review of low-risk studies looking to recruit on more than one Atlantic Canadian campus). The pilot will be launched in September and promoted (in order to expand and include more REBs) during Research Atlantic (formerly “CARA East”) in December at MSVU.

7 REB Administration

Following the recommendation last year that the position of Chair be re-advertised with a statement that course release would be offered, course release for the REB Chair is established at one 3-credit hour course per year.

In October 2018, Lauren Eagle took on responsibility for renewals and closures of files in advance of Danielle Connell commencing a one-year secondment to Mitacs. In November 2018, Lauren Eagle become REB Coordinator. The issue of REB administration will be reviewed in the Fall.