BROCK UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
Tuesday, May 2, 2017
12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
PL 500A

Minutes of the SREB Meeting

Attendance		**Regrets**
Sandra Bosacki	Karen Julien	Mahfuz Hassan
Lynn Dempsey	Linda Morrice	
Ann-Marie DiBiase	Miya Narushima	
Christina Garchinski	Christine Tardif-Williams	

MINUTES			
ITEM		**DISCUSSION**	**ACTION**
1		**Motion to approve Agenda** • Approved.	Motion to approve: SB Seconded: MN All in favour
		Motion to approve March & April Decision Reports • Approved.	Motion to approve: LD Seconded: LM All in favour
		Motion to approve March Minutes • Approved.	Motion to approve: LM Seconded: KJ All in favour
		Motion to approve April Minutes • Approved.	Motion to approve: LD Seconded: CG All in favour
2	New Business	**The REB Sub-Committee on Guidelines, Practice, and Procedure (GPP)** • The new documents to be approved by SREB today were reviewed: 1. Proposed Revision to the Requirement for Graduate Student Researchers to Complete the CORE Tutorial (proposed change to the Faculty Handbook): • This document initially indicated that if graduate students were conducting human participant studies strictly based on secondary analysis of a) human tissue or bodily fluids or b) data from non-public sources (provided there was no involvement or interaction with human participants), they were only required to complete Modules 1 (core principles), 2 (defining research) and 5 (privacy and confidentiality) as a minimum (but were encouraged to complete the tutorial in its entirety). • The revised requirement now applies to all graduate students preparing a thesis, exit project, or course-based research as part of their degree requirements and to students working as research/laboratory staff, project managers or research assistant where they will be	

responsible for recruiting or interacting with human participants or have access to data in an identifiable form.

- The office informed the board that the Panel on Research Ethics (PRE) has recently indicated they will not be able to revise the CORE tutorial as a result of technical difficulties. Any additional chapters and changes they are making they will disseminate as PowerPoint presentations rather than revising the current modules. For this reason, it is anticipated that the tutorial will eventually become obsolete (given it will slowly become out of date). There has been push back from the ethics community because many institutions have made the training mandatory for researchers. This is a crucial piece for PRE to address given that education is party of their mandate. In fact, it is already considered out-dated because it does not include a module for Chapter 9. We plan to continue requiring that our researchers complete the tutorial given that is the only educational tool right now however, this is something to consider moving forward (adapting our policy if a better, more up to date tool is released).
- A motion was put forward by AMD to approve the changes made to the graduate student requirements. Seconded by SB. All members voted in favour.

2. Proposed Requirement for Undergraduate Student Researchers to Complete the CORE Tutorial (proposed requirement to be passed by the Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee):
   - It is being proposed that as part of any application for human ethics clearance, all undergraduate students must complete the CORE tutorial in its entirety as well, prior to their involvement with human participants in research. The same parameters would apply as outlined above for graduate students.
   - Both these documents need to first be approved by the REBs before taken to Senate and the Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee for approval, respectively.
   - LW informed the board that 1842 Brock affiliates have completed the CORE tutorial since it was made mandatory for graduate students in 2014. When you examine the breakdown of demographics, it appears that 70% of these completions were by undergraduate students. Therefore, in practice it would seem that Faculty supervisors are having their undergraduate students complete the tutorial anyways. Making it a requirement should not be onerous on researchers or students. In fact, when speaking with professors of methods courses, several of them have used the CORE tutorial as a 10% assignment for their students.
   - It was also clarified that the REB's original intention when putting the CORE tutorial requirements forward was to implement the undergraduate student requirements a year after the graduate student

requirements were released. However, this did not come to fruition. The Chair asked if there were any objections to the undergraduate requirements moving forward as intended. No objections were brought forward.

- A motion was put forward by AMD to approve the proposed requirement. Seconded by LD. All members voted in favour.

3. REB Standard - Ethics Education for Student Researchers (for circulation to researchers, e.g., website):
   - This document provides a synopsis of the CORE tutorial and the requirement of student completion, should they be conducting research with human participants. This document will be circulated to researchers and put on the website for informative and educative purposes.
   - A motion was put forward by AMD to approve the REB standard. Seconded by CTW. All members voted in favour.

