BROCK UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
Wednesday, January 11, 2017
12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Plaza 501C

Minutes of the SREB Meeting

Attendance
Sandra Bosacki
Lynn Dempsey
Ann-Marie DiBiase
Mahfuz Hassan
Linda Morrice
Miya Narushima
Christine Tardif-Williams

Regrets
Christina Garchinski
Karen Julien

MINUTES

	ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1	**Motion to approve Agenda** • Approved **Motion to approve October, November & December Decision Reports** • Approved **Motion to approve October Minutes** • Approved		Motion to approve: SB Seconded: LD All in favour Motion to approve: CTW Seconded: LM All in favour Motion to approve: LD Seconded: CTW (2 members abstained given their absence from the October meeting)
2	**New Business**	**Introduction of new Chair and board**	
3	**Updates (in camera)**	**Update on compliance case** **Appeals board proposal**	Motion to move in camera: AMD Seconded: SB All in favour
4	**Education**	**Proposed Changes to the TCPS2** • LAW reiterated that we reviewed these changes at a previous meeting, and asked the Board to submit any comments they had in a response to the Panel on Research Ethics by January 31, 2017. • The Office recently had a meeting with some Faculty members in the Centre for Applied Disability Studies, who were very concerned about the proposed changes regarding clinical trials. As currently written, the Policy would require that all single-case design studies would have to be registered as a clinical trial. These Faculty members agreed to respond to the	Motion to move out of camera: AMD Seconded: SB All in favour

		Panel with these concerns, speaking about the feasibility and appropriateness of this approach. • There have also been concerns raised about The Scholarship for Teaching and Learning; the idea of improving student learning through scholarly inquiry about learning, about teaching, and about how to best make public the resulting findings. The proposed changes indicate that for example, a study of student learning success that prospectively assigns children in an early education program to groups that will receive either the standard curriculum or an experimental curriculum that may improve short and long-term learning outcomes, would be considered a clinical trial. Their rationale being that the study uses prospective assignment and may present more than minimal risks to participants (e.g., effect of learning outcomes due to curriculum on social or economic status, self-esteem, mental health). This is a concern for Faculty members in education as well given that most their projects would now be considered clinical trials. This chapter also appears to have inconsistencies in the definition of a clinical trial. It first states that the chapter only needs to be applied if the interventions involve more than minimal risk to participants. Later they provide the example related to the scholarship for teaching and learning, indicating it would meet the criteria for a clinical trial. We will craft a response to the Panel regarding the need to clarify this. • The other major proposed change is the additional of an article that exempts course-based research pedagogical activities from REB review. The definition of course-based research was reviewed for the Board: this type of research occurs when professors allow their students to conduct research as part of a class assignment. This is not considered an undergraduate thesis or Major Research Paper. This involves research that is minimal risk, involves data collection outside of the classroom, where all students are either doing the same research project (instructor-designed research), or students are designing their own data collection measures but the professor is providing specific guidelines for recruitment, type of measurement, procedures, data storage and disposal, and reporting of results (instructor-guided research). This assignment would have an evaluative component that would contribute to their mark in the course. • Course-based research pedagogical activities often refer to activities that are not meant to add to the literature; instead, simply teaching	

		students the concepts of research. However, across the country, REBs agree that this is not the type of assignments professors are giving their classes. They are assigning more substantial research projects that in some cases, are more than minimal risk. In the proposed changes, these projects would not be seen by the REB given that the Policy would consider this pedagogical. Comments regarding the concerns on this topic will be submitted to the Panel as well. **Reviewers comments and questions** ***Course-based research*** • The above definition was reiterated to help Board members distinguish between course-based research and Faculty research where professors retain class work from their students: course-based research occurs when professors allow their students to conduct research as part of a class assignment. Should a professor want to retain course assignments/work from students in their class, this would be considered Faculty research and would go through our usual delegated approach (with the standard application). • A Board member posed an example to discuss: if an instructor wanted to gather assignments for research purposes after the course was already complete, would they submit a secondary use of data application (given that data was originally collected for a different purpose and is now being proposed for research) or a standard application? LAW explained that ideally, professors would disclose to their students at the beginning of the course that they are intending on collecting assignments for research purposes and gain consent to do so (and would only collect assignments from students who consent). This is particularly important in the collection of journal submissions/reflective pieces. Students should be given the opportunity to read through/vet their journals and decide what they want to include in the research. If professors have waited until the course is over to request retention of class work, a secondary use of data application would be appropriate however, if it is possible to gain consent from students, they should. ***Psychological risk*** • LAW reviewed how to proportionately review the psychological risk of a study. The Office is finding that many reviews are being returned with generic comments regarding psychological stress, and requesting that researchers include	

