

# Course-Based Research Project Applications for Undergraduate and Graduate Projects

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## Purpose

This guidance is for faculty/instructors who are planning to submit an ethics application for course-based research projects conducted by students as part of their coursework.

## Applicability

The Course-Based Research Project BREB application has been created for use by instructors in recognition that student research projects do not need to be reviewed individually if they are being undertaken for pedagogical purposes, are similar in design, and fall under minimal risk to participants.<sup>1</sup> One application form may be used to cover all eligible projects (research with human participants) being carried out by students within a course as long as they fit within the parameters described in the RISe application. The application must be submitted by the course instructor, and the assignment should be described in the class syllabus. The course-based research ethics application may be used for undergraduate and graduate courses that:

- Offer fieldwork exercises
- Teach research methods/theories and let students apply them in practice
- Provide research communication skills (writing up and presenting results)

## Exclusions

Instructors may not use the course-based ethics application for the following types of projects, which need to be submitted as individual RISe applications:

- Undergraduate or graduate student theses and dissertations (Honours, Masters, PhD)
- Directed studies courses where each student conducts a single research project
- Student activities conducted as part of an instructor's own research program
- Above minimal risk research (even if other students in the course are completing projects that qualify under a course-based research ethics application)

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<sup>1</sup> The Tri Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 distinguishes between course-based research conducted for pedagogical purposes and other types of research projects (see Article 6.12).

This application may also be used for courses taught by multiple instructors (simultaneously or in departmental rotation). In these cases, please ensure that all instructors are listed on the ethics applications as co-investigators with one of the instructors being designated as the Principal Investigator.

## Research Risk

In order to qualify as a Course-Based Research Project application, the projects it covers need to have low research risk and involve participants with low vulnerability. Projects that may have a medium research risk (see diagram) may be considered in a Course-Based Research Project application, however, a strong argument will be needed for why they should be included.

Participant Vulnerability	Research Risk 		
	Low	Medium	High
Low	1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Medium	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
High	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

Projects falling within the **green circle** (low research risk and low participant vulnerability) are acceptable for Course-Based Research Project applications without extensive justification.

Projects falling within the **yellow circle** include medium research risk and low participant vulnerability.

They still qualify as Minimal Risk projects and may be accepted under the umbrella of a Course-Based Research Project application. However, detailed justification on Page D of the application will be required.

Projects falling within the **red circles** will need to submit a stand-alone ethics application. Please review the Appendix for the additional details required and before completing the application.

## The Application Process

Course instructors need to submit Course-Based Research Project applications on behalf of all students in the class through the UBC RISe system (<https://www.rise.ubc.ca>). If you are the course instructor and do not currently have the capacity to list yourself as a Principal Investigator (PI) on ethics applications, please contact [allison.stewartgomes@ubc.ca](mailto:allison.stewartgomes@ubc.ca) (Point Grey campus) or [lisa.shearer@ubc.ca](mailto:lisa.shearer@ubc.ca) (Okanagan campus) to have your status updated, explaining that you are applying for a course-based research project.

When you select “Course-Based Research Project” as the study review type (Box 4.8), the RISe application will truncate by removing pages 5 through 8 and replacing them with one Page D. In order to complete the application, you will need the following:

- A description of the class assignment or project that students will complete

- The research methods to be used
- How ethics training and oversight for the projects will be provided to students

Students and faculty/instructors must complete the TCPS2 CORE tutorial before research activity begins. Once submitted, the application is reviewed by a BREB member. You will need confirmation of application approval before students begin interacting with prospective participants for research purposes. The application can be renewed each year with changes made to Section 1 if there is a change in Instructors.

**Important Note:** To ensure students understand that all research involving human participants requires ethics review and approval, instructors using the Course-Based application should avoid stating that “ethics is not required for their project.” Explain instead that ethics has already been obtained through the course-based ethics application. Students should be aware that any other research projects, even if for a class project, would require ethics review and approval.

You will need to renew the application annually, as with other ethics applications.

### Tips on filling out the RISe form

Boxes 1.1 - 1.3 (research team)	The Principal Investigator (PI) on the application must be the course instructor. If there are multiple instructors, appoint one as the PI and add the others as Co-investigators. If one of the instructors is also acting as the Primary Contact (Box 1.2), they will also need to be included in either 1.1 or 1.3.
Boxes 1.7 and 1.8 (title)	Include “Course Project: [insert specific subtitle]” in both fields so that it will be readily apparent to the ethics administrator.
Box 4.1 (application type)	Select “Behavioural.”
Box 4.2.A	Indicate whether the site is UBC Okanagan or UBC Vancouver.
Box 4.2.D. (Roles)	Check off all that will apply in the students’ projects. It is unlikely that students will be accessing records or charts in minimal risk studies.
Page 4.4.A – C (Peer Review)	As minimal risk projects do not require peer review, please leave A and B blank and indicate in 4.4.C that because the projects are considered to be minimal risk, a peer review is not required (per TCPS2   see <a href="#">Article 2.7</a> ).
Box 4.5.A (risk level)	The risk matrix will need to confirm the risk involved in the students’ projects and match the information provided in the course syllabus.
Box 4.5.B	Provide the rationale for your rating, describing separately the particulars of participant vulnerability and research risk. See the Appendix for further instructions.
Box 4.5.C	Must answer “yes.”
Box 4.6	Must answer “no.”
Box 4.7.A and B	Must answer “no.” <b>You will not see the next question until you answer “no” to 4.5.C and 4.6.</b>

