

Algonquin College Research Ethics Board (REB) - Terms of Reference

The REB Terms of Reference (TOR) were developed by the REB and approved by the President's Council. Routine review of the TOR will occur not less than once a year.

Mandate

The Algonquin College REB is responsible for approving, rejecting, modifying, monitoring, or terminating any proposed or ongoing research involving human subjects which is conducted within or by faculty, staff, students or other researcher at Algonquin College, or by a researcher who is not a member of the Algonquin College community. The REB was established to ensure that research conducted by the faculty, staff and students of the College, and research otherwise conducted under the auspices of the College, respects the rights and assures the well-being of those persons agreeing to be research subjects, and that such research conforms to the [Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2014 \(TCPS 2\)](#).

Deliberations of the REB will be conducted in accord with the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Research Involving Humans. If the proposed or ongoing research is deemed incongruent with the Tri-Council Policy, the REB's shall propose appropriate modifications, in consultation with the principal investigator where feasible.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the Office of Applied Research and Innovation, the Algonquin College REB is also responsible for keeping current on ethical issues related to research involving human participants, and to educate the Algonquin College community on these issues and to formulate policies on these matters. This will be accomplished by serving as a resource to the research community, communicating and advising researchers on guidelines, procedures and other matters relating to the conduct of research with humans.

Authority

The President's Council at Algonquin College has established the REB to ensure competent and independent research ethics review. The REB is independent of the President's Council, College Executive and Senior Administration in its decision-making with respect to its mandate under the TCPS 2. All other entities and offices shall respect the independence, accountability and authority delegated to the REB and may not override an REB decision to approve or reject a research proposal. Information regarding the appeal process can be found on the REB website.

An REB approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research and does not, in itself, constitute authorization for the research to proceed (such reasons may be administrative or resource-based in nature).

Accountability

In keeping with TCPS 2, and the Board of Governors Policy Framework, the REB Chair is responsible for ensuring that the REB process conforms to the requirements of TCPS 2. The REB and the REB Chair are accountable to the President's Council for the integrity of its research ethics review process. For oversight

and risk management purposes, beyond an Annual Report to the President's Council, when immediate or incidental reporting is required, the REB Chair will notify the President. For day-to-day administrative matters, the Chair may consult with the Director of Applied Research and Innovation.

In keeping with Algonquin College's Policy RE03, the REB Chair shall prepare an Annual Status Report for the President's Council. The Annual Status Report shall include the number of proposals reviewed, approved, and rejected, the submitting Faculties, a generic description of research ethics issues/concerns that have been addressed in the past year, and frequency of use of the REB appeals process. The Report shall also demonstrate compliance with the mandatory provisions in the TCPS 2 and identify any issues regarding process integrity of research review (initial and continuing) at Algonquin College. Concerns or suggestions regarding the REB Terms of Reference should also be included for discussion with the Director, Applied Research and Innovation at this time.

Research on Animals is governed by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC). Any researcher who plans to include animals in his or her study should contact the Animal Care Committee (ACC) for information on ethics review. Further information is available under College Policy [RE04](#).

Structure, Membership, & Tenure

The REB will consist of at least five members, one of which will serve as the Chair. The board will include both men and women. The breakdown of the board will be as according to College Policy [RE03](#) and TCPS 2 Article 6.4, and as such:

- at least two members will have expertise in relevant research disciplines;
- at least one member will be knowledgeable in ethics;
- at least one member will be a community or external member with no affiliation to Algonquin College (additional community members must be additional to the minimum five members);
- and at least one member will be knowledgeable in law.

In accordance with the TCPS 2 (Chapter 7: Conflicts of Interest), members of the President's Council, College Executive and Senior Administration shall not serve on the REB.

Each member will be appointed for a three year term, renewable. Where possible, membership replacement will be staggered in order to ensure a blend of new and experienced members. No member may sit on the board for more than six consecutive years. All Algonquin College faculty members on the REB shall be compensated on their SWF in order that they may carry out their duties associated with the REB.

The Board may invite individuals with competence in specific areas to assist in the review of any application which, in the opinion of the Board, requires expertise not held by board members.

All REB members must complete the [TCPS2 CORE tutorial](#) and file their completion certificates, along with their current CV and Statement of Intent, with the Office of Applied Research and Innovation.

The non-voting Recording Secretary for all meetings will be a member of the Office of Applied Research and Innovation.

Chair Selection

The Chair shall be appointed by the President and the Director, Office of Applied Research and Innovation, based on the recommendation of the REB normally from among the appointed members. The Chair shall serve, normally, for a term of three years, once renewable. The Chair shall hold a faculty position with Algonquin College. The Chair shall not serve in the position of a member knowledgeable in relevant law.

Responsibilities of the Chair

With the support of the Office of Applied Research and Innovation (Recording Secretary), the Chair is responsible for ensuring that the REB review process conforms to the requirements of the TCPS 2.

The Chair will plan and schedule meetings; prepare / approve the agenda for each meeting; ensure that protocols are circulated for review; issue requests for additional information; oversee the revision and approval process; and chair meetings of the REB.

As necessary and appropriate, the Chair may also be involved in reviewing protocols.

Responsibilities of the Members

All members are responsible for assessing submitted ethic applications for compliance with Tri-Council standards. Specifically, they will review applications assigned by the Chair, request revisions as required, and give or deny approval.