		contact information for support services/resources. In some cases, this can alarm participants if we are over estimating the risk. These comments also start to become meaningless if participants are seeing them on all studies – regardless of the level of risk. This may cause them to become desensitized and when a study does in fact pose psychological risks, may not prepare participants properly for this. Board members should carefully consider whether the risk would be encountered in a participant's everyday life – and be particularly cognizant of the participant pool (some may be exposed to greater risks in their normal, everyday life, e.g., asking university students questions about sex and violence. We may initially think these are personal or sensitive questions however, thinking about the population of interest, young people are exposed to these topics frequently and are often open to discussing them. In this case, we may not be as worried about participants experiencing psychological distress compared to a study that looked at these variables in an adolescent population for example). • Board members should also consider the risks in the context of that particular study. For example, if a participant decides to withdraw from a study examining rape culture, this may put them at social risk (feeling embarrassed, assumptions being made about them etc.). • Although it does not hurt to err on the side of caution, we want to avoid using these blanket statements and ensure the review is specific and proportionate to that project and participant population. This will ensure participants do not become desensitized to these statements. • A few examples were discussed as a group: a Board member inquired about the risks associated with taking photographs and videotapes of children in school settings. If this has been given clearance from the school Board, should we back down on our scrutiny of risk? Members agreed we can still require statements regarding confidentiality in the consent form, regardless of the school board's decision. ***Proportionate review and purpose*** • The Office encouraged Board members to ensure their comments are related to ethics and ethical considerations. If a reviewer includes a comment simply for interest sake, it may not be necessary. If it is necessary to understand the context of the study, this can be included. However, Board members are encouraged to	

		contact the Office about this, and we can ask the researchers for more context. Without it, it may not be possible to perform an informed review. • Board members were encouraged to ask themselves, “what is the reasoning for needing to know this?” If it is for curiosity, this may not be necessary or our prerogative from an ethics perspective. • A Board member inquired about the lack of context provided on some files that are being resubmitted (given they were open for 5 or more years). Should members assume the measures were provided in the original file or should they be reviewed again in the resubmission? The Office confirmed the measures should be provided upon resubmission to allow researchers to perform an informed and adequate review. • Emergent files were discussed: given the nature of emergent research, it is difficult for researchers to predict what will occur each year. In a recent resubmission, the researcher indicated she will be collaborating with teachers in the school board to develop the focus and scope of the project each year. In this case, we could make some accommodations such as adjusting the renewal date to October. This would allow the researcher to submit a modification to the file outlining the unique scope of the project as decided by the researcher and the teacher, while at the same time renewing clearance for another year. Members were encouraged to consult with the Office if there are unique circumstances such as this. • LAW indicated that even if the school board has provided clearance (or in some cases, Brock is simply a collaborator on a school board initiative), we should still be requesting that they follow our protocols given that Brock is affiliated with the project (e.g., information on consent form, modification requests etc.). • Members inquired about any stipulations regarding data being kept indefinitely to include in open access journals that are freely available. This is coming up more frequently in reviews, and many psychology journals now require that data is made publicly available (e.g., the data file is posted on Open Science Foundation). Is this ok? • LAW clarified that the participant must be aware of these intentions in the consent form and agree to this. We can ask researchers to define the parameters around future analyses for	

		participants so they can fully understand how their data may be used in the future (or some description indicating when/what circumstances data would be shared with other researchers). We would also like researchers to indicate what type of data will be shared – will it be shared with identifiers or anonymized? Members were encouraged to read through the consent form and determine – is there enough detail that a participant could provide informed consent? Is their request reasonable? What data will be released? (E.g., we have declined in the past a request to release participants' postal codes alongside data). • It is believed the Board will start to see these requests for data to be used in open access venues more and more – in fact, SSHRC and the Canadian Association of Research Libraries have partnered to conduct a major project that will lay out the guidelines around this. This will be distributed to REBs so we can determine how to handle these requests moving forward. • A Board member indicated that sometimes researchers do not provide any citations/references in the rationale section. Is this required? • LAW indicated this is more of an APA requirement and not a major concern for ethics. However, researchers should be providing enough justification for the research – stating the problem, and providing background rationale that justifies and warrants the investigation. We can ask that researchers substantiate their research and situate it in the field if we feel the rationale section is lacking. For example, investigating the importance of breakfast programs for children has been extensively studied and the findings are consistent in the literature. We could ask researchers to show us why more research in this area is needed, and prove that there has been a call for more investigation to be done. • Members should also be considering the level of risk in the rationale section as well. If the study is greater than minimal risk, researchers need to clearly outline their justification for conducting it to ensure we are not needlessly putting participants at risk, for a study that has already been done.	
5	**Adjourn**	**Meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.**	Motion to adjourn: MH Seconded: MN All in favour