Departmental Research Ethics Committee (REC) Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

As per the [TCPS 2 (2022), Article 6.12](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2022_chapter6-chapitre6.html#12), the Research Ethics Board (REB) has delegated the review of **undergraduate\*** research activities to Departmental Research Ethics Committees when *all* the following criteria are met:

* The research activity is course-based (i.e., not theses or equivalent research projects such as directed studies and major research papers). Such pedagogical activities are normally required of students with the objective of providing them with exposure to research methods in their field of study. Examples of course-based research activities include:
  + Structured or semi-structured Interviews with key informants working in a particular area/field (e.g., professors, not-for-profit organizations, employers)
  + Surveys with family/friends/other students/members of the general public
  + Focus groups/group interviews with employees or members of an organization or group
* The supervisor will **not** be using the data as a part of their own research program and data will not be used outside of the course.
* The research activities are considered minimal risk. Minimal risk is defined as research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in the aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research. Types of risk may include physical, psychological/emotional, and social. Examples of research topics and procedures that may be considered higher than minimal risk include:
  + ingestion, tasting, smelling, application of a substance that pose any health risk
  + answering questions related to sexual or physical abuse, as well as self harm and suicidal thoughts or actions
  + providing medical/health information or clinical diagnoses (e.g., depression, anxiety) particularly if associated with identifiers
  + reporting on illegal activities
* The research does not aim to recruit Indigenous Peoples (including First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada), use Indigenous identity or membership in an Indigenous community as a variable for analysis, or meet other criteria that would require Indigenous community engagement in accordance with [Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2 (2022)](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2022_chapter9-chapitre9.html).
* The research does not involve individuals, groups, or populations in vulnerable circumstances. This includes individuals who lack decision-making capacity (e.g., children, those living with cognitive impairments, persons who are not able to legally consent to participate in research).

If any of the above criteria is not met, the project must be submitted to the REB. Review by the REB requires a submission of a different application through the online ethics management system, Romeo. Please see [Research Ethics Board Review](https://students.wlu.ca/academics/research/human-research/research-ethics-board-review.html) for more information on the REB review process. Researchers and/or RECs should consult the [REB](mailto:reb@wlu.ca) if it is unclear whether a project meets all the above criteria or if there are any questions or concerns about a research project.

**\* In some cases, graduate classwork may be subject to review by the REC. This can only occur if the instructor has sought previous approval to do so from the REB. Details on this process can be found** **in the** [**Request for REC Review for Graduate-Level Course-Based Research Projects**](https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/teams/team-ors-facilitators/Shared%20Documents/General/ResearchServices/ETHICS/REC/Forms/Request%20for%20REC%20Review%20for%20Graduate-Level%20Course-Based%20Research%20Projects.docx) **document.**

# **FAQ:**

**Q:** Who should review a funded project?

**A:** If a project has funding attached to it, it should be reviewed by the REB.

**Q:** I am an instructor of a graduate course whose project fits all the other criteria for REC review. Who should I contact?

**A:** Before the teaching semester begins, please review the requirements in the [Request for REC Review for Graduate-Level Course-Based Research Projects](https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/teams/team-ors-facilitators/Shared%20Documents/General/ResearchServices/ETHICS/REC/Forms/Request%20for%20REC%20Review%20for%20Graduate-Level%20Course-Based%20Research%20Projects.docx) document and submit your materials to the REB Chair.

**Q:** A student’s project contains questions about participants’ mental health. Who should review this application?

**A:** If a project directly asks about a participant’s mental health or any diagnoses, this application should be reviewed by the REB.

**Q:** A student’s project contains questions about participants’ marijuana use. Who should review this application?

**A:** Questions about marijuana use is not considered reporting on illegal activities unless the participant is under the legal age of purchase/use of marijuana. This application can be reviewed by the REC. If the project contains questions about controlled substances, these applications should be directed to the REB.

**Q:** A student’s project does not follow the criteria above. What do I do?

**A:** If the project does not follow the criteria, it must be reviewed by the REB. These applications can be submitted through Romeo. Otherwise, the project must be modified to adhere to all the criteria to be reviewed by the REC.

**Q:** A student’s project has risks, and I believe that the benefits of participation do not outweigh the risks. Who should I contact and what information should I provide?

**A:** Please contact the REB at [REB@wlu.ca](mailto:REB@wlu.ca) and provide as much information as possible, including the application and its materials.