4. REB Guideline – Secondary Use of Data:
   - The Chair outlined the changes that had been made to the secondary use of data guideline: the difference between anonymous and anonymized data was further explained; the guideline now outlines what is exempt from REB review.
   - It was clarified that even when data are anonymized, the project still must come to the REB for review as "secondary use of data." The perception is that if the identifiers have been removed, the data can be passed on to other researchers or used for different study purposes without REB review. However, if a researcher intends to make data available to other researchers (who may analyze the data for other purposes, outside of the original purpose), both researchers have to go through their respective boards for secondary use of data REB approval.
   - A motion was put forward by AMD to approve the changes made to the secondary use of data guidelines. Seconded by MN. All members voted in favour.

5. REB Guideline – Conducting Research as a Course Assignment:
   - The Chair outlined the changes made to the guidelines for conducting research as a course assignment: most changes were a result of the updated version of the TCPS in 2014 (e.g., changing the Article number in the TCPS2, page numbers etc.). This guideline now also clarifies the difference between instructor guided and instructor designed projects.
   - The office explained that the proposed changes to the TCPS2 would eliminate REB review of research conducted as a course-assignment. The Secretariat has indicated they received rather divided feedback from across the country regarding this proposed change. They are planning on going back to the drawing board

and better clarifying what is pedagogical work versus actual research that would need to be seen by the REB.

- When the Secretariat is referring to course-based research, they believe it is strictly students learning to conduct research in research methods courses. However, in the consultation, many institutions pointed out that this type of work is not only occurring in research methods courses. Some professors (in other courses – not research methods) are asking students to conduct research outside of the classroom as part of their curriculum. In these courses, professors are not necessarily teaching proper research methods or ethical considerations, and are not recognizing risk in some of the topics students choose.
- This is a concern for many institutions because the students are being asked to conduct research independently, without the background information, knowledge or expertise that a pedagogical approach to research would provide.
- The office confirmed that even if course-based research is removed from REB purview in the TCPS2, this represents a minimal standard. Brock could decide these projects still require REB review if we felt we wanted to go over and above the TCPS2.
- More work needs to be completed with regards to defining course-based research; conducting research as a course assignment in the revised TCPS2.
- A number of institutions commented that if these course assignments were taken out of the TCPS2, there would be very minimal oversight of the projects (the Secretariat was not aware that although the course syllabus needs to be reviewed and approved by the department, in reality, Faculty are provided with a great deal of freedom when overseeing these assignments). Across the country, REBs agreed that professors are assigning rather substantial research projects that in some cases are more than minimal risk. In the proposed changes, the REB would not see these projects given that the Policy would consider this pedagogical. This is a concern.
- If research assignments were treated as strictly pedagogical, it would be up to each department and Faculty to oversee these activities and ensure the safety of any potential participants. The concern from REBs is whether all departments are up to date on the ethical standards. They are not necessarily looking at these ethical considerations (e.g., qualifications of the instructor to oversee those activities) when they approve the course outline. This also relies on Faculty to understand what is minimal risk research – are all Faculty trained to properly make this assessment? Further, many institutions hire sessional or graduate student instructors to teach courses. Even if all long-term Faculty are trained on this, it does not account for the number of short-term or contract positions.

- It was clarified for board members the difference between a professor conducting their own Faculty research with their students, and conducting research as a course assignment.
- Course-based 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.
- Faculty research where professors retain class work from their students would go through our usual delegated approach (with the standard application).
- In other cases, professors may offer course marks for completing a research project. They are required to provide an alternative assignment of equal time commitment and effort, given that students cannot be forced to be a research participant (this could lead to exploitation of students for research gain).
- If students are required to conduct research as part of a course assignment however, professors are not expected to provide an alternative (this is an assignment for class, intended to achieve course objectives etc.).
- The board asked for clarification on what is considered research in the course context. LW clarified it is considered research when students are asked to go outside the classroom to collect data and write up results based on research questions, a purpose and rationale. The purpose of the project should be used as a gauge for defining research – if they are intending to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation, it would be considered research (versus writing a reflective piece designed to help study the population of interest for example).
- Board members asked how dissemination of results may relate to the definition of research. LW clarified that the TCPS used to mention generalizability of results and publication as a meter for distinguishing whether a project was considered research. However, when the social science chapter of the TCPS2 came out, many people were opposed to these statements because while program evaluations are exempt from REB review, there are some journals dedicated to publishing quality

assurance pieces. Therefore, reviewers should focus on the purpose of the work, versus whether or not investigators intend to publish.

- Reviewers should also consider the difference between research ethics and one's professional code of ethics (e.g., Doctor). We need to be careful in making this distinction and not comment on anything considered part of the professional code, given it is outside our mandate.
- A motion was put forward by AMD to approve the guidelines for conducting research as a course assignment as is, without considering any of the proposed changes to the TCPS2. Seconded by CG. All members voted in favour.

