

## **Background and Purpose:**

NAIT students may be required to conduct small-scale research projects for program course work. Individual students, small groups of students, or classes may carry out these projects. If course-based research projects involve human subjects, The Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2, 2014) requires instructors to submit a research application on behalf of the students who will be conducting the research. Instructors must receive ethics approval from their REB prior to the onset of student involvement in research. The potential for risk to those who participate in these projects must be acknowledged and addressed. These guidelines will assist the instructor in determining whether REB approval is required for a class project or activity.

## **When is it research and when is it pedagogical?**

Information-gathering may be expected for pedagogical purposes within a classroom, either face-to-face or virtual settings.

Information-gathering activities are classified as **RESEARCH** where:

- the intent is to educate students on research processes used to explore and expand existing theories and conceptual knowledge;
- students compare new techniques, practices, programs with standard approaches to determine which is more effective;
- the results or findings are written in a format that would be acceptable for a research journal or academic conference presentation; and/or
- primary data are collected and organized for analysis and distribution or dissemination.

Information gathering activities are classified as **SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND NOT RESEARCH** where:

- the intent is to use the information to provide advice, diagnosis, identification of appropriate interventions, or general advice for a client;
- the intent is to develop skills which are considered standard practice within a profession (e.g., observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing); and/or
- the information-gathering processes are part of the normal relationship between the student and the participants (e.g., classroom teacher and students, nurse and patient, lawyer and client).

## What are the Key Elements of Ethical Course-Based Research Projects?

- 1) Course-based research projects must be no more than minimal risk\*;
- 2) Course based research projects must not recruit vulnerable subjects as research participants;
- 3) Course-based research projects must not involve any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions that could place participants at risk;
- 4) Course-based research projects must not manipulate behaviour of participants beyond the range of “normal” classroom activity or daily life;
- 5) Course-based research projects must not involve physically invasive contact with the research participants;
- 6) Course-based research projects must not involve deception.

**\*Minimal risk** research 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 those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research (TCPS2, 2010, Article 2.8).

### Application process

If a course-based project falls under the definition of research as described above, the course instructor must request ethics approval according to TCPS2 (2010). In the online application (Form 1), the instructor is asked to explain the purpose of the research and how it benefits student learning. The instructor is asked to outline the expectations for research participants. NAIT REB recommends students and instructors complete the TCPS2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics (CORE). This training will help ensure that students and instructors understand the rationale for receiving ethics approvals for studies involving human research participants.

It is the instructor's responsibility to ensure that students' research projects conform with the activities outlined in the ethics application. The instructor may be assigned an REB member to liaise with the NAIT REB on his/her behalf. To supplement the application, Form 1A will be signed and completed. The project summaries will be presented to the delegated board members or NAIT REB liaison. Any questions or concerns may go through this REB member or be brought to the board for discussion.

## **I: Examples of REB review.**

### **1. Projects that NEED REB approval and their own application.**

- Projects which involve more than minimal risk;
- Projects where the participants are vulnerable participants;
- Projects which involve any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics;
- Projects which involve deception;
- Projects which involve manipulation of the behaviour of participants beyond the range of “normal” classroom activity or daily life; and
- Projects which involve physically invasive contact with the research participants.

### **2. Projects MAY require a Course-Based REB approval:**

- Projects where primary data are being collected and organized for analysis and distribution or dissemination;
- Projects designed to answer research questions;
- Projects involving a risk of disclosure, publication, or use of data outside the classroom or outside the organization being studied;
- Projects where students are asked to sign a non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement;
- Projects where students require consent to use individual identifiers in reports or classroom presentations because of confidentiality or privacy concerns; and
- Projects where “ownership of information” or “product development” as a result of a project may become an issue.

### **3. Projects that DO NOT require REB approval:**

- Projects where students are conducting the research in the classroom on their peers during class time (but this must not be above minimal risk); For example, anonymous surveys of the class by a student group.
- Projects involving the use of records or information that is in the public domain, including anonymous secondary data that have already been published;
- Projects involving the use of naturalistic observation where the participants are seeking public visibility and participant confidentiality and anonymity are ensured;
- Practicum or job training projects where students are not conducting research;
- Projects where the intent is to use the information to provide advice, diagnosis, identification of appropriate interventions or general advice for a client;
- Projects where the intent is to develop skills which are standard practice within a profession (e.g. observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, auditing); and

## **REB review process**

Applications Form1 and Form 1b should be completed by the instructor or course coordinator. Once established, the summaries of the research project should be submitted to REB@nait.ca or assigned REB liaison for consideration. The instructor or coordinator will contact the REB ([REB@nait.ca](mailto:REB@nait.ca)) in cases where there may be questions that arise concerning any ethical issue. (See below for an abbreviated list of possible ethical issues).

When appropriate participants should be provided contacts for appropriate support services, such as research involving potential psychological or emotional risks.

The key ethical principles should ensure each project shows:

- Respect for human dignity
- Respect for free and informed consent
- Respect for vulnerable persons
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality
- Respect for justice and inclusiveness
- Balancing harms and benefits
- Minimizing harm
- Maximizing benefits

The key ethical issues, might occur if a project shows:

- illegal activities
- deception
- an excluded population
- a participant that is speaking on behalf of the whole population
- or a targeted vulnerable populations

