

**St. Thomas University  
Research Ethics Board  
Annual Report 2020-2021**

**Prepared by  
Dr. Clive Baldwin  
Chair, Research Ethics Board  
&  
Lauren Eagle  
Coordinator, Research Ethics Board**

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## **Research Ethics Board Annual Report 2020-2021**

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## 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, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

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, 2020-2021

<i>Member</i>	<i>Representation</i>	<i>Expiration of Appointment</i>
Mihailo Perunovic	Psychology	December 31, 2020
Nick Sehl	Community Rep	June 30, 2022
Jennifer Dickinson	Community Rep	June 30, 2023
Donna Curtis Maillet	Community Rep	June 30, 2022
Stephen Pidwysocky	Criminology/Criminal Justice	April 30, 2022
Linda Caissie	Gerontology	January 20, 2023

Renee Bourgoin	Education	January 20, 2023
Lisa Mitchell	Education	January 20, 2023
Clive Baldwin, Chair	Social Work	June 30, 2024

#### Changes to membership

Mihailo Perunovic finished his term in December 2020.

Clive Baldwin finished his term as Chair June 30, 2021.

A call for a Chair of the REB was sent out in May and Clive Baldwin was appointed.

Donna Curtis Maillet was re-appointed to the Board as a community representative for one year.

Nick Sehl was re-appointed to the Board as a community representative for a two-year term.

Jennifer Dickison was appointed to the Board as a community representative for three-year term

### 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.

#### 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](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 2021-2022.

## **Activities of the REB: July 1, 2020– June 30, 2021**

### ***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 25 files, 16 were approved. Researchers reported 22 studies concluded and had their files closed and 45 files were renewed for another year. Two adverse events were reported, both of which were dealt with to the satisfaction of the Board.

The REB had 54 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.

17 requests for amendments were submitted and approved.

One application submitted was sent back to the department level for approval because it was a student led research project and submitted as below minimal risk.

Eight enquiries regarding the necessity for REB review were received primarily concerning student theses. None required REB review due to the projects being below minimum risk.

### **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 the two delegated REB reviewers identified outstanding ethical issues or STU-related ethical issues.

## **4 The TCPS2 (2018): 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:

### *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, two researchers were contacted and asked to reapply with updated documentation.

#### *4.2 Professional Development*

The REB Coordinator completed Gender-Based Analysis Plus training, Bias in Peer Review training and attended the CAREB conference online with three Board members.

### **5. Plans for REB in 2021-2022**

#### *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 13, 2021, Dr Clive Baldwin, Social Work, was re-appointed as Chair of the Board.

#### *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. Further, due to the number and frequency of applications from the Department of Psychology, it would be helpful to have a member of the Board from that Department.

#### *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 2021-2022 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 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 2021-2022 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 Training Seminar/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. This year, the Chair of the

Board has presented on research ethics to the Dept of Sociology honours student seminar and to the School of Social Work students on social action placements.

As issues of data security are raised by many applications, the Board are currently considering requiring a specific data security protocol to accompany each application. Should this be agreed by the Board, a seminar/workshop on data security will be offered.

#### *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.

The current jotform used for REB applications will be reviewed and amended together with further guidance on making REB applications.

The Board will develop a policy on student applications requiring more than Departmental approval but not full REB review.

## **7. Departmental Reviews**

Criminology and Criminal Justice:

- 1) Supervisor Dr. Claire Goggin. Student: Jenicca Jean Project title: Cell phone use while driving among young adults enrolled at St. Thomas University
- 2) Supervisor: Dr. Susan Reid. Student: Grace Baker Project title: Lost in the Lockdown: An Analysis of Youth Voices Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

Psychology:

- 1) Supervisor Dr. Michelle Lafrance and Dr. Janet Durkee-Lloyd. Student: Ashley Erb Project title: Helping New Brunswick seniors and their caregivers “navigate the system”.
- 2) Supervisor Dr. Tyleer Bancroft. Student: Anoushka Mandwal Project title: Memory from Bilingual Stroop Test: Assessing Models of Bilingual Representation.