6. REB Guideline – Meetings, Quorum, and Attendance:
- It was clarified that all these documents will go back to the Senate Sub-Committee (Research and Scholarship Policy Committee), as part of their mandate is to review and advise our policies, procedures, guidelines, etc.
- The office clarified that the boards meet a minimum of 10 times a year. We generally try to cancel the December and August meetings if there are no full board files to review.
- Board members felt some of the wording in the guideline gave the impression that researchers whose projects are coming to full board review can dictate the date of the meeting. However, scheduling of the meetings should be based on the board members' availability (i.e., we meet at a time convenient for the majority of members and invite the researchers to the already scheduled date).
- However, if the researchers are unable to make the next scheduled meeting and delaying them to the next month would greatly delay their research, we will look to either move the meeting or schedule an ad-hoc meeting.
- This is done at the discretion of the office and the Chair to determine what is reasonable to ask of the board.
- The office also pointed out that we are able to accommodate researchers by Skype of teleconference if they are unable to attend the meeting in-person.
- Board members asked that this wording be modified in the guideline: to say while we will attempt to accommodate requests from researchers…or the board will make reasonable effort to accommodate researchers etc. This will be taken back to the GPP for revision.
- Board members would also like GPP to clarify quorum requirements for business meetings (where no full board files are being reviewed). Can board members vote via proxy without attending the meeting in-person?

7. REB Standard – Faculty Supervisors and Student Researchers:
- The board discussed whether post-docs would be

considered students in this standard. The post-doc position appears to differ across Faculties and each one is unique (e.g., some are paid by the university, some are fellowships).

- Members would like the standard to specify/define who "student" refers to.
- It was discussed that although Senate regulations require graduate students completing a major research paper or thesis to submit and have approved by their supervisory committee a proposal of research prior to securing ethics clearance (see Faculty Handbook III:B9.2A–B), we still see applications submitted to the office that have not completed the proposal.
- This is an issue because once the committee meets, the researchers often need make edits to the protocol/design. These changes come back to the office as a modification request which is rather resource intensive for us. Further, if the protocol is not concrete, it often leads to a number of clarifications/recommendations from our reviewers, which can appear intimidating for researchers and students.
- The board asked for clarification on how this circumstance might be handled: Faculty research (using a research assistant) gets ethics clearance. Then the research assistant becomes a graduate student and wants to use the data for their own Masters thesis/project. The office clarified that if the thesis falls under the original purpose and data will be analyzed for the same purposes are already outlined in the Faculty project, we should be told that this person will be using data for their thesis in the annual report, at minimum (given that we already knew they are assisting with the project and would have access to the data).
- A member raised an issue concerning the Child and Youth Studies department. This department has an applied research component to some of their courses, where students work on Faculty projects that already have ethics clearance. They are involved in the research process as a RA and are expected to write up a culminating paper/poster. They are expected to read the REB application and if they are collecting data, complete the CORE tutorial.
- The office asked – what is the purpose of this work?
- The member clarified the purpose is to allow the student to learn to do research. Thus, this would represent pedagogical work and not research. However, if the student were to write up findings with the intention of answering research questions, this would constitute research and should come back to the REB for guidance.
- Ideally for ethics, RAs are paid and not students simply assisting with the research for course credit (would not be considered a RA if they are writing up a paper to fulfill course requirements). The office also asks

researchers for the names of any RAs that will be assisting with the research and have access to the data. With regards to the previous example, if a student crossed the line into becoming a RA (versus a student fulfilling course requirements), this change would need to be reported back to the office.

- The board discussed again whether the standard should include post-docs as students. It was determined that they still require a supervisor on a grant and therefore, may fall under this definition of individuals who require supervision.
- The office indicated the next document about who can be a Principal Investigator (PI) will address some of these issues as well. We intend to involve the Office of Research Services when drawing up with document to determine who can hold a grant (e.g., sessionals, Emeritus, Adjunct etc.).
- Right now, we do not allow sessionals/limited term appointments to act as the PI for their own personal research because if their contract does not get renewed but the research is ongoing, they have no affiliation with Brock. However, if an external researcher wants to apply to Brock to use our resources, participants etc., we currently review those applications with the external applicants as the PI (and no representative from Brock). The rationale behind this is because these externals are affiliated with another institution (and not just wandering researchers).
- The Board would like GPP to include more information about whether a student needs individual ethics clearance for their own project if it falls under the Faculty work, or whether they are covered under their supervisor's clearance.
- The office also agreed to meet with Graduate Studies to determine what constitutes a "proposal" in each department (some allow the supervisor to approve the student's proposal on behalf of the committee, etc.).

