

# Ethics Procedures for Instructors

Department of Applied Human Sciences

Department Human Research Ethics Committee (DHREC)

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document was created for instructors in the AHSC department whose students are required to carry out research activities that involve human participants. The procedures described in this document apply to all courses in which students must collect, organize, and/or analyze data from human participants who are not students in the course, and/or must prepare and present reports based on this data.

The document describes the procedures that must be followed and the materials that must be used to ensure that all research activities are consistent with the rules established by the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2022\)](#).

If you have questions about this document or its contents, please contact [the Chair of the DHREC](#).

## SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT'S MAIN POINTS

This document begins by providing background information on three topics:

- Ethical risks
- Informed consent
- Finding the required forms and materials

The document then describes the department's ethical procedures for:

- Undergraduate courses
- Instructors of and students enrolled in AHSC 672
- Instructors of and students enrolled in AHSC 680
- Instructors of and students enrolled in AHSC 692
- Supervisors of INDI Students and some Independent Studies

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Instructors of courses that include research activities should be familiar with the definition of ethical risks that is used in TCPS-2. They should also be aware of the rules and standards governing how research participants may give informed consent to participate in a research activity. And finally, it is important that instructors and their students know where the department keeps the ethics forms and other useful materials.

## **Important Information About Ethical Risks**

TCPS-2 suggests that a research project is likely to entail certain ethical risks, and that these risks can be classified either as minimal risks or as risks that are more than minimal.

Minimal risks include those risks that arise during a research project that are no different than the risks that participants might encounter “in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research” (TCPS-2, 2022, p. 25). In other words, the term “minimal risk” is used to describe research activities that have not changed the situation in ways that could introduce new risks or a greater level of risk.

When considering whether risks are minimal or more than minimal, TCPS-2 requires that we recognize a special obligation to “individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of a specific research project, and to those who live with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis” (TCPS-2, 2022, p. 25). Research ethics boards often interpret this requirement as meaning that special care must be taken with certain populations, including people younger than 18 years of age, people who are considered be part of a vulnerable population (which TCPS-2 sees as people with limited decision-making capacity or people with limited access to rights, opportunities and power; examples historically have included children, the elderly, prisoners, and others), First Nations, Inuit or Metis peoples, etc. If the research activity involves working with this sort of population, the research is often considered to be of more than minimal risk.

The level of risk is important because if your students are carrying out research activities associated with minimal risk, you may follow the procedures outlined in the relevant sections below. However, if your students are carrying out research activities associated with more than minimal risk, you and the student must submit the research project to the Concordia’s University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) for approval, and the procedures described below do not apply.

## **Important Information About Informed Consent**

All research participants must be given the opportunity to provide informed consent to participate in the research. A participant usually provides informed consent by reading a consent form that fully describes the research, and then signing the form. Templates for informed consent forms are available for your students to use (see the next subsection of this document).

If the research involves people who are members of a specific organization (for example, if they are employees of the same organization), and if the research is specific to that organization, then an authorized representative of the organization needs to sign an institutional consent form that grants the organization’s permission for the research to take place.

Regardless of whether the research requires institutional consent, all individual participants must also provide informed consent. They usually do this by reading and signing a consent form that is intended for individual participants.

If the research involves data gathered through a standard questionnaire, then informed consent can be explained at the start of the questionnaire document or webpage, and consent is assumed

when the participant submits a completed questionnaire. The implication is that the questionnaire itself acts as the consent form.

In the case of undergraduate projects, students must submit the signed consent forms to their instructor, and the instructor must keep the signed consent forms in a secure location for twelve months. After the twelve months have elapsed, the instructor must destroy the signed forms.

In the case of graduate projects, the student researcher must keep the signed consent forms in a secure location for twelve months. After the twelve months have elapsed, the student must destroy the signed forms.