To allow for the efficient running of the Board, and to ensure quorum is met, regular attendance at meetings is imperative. A member who will be absent from a meeting must notify the Chair (or his or her designate) ten days before a scheduled meeting. A member who misses more than two sequential meetings or three non-sequential meetings may be removed from REB by the Director, Office of Applied Research and Innovation. To aid with attendance, all faculty members on the REB must be given 3 hours per week on their workload contracts to perform their REB duties.

REB Meetings, Attendance, and Quorum

The REB shall have regular face to face meetings to discharge their responsibilities. The meeting schedule shall be determined by the Chair in consultation with the REB membership and shall occur face-to-face once monthly through the academic year and at least once over the June – August period. Where a face-to-face meeting is not possible or when exceptional or exigent circumstances limit the feasibility of face-to-face deliberations, teleconferencing or use of other technologies may be regarded as necessary to discharge responsibilities.

Quorum for meetings and Full REB reviews shall be 80% of the REB membership.

Motions and decisions shall be carried with a majority; being 50% + 1 in agreement.

Procedures of the REB

Researchers shall submit their research proposals for REB review and approval to the REB office prior to the start of recruitment of participants, access to data, or collection of human materials. The Recording Secretary will prepare an agenda for the Chair's approval and circulate all applications for review not later than ten days prior to each REB meeting. Necessary applications will be reviewed at each meeting as well as any project amendments, extensions, and completion documents. Other items on the agenda may include the review of forms, the review of policies, or other matters relevant to the interests of ethical research practice.

The REB Chair shall use a proportionate approach to determine the appropriate level of REB review by assessing the level of foreseeable risk to the participants; where the lower the level of risk, the lower the level of scrutiny (delegated/expedited review); the higher the level of risk, the higher the level of scrutiny (full board review). This determination will be based on TCPS 2 procedures.

Where a Full REB review is determined, the REB Chair will circulate the research proposal to all members of the REB for review and assessment; following which the REB shall normally meet face to face to review and adjudicate the proposed research.

Where a Delegated/Expedited REB review is determined, the REB Chair shall delegate the protocol for ethics review to one (1) or two (2) members of the REB according to his/her assessment of the level of risk, complexities, and complications of the proposed research .

Delegated REB reviewers shall be selected from the REB membership. Delegated reviewers may refer projects back to the full REB if they determine that full board review is required. Where delegates consider a negative decision, this decision shall be referred to the Full REB for further review and endorsement before communicating the decision to the researcher.

Research proposals will be considered as being eligible for Delegated/Expedited REB review by the Chair when:

- The research projects must be no more than minimal risk; defined as: If potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.
- The research participants must be drawn from the general adult population, capable of giving free and informed consent, and may not include vulnerable subjects such as children, persons who are not legally competent to consent, mentally incompetent persons, prisoners, legal wards or the therapeutically dependent.
- In general, the projects should not involve any highly personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions which could place participants at risk or cause embarrassment.
- The projects must not manipulate behaviour of participants beyond the range of "normal" classroom activity or daily life.
- In general, the projects should not involve physically invasive contact with the research participants.
- The projects should not withhold key information that could influence a participant's decision to participate in the research.

- The projects should not involve the kind of deception that had a participant known about it in advance they likely would not have agreed to participate.

Members of the board will act individually to give an impartial opinion on the ethics of each research project. Where there is a conflict of interest, the member of the board with the conflict will absent him or herself from the room during discussion of the particular application.

Each member will make a decision based only on the ethical acceptability of the research. Ideally, members of the board will reach a consensus on each application. In cases where one or more members have concerns, the board will work together to identify needed revisions that will make a project ethically acceptable. In such cases, consultation with the researcher, the Director of Applied Research and Innovation, external advice or further reflection should be called upon.

If a disagreement persists, the majority position (50% +1) will stand, and the minority position will be communicated to the researcher in writing by the Recording Secretary.

Following each meeting, the Chair will communicate rejections, approvals and requests for revision within five working days of the meeting.

Faculty teaching courses where research outside the classroom takes place will apply for course designation. One application for all sections of the course is sufficient. This designation must be renewed every two years. All faculty teaching designated courses must complete the TCPS2 CORE and register their completion certificate with their Associate Dean. Professors of designated courses may approve minimal risk projects. A student who wishes to undertake a greater than minimal risk project must seek individual REB approval for his or her project.

Record Keeping

The Recording Secretary (non-voting) will collect all applications, amendments, change applications and completions forms; and verify their completeness, including signatures. The Recording Secretary will prepare the agenda for each meeting for the Chair's approval, take minutes at each meeting, communicate decisions of the REB to applicants, track the revisions where applicable, and issue approval letters for the Chair's signature. The Office of Applied Research and Innovation will maintain a complete file on each application, including amendments and extensions; track each project to completion and collect a completion document; and track course designations for renewal and/or amendment.

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As a member of the Algonquin College Research Ethics Board (REB), I agree to respect and maintain the confidentiality of all discussions, deliberations, records and other information generated in connection with these REB activities, and to make no voluntary disclosures of such information, except to persons authorized to receive it in the conduct of affairs of the REB.

I understand that Algonquin College employees or others are entitled to undertake such action as is deemed appropriate to ensure that this confidentiality is maintained, including application to a court in the event of a threatened breach or other relief in the event of a breach of this agreement.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Any REB member who has a personal/professional interest or a real or perceived conflict of interest with a research proposal under review (as Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, Supervisor, student, funder) shall not be present when the REB is making its decision.

Signature of REB Member

Date of Signature

Printed Name

Signature of Witness