

REB Standard: Eligibility to Serve as a Principal Investigator

Current Status: Approved and Posted

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1. The title “principal investigator” designates the person who is “in charge” of the research. In this position, the principal investigator is assumed to have the abilities to supervise other researchers, be responsible for the financial administration of the project, have the authority to ensure that appropriate guidelines and regulations are followed, and be competent to conduct the research in the absence of supervision. The principal investigator is “responsible for the ethical conduct of the research, and for the actions of any member of the research team” (TCPS2, 2014, Glossary).
2. Eligibility to serve as a principal investigator on an application to a Brock Research Ethics Board (REB) is determined by academic credentials and affiliation with the university.
 - a. Individuals who hold academic appointments at Brock are eligible to serve as principal investigators. This provision extends to tenured or probationary faculty, permanent or probationary librarians, limited-term appointees (LTAs), and instructional limited-term appointees (ILTAs), as well as administrators who hold academic rank within a Centre or Department (e.g., President, Vice-President, Vice-Provost, Dean, Associate Dean, University Librarian, Associate University Librarian). LTAs and ILTAs are eligible as principal investigators beyond term appointments with authorization from their Dean.
 - b. Professors Emeriti or Emeritae are eligible to serve as principal investigators consistent with Brock’s commitment to facilitate their ongoing research (Faculty Handbook II.11.2). Other retired Brock faculty will be deemed eligible with authorization from their Dean.
 - c. Part-time, contingent, or sessional Instructors may serve as principal investigators for research projects associated with the courses they teach for the duration of their appointments if granted permission from the Chair or Centre Director.
 - d. Adjunct professors are eligible to serve as principal investigators with authorization from their Dean.
 - e. Visiting international scholars may serve as principal investigators for projects that involve their Brock host as an investigator. If the proposed project may extend beyond the duration of the visiting scholar’s appointment, the Brock host should be the principal investigator.
 - f. Individuals who hold staff appointments at Brock may serve as principal investigators for research projects associated with their formal job responsibilities.
 - g. According to Brock policy, postdoctoral fellow appointments involve “substantially full-time research or scholarship” (Faculty Handbook III.C.10.1.1.iii). However, the policy further asserts default assumptions that any results will be co-published with the supervisor (Faculty Handbook III.C.10.1.1.iv) and that all intellectual property rights reside with the supervisor for any work in the supervisor’s lab (Faculty Handbook III.C.10.1.1.v) unless there is agreement about alternate arrangements that is filed in advance with the Office of Research Services. Consistent with this policy, postdoctoral fellows can serve as principal investigators for an application to the Research Ethics Board only if there is a related agreement on file for the specific project in question; otherwise, the faculty supervisor must be the principal investigator.
 - h. A student cannot be identified as a principal investigator on REB applications. As per [REB Standard: Responsibilities of Faculty Supervisors and Student Researchers](#), student researchers must have a faculty supervisor and that individual is typically, although not always, the principal investigator.
 - i. All research involving human participants conducted at Brock requires clearance from a Brock Research Ethics Board. If a non-affiliated researcher has proposed research at Brock that will not involve Brock researchers, the Research Ethics Board shall review the credentials of the lead researcher to determine if this individual is eligible to serve as a principal investigator at Brock. Normally an academic appointment at another Canadian university and ethics clearance from that institution will satisfy the criteria.

3. The restriction of the term “principal investigator” does not determine ownership of intellectual property or recognition of authorship. All Brock researchers are encouraged to discuss such expectations with any collaborators, students, or employees as part of their commitment to engage responsibly in research.
4. Research projects may require specific professional expertise or qualifications beyond those required to meet the eligibility criteria to serve as a principal investigator. In some cases, research funders or outside agencies may stipulate requirements that differ from the considerations identified herein. Researchers are encouraged to consult with the REB (reb@brocku.ca) to avoid confusion or unnecessary steps.