## **Finding the Department's Research Ethics Materials, Forms, and Resources**

The [AHSC department website](#) contains the following:

- Names and contact information for members of the DHREC
- Information for AHSC instructors, including:
  - *Ethics Procedures for Instructors* (the document that you are currently reading)
  - *Typical Ethical Issues*, which describes typical ethical issues that students may encounter
  - The *Ethics Protocol Confirmation Form* that is to be used by instructors of undergraduate courses and the instructors of AHSC 672 and AHSC 680
- Information for AHSC undergraduate and graduate student researchers, including:
  - *AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form* that can be used by undergraduate and Masters students who are seeking ethics approval for their proposed research
  - *Guidelines to Help You Think Ethically*, which students may find helpful to read before filling out their protocol form
  - *Sample Institutional Consent Form – English*, which is a template for students to use to create their institutional consent forms (if one is needed)
  - *Sample Institutional Consent Form – French*, which is a template for students to use to create their institutional consent forms (if one is needed)
  - *Sample Participant Information and Consent Form - English*, which is a template for students to use to create their participant consent forms
  - *Sample Participant Information and Consent Form - French*, which is a template for students to use to create their participant consent forms

## **ETHICS PROCEDURES FOR UNDERGRADUATE COURSES**

Instructors of undergraduate courses that include research activities must complete and submit an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form for their course as early in the semester as possible. The form is submitted to the chair of DHREC. One Ethics Protocol Confirmation form must be submitted for each section of a course in which there are research activities, and the form must be submitted even if the instructor taught the course the previous semester and has made no changes to the course.

The Ethics Protocol Confirmation form assures the DHREC that:

- Research ethics and ethics procedures will be taught and discussed in class
- All student projects will be required to conform to the criteria outlined in the assignment description that was provided in the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form
- All students conducting research will fill out the AHSC Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form and will create Informed Consent forms and submit them to the instructor
- The instructor will review and approve ethics forms that are clear, complete, and compliant with ethical rules
- The instructor will monitor the student research to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical manner

By approving the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form, DHREC is delegating authority to the course instructor.

After the Ethics Protocol Confirmation has been approved by DHREC and an approval number has been issued, the research may begin. All students in the course who are carrying out research activities must complete and submit an AHSC Undergraduate Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form and the relevant consent forms to their course instructor.

The step-by-step procedures are:

1. The undergraduate instructor submits an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form to DHREC and receives approval. This approval includes a unique approval number.
2. The instructor teaches research ethics to the class.
3. The instructor ensures that students complete the required AHSC Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form. The instructor reviews and approves the forms, including the Informed Consent form.
4. The instructor ensures that students receive informed consent from all participants.
5. The instructor retains in a secure place all documentation related to student ethics protocols for a period of 12 months (and makes this material available for review by the DHREC, if requested). After 12 months the material is destroyed.

## **ETHICS PROCEDURES FOR AHSC 672 INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS**

Instructors of AHSC 672 must complete and submit an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form (the same form that is used by undergraduate instructors) for their course as early in the semester as possible. The form is submitted to the chair of DHREC. The form must be submitted whenever AHSC 672 is taught, even if it is taught by the same instructor and no changes have been made to the course.

The Ethics Protocol Confirmation form assures the DHREC that:

- Research ethics and ethics procedures will be taught and discussed in class
- All student projects will be required to conform to the criteria outlined in the assignment description that was provided in the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form

- All students (or each student team) conducting research will fill out the AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form and submit the form to the instructor
- The instructor will review and approve ethics forms that are clear, complete, and compliant with ethical rules
- The instructor will monitor the student research to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical manner

By approving the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form, DHREC is delegating authority to the course instructor.

After the Ethics Protocol Confirmation has been approved by DHREC and an approval number has been issued, the research may begin. All students (or student teams, if the project is conducted by a team) in the course who are carrying out research activities must complete and submit an AHSC Graduate Student Ethics Proposal Form to their course instructor.

The step-by-step procedures are:

1. The AHSC 672 instructor submits an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form to DHREC and receives approval. This approval includes a unique approval number.
2. The instructor teaches research ethics to the class.
3. The instructor ensures that students complete the required AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form. The instructor reviews and approves the forms, including the Informed Consent forms.
4. The instructor ensures that students receive informed consent from the sponsoring institution and from all participants.
5. The instructor ensures that the students (or one member of the student team) retains in a secure place all documentation related to student ethics protocols for a period of 12 months (and that they make this material available for review by the DHREC, if requested). After 12 months the material is destroyed.