8. Note small revisions (e.g., grammar edits) to the Standard for Maximum Number of Annual Renewals (approved December 2016) already approved by the REBs.
    - The Office also updated the board on some small revisions that were made to the Standard for Maximum Number of Annual Renewals. This already approved by the REBs in December 2016 however, GPP made some minor revisions to allow leeway in applying this standard in extenuating circumstances. For example, if a project was only collecting data for a few more months, we may not require a full resubmission.
    - As well, the office has revisited some of our internal procedures regarding annual renewal: right now, we set all expiry dates for ethics clearance to the last business day of the month. However, if clearance is initially provided before the last business of the month, this would technically mean that clearance is provided for

more than 365 days. The Tri-Council has recently been reinforcing their policy on this, indicating that renewals must be processed and granted 365 days or before the initial clearance day. Further, if researchers submit their renewal request on the same day their clearance expires, the office is not always able to provide renewal until a few days later. This results in a gap in clearance - the Tri-Council has identified this as non-compliance at other institutions. We have now changed our procedures so that all clearances expire on the first of the month (meaning clearance is only provided for 365 or less days), and files are immediately closed and require resubmission if the annual renewal request is not submitted with ample time to process the request and provide clearance for an additional year.

9. Update on the Annual Report (2013-2016):
   - The Office explained that the Annual Report has been delayed for the past several years as we were waiting to confirm process regarding governance (i.e., who the reports go to).
   - Now that these questions have been cleared up, the report will be made public on our website.
   - The board was invited to ask any questions or propose any revisions to the report.
   - A current board member indicated their name was missing from the list of members in 2013. This will be added before the report goes to Senate.
   - LW explained that the first part of the report contains a great deal of background information that was included to ensure Senate could fully understand our board, structure and reporting, workload etc.
   - However, information pertaining to how the Office participates in community engagement may be new to the board.
   - The Office explained that when our REB split into two boards, Senate was concerned that BREB was not seeing equitable workload to the SREB (BREB only reviewed 48 applications, as opposed to SREB who reviewed 262 applications that year). This year, those numbers increased to 57 and 282 respectively. However, when the boards split, we maintained two reviewers on each BREB file and reduced to one reviewer on SREB files. This meant overall workload for each REB member was quite similar: 31 applications a year for SREB members and 22 applications a year for BREB members. These numbers also reflect the type of research that goes on a Brock (i.e., majority being social science).
   - It was also explained that the Chair of the BREB processes all clarification responses and modification requests whereas these are handled in the Office for SREB files. This helps to even out the time commitment for each Chair.
   - SREB also sees a larger number of undergraduate

| | | applications, which are only reviewed in the Office. Some of the numbers reported above would be undergraduate projects so they would not contribute to the board reviewer's workload numbers. This further closes the gap between the boards in terms of workload.
• LW indicated that the report first went to the Research and Scholarship Policy Committee who accepted it with two questions: who constitutes the Aboriginal Research Advisory Circle (ARAC) and how do they judge research. It was clarified for committee members that ARAC performs a cultural review of the project.
• ARAC was explained to SREB board members who were not familiar: ARAC was established in 2009 through partnership with the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education at Brock. ARAC is an advisory committee, normally comprised of 5 people. Members come from inside and outside the Brock community however, must self-identify as Aboriginal. ARAC completes a culturally informed review of all research applications that fall under the guidance and definition of TCPS2 Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada, with consideration for cultural protocols, histories, and traditions.
• LW also explained to board members that Aboriginal research is not exclusive to research involving Aboriginal participants. For example, if a researcher wanted to specifically report on demographics (i.e., Aboriginal participants yielded these results), this would have to come to ARAC for review. They would examine the information and determine whether it may single out or stigmatize a group unfairly.
• The Research and Scholarship Policy Committee (RSPC) also inquired about the possibility of having separate reports for SREB and BREB, and whether it would be possible to have the Chairs write the reports.
• LW and the BREB Chair both attended the meeting to field these questions.

Update on Compliance Case (in camera) | Motion to move in camera
All in favour |
| 3 | **Adjourn** | **Meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m.** | Motion to adjourn: LD
Seconded: CG
All in favour |