Box 4.8 (course-based research)	Answer “yes”. The application will truncate and insert the branch off Page D: Course-based Projects (RISe will remove pages 5 – 8).
Box D.1	If you selected medium research risk in Box 4.5.A, please review the Appendix below before completing this box. Otherwise, answer “n/a.”
Box D.2 (assignment purpose)	Briefly describe how the research assignment contributes to the learning goals of the course.
Box D.3.A (methodology)	Describe the methods students will be using to complete their projects, e.g., surveys, participant observation, sharing circles, interviews.
Box D.3.B (student oversight)	Explain the steps the instructors will take to confirm that students are following the allowable methods. Steps might include a requirement that students submit a research proposal; regular in-class debriefings; and/or one-on-one update meetings between student and instructor.
Boxes D.4 – D.8 (instructions to students)	List the Instructions you will be providing to students for conducting their research assignment.
Boxes D.9 – D.10 (research ethics in the course)	Explain how the principles of research ethics will be covered in the course. As students conducting research with human participants are required to complete the TCPS 2 CORE tutorial, please also explain how you will ensure completion. The tutorial is free and takes up to three hours to complete: <a href="#">TCPS 2 CORE tutorial</a> . The instructor should be storing students’ CORE tutorial certificates, but they do not need to be uploaded to the RISe application.
Box D.11	If students (individually or in small groups) will develop their own projects, use this space to describe how you will review and approve them.
Box D.12	Instructors are required to keep project materials (e.g., consent forms, research proposals, collected data) for at least 6 months (or longer if required by your department) after course marks are issued. Materials can be destroyed after this period.
Box D.13	This section confirms that the instructor is aware of their responsibilities as the PI on student research projects.
Box 9.1	Attach the course outline and handouts pertaining to the research assignment/project, etc.
Box 9.2	Attach the consent form template that students will use. If each student’s project might differ in types of participants, methods of recruitment, study purpose, and other details, provide a general template with space for students to include these required details.  The consent forms must include the course name and acknowledge that the research is being undertaken for learning purposes.  See the <a href="#">Informed consent form guidelines</a> for further detail.

Box 9.5	If you will be providing templates for the students to use in their projects (surveys, interview scripts, etc.), attach them to this box for review.
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## Renewing or Amending a Course-Based Research Project Application

You will need to renew the Course-Based Research Project application annually as long as the course is offered, up to a maximum of six years. Use the customary RISe renewal procedures and ensure that the renewal nickname includes “Course-Based Project.”

An amendment is needed if there is a change in instructor/s, or if the parameters of the course-based project change (but continue to be minimal risk). An amendment to change the PI each year is not necessary, as long as the current instructor is listed as either the PI or Co-investigator.

Please remember to submit a “Completion of Behavioural Study” PAA when the course is discontinued, or if the program is replaced.

See our [After You Have Initial Ethics Approval](#) webpage for more information.

## Appendix

### *When is medium research risk acceptable?*

Although research with medium research risk is technically eligible for a Course-Based Research Project application, the BREB advises instructors to direct students towards low research risk projects – especially if they are novice researchers. However, if you wish to broaden the parameters of the student projects by engaging in above minimal-risk projects, you will need to make a strong case for doing so. For example, students in a particular cohort may have prior academic experience employing higher risk research methods, such as focus groups. In such cases, you will need to describe how students will mitigate the additional risks and what their qualifications are to handle these projects. Use Page D to describe the risk (e.g. loss of confidentiality), how the instructors and students will address the risks, and additional considerations (student experience or expertise) that would justify the additional risk.

### *Is it ever acceptable to involve vulnerable populations in student research?*

Course-based applications should not include student projects involving vulnerable populations. These would require a stand-alone ethics application. However, any student project involving vulnerable populations will require greater scrutiny (including review by the full board) and may be rejected by the BREB. If a student is interested in engaging vulnerable populations in their research project, we encourage the PI/Instructor to reach out to the BREB for discussion. The PI and student will be asked to address the following criteria:

- A strong, well-supported argument for how the population will benefit from the research
- A communication plan for dissemination of results to participants
- Evidence of community or agency support and collaboration
- A strong supervision plan

The degree of participant vulnerability should be assessed within the specific research context.

Examples of potentially vulnerable populations include:

- Children and others unable to consent on their own behalf
- Abuse victims, when the research is about their abuse
- Patients, when the research is about their medical condition

- People who are members of groups or communities that are already heavily involved in research (such as residents of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside) and when their membership in that community is an inclusion criterion
- People involved in illegal activities