## **ETHICS PROCEDURES FOR AHSC 680 INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS**

Instructors of AHSC 680 must complete and submit an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form (the same form that is used by undergraduate instructors) for their course as early as possible. The form is submitted to the chair of DHREC. The form must be submitted whenever AHSC 680 is taught, even if it is taught by the same instructor and no changes have been made to the course.

The Ethics Protocol Confirmation form assures the DHREC that:

- Research ethics and ethics procedures will be taught and discussed in class
- The 680 project must conform to the criteria outlined in the assignment description that was provided in the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form
- Members of the student cohort that is conducting the 680 research will fill out the AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form and submit the form to the instructor (it is up to the instructor to determine how the students collaborate to fill out this form)

- The instructor will review and approve the student ethics submission if it is clear, complete, and compliant with ethical rules
- The instructor will monitor the student research to ensure that the project is conducted in an ethical manner

By approving the Ethics Protocol Confirmation form, DHREC is delegating authority to the course instructor.

After the Ethics Protocol Confirmation has been approved by DHREC, the research may begin.

The step-by-step procedures are:

1. The AHSC 680 instructor submits an Ethics Protocol Confirmation form to DHREC and receives written approval from DHREC to proceed.
2. The instructor teaches research ethics to the class.
3. The instructor ensures that students complete the required AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form. The instructor reviews and approves the form, including the Informed Consent forms.
4. The instructor ensures that students receive informed consent from the sponsoring institution and from all participants.
5. The instructor ensures that all documentation related to student ethics protocols is maintained in a secure manner for a period of 12 months (and that this material is available for review by the DHREC, if requested). After 12 months the material is destroyed.

## **ETHICS PROCEDURES FOR AHSC 692 INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS**

DHREC is responsible for reviewing and approving projects conducted by AHSC 698 students. As a result, course instructors are *not required* to submit an Ethics Protocol Confirmation for this course.

The ethics procedures are as follows:

1. After students have conducted their environmental scan and are nearing the completion of their contracting process, students must review the relevant AHSC ethics materials and forms. Their academic supervisor is responsible for ensuring that they have access to the relevant forms, and for answering their questions about the process.
2. Before beginning any data collection, students must complete an AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form.
3. Students forward their ethics protocol to their academic supervisor for review, approval and signature.
4. After the completed form has been approved by their academic supervisor, the student submits the approved form to the chair of DHREC.
5. Students must refrain from data collection, and must minimize contact with their research site, until they receive full approval from DHREC.

6. During the review process, the student will be required to answer questions raised by DHREC, and make any needed revisions to the ethics protocol.
7. When the review is complete (typically within ten business days, and sometimes longer during periods when the university is closed), DHREC provides written approval along with a unique approval number to the student. At this point the student may begin data gathering activities.
8. Students must keep all documentation related to ethics protocols (including signed consent forms) in a secure location for at least 12 months following the completion of their final project report. This material must be made available for audit by DHREC, if requested.

***Important Note About Environmental Scan Findings:*** Instructors and students will note that the ethics procedure for AHSC 692 students calls for the AHSC Abbreviated Ethics Protocol Form to be completed and submitted *after* the contracting process (and environmental scan) is complete. It is important that students realize that this means that any findings elicited from the environmental scan cannot be included in their data set. People who participated in the environmental scan activities did not provide informed consent for their words and opinions to be used in later project activities, and thus this environmental scan information can only be used to assist with the contracting process. AHSC 692 students may wish to seek further clarification on this point from their instructor.

## **ETHICS PROCEDURES FOR SUPERVISORS OF INDI STUDENTS AND SOME INDEPENDENT STUDIES**

The ethics procedures outlined in this document apply only to instructors who teach AHSC courses that include research activities carried out by students.

Supervisors of INDI students (and potentially some independent studies carried out by students supervised by AHSC instructors) must ensure that their students receive ethics approval from the College of Reviewers. The College of Reviewers is a body that is independent and separate from DHREC, and the procedures in this document may not apply.

Please contact Concordia University's [Office of Research](#) for more information about submitting an ethics protocol to the College of Reviewers for approval.