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 for pedagogical purposes by students in their classes.

Applicability

The Course-Based Research Project BREB application has been created for use by instructors in recognition that projects within a class, carried out for pedagogical purposes, do not need to be reviewed individually if they are all similar in design and carry similar types of risk to participants.[1] The course-based research ethics application may be used for undergraduate and graduate courses that cover research methods in the syllabus, e.g.:

- o Courses offering fieldwork exercises
- o Courses on a particular type of method/theory where students are given practical experience applying the methods or theory in research
- o Research communication courses where students conduct research to gain experience in writing up and presenting results

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 application. The application must be submitted by the course instructor and the assignment should be described in the class syllabus.

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. The application can be renewed each year.

Please see the section on Research Risk for additional criteria and contact our office if you have any questions about eligibility for a course-based research ethics application.

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[1] The Tri Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018) distinguishes between course-based research conducted for pedagogical purposes and other types of research projects (see Article 6.12).
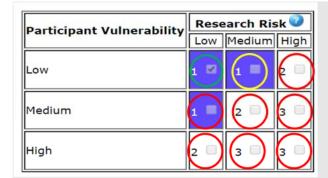
Exclusions

The following types of projects may not use the course-based research ethics application and 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 fall under a course-based research ethics application)

Research risk

The BREB does not endorse the inclusion of potentially vulnerable populations in projects being undertaken for the purpose of teaching students how to do research. 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 ☑	1 ☐	2 ☐
Medium	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐
High	2 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐

Projects falling within the **green circle** are acceptable for Course-Based Research Project applications without extensive justification.

Projects falling within the **yellow circle** include medium research risk but not medium 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 (Page D) will be required.

Projects falling within the **red circles** will not be accepted under the umbrella of a Course-Based Research Project application. Students who are interested in doing this type of research project will need to contact the BREB before starting their application.

Students whose projects fall outside the marked ranges will need to submit individually using the full ethics application. If your Course-Based Research Project application will not fit within the Low Research risk/Low Participant Vulnerability range, please review the Appendix for the additional detail 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 Leah Meanwell (leah.meanwell@ubc.ca) 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:

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- 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

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. Students and faculty/instructors must also have completed the TCPS2 CORE tutorial.

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

Tips on filling out the RISe form

Boxes 1.1 and 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.
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)	Complete all boxes. If no review has occurred, indicate that, because the projects are considered to be minimal risk, a peer review is not required (per TCPS2 | see Article 2.7).
Box 4.5.A (risk level)	The risk matrix will need to represent 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.
Box 4.5.C	Must answer "yes."
Box 4.6	Must answer "no."
Box 4.7.A and B	Must answer "no." **You will not see the next question until you answer "no" to these questions.**
Box 4.8 (course-based research)	Answer "yes" to this question. 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 on the minimal risk matrix, please review Appendix X before completing this box. Otherwise, answer "n/a."
Box D.2 (assignment purpose)	Briefly describe the purpose of the research assignment – this is to confirm that the research is for pedagogical purposes.

Box D.3.A (methodology)	Describe the methods students will be using to complete their projects, such as surveys, participant observation, or interviews. If students will have latitude to develop their specific project methodology within broad parameters, you will need to describe the range of options.
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 one-on-one update meetings between student and instructor.
Boxes D.4 – D.8 (instructions to students)	List the "ground rules" you will require students to follow when conducting their research assignment.
Boxes D.9 – D.10 (research ethics in the course)	Explain how you will cover the subject of research ethics 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: TCPS 2 CORE tutorial
Box D.11	If students will be developing individual 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) beyond the end of the course, but you can destroy them after this period.
Box D.13	This section confirms the instructor's responsibility for 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 the description of the population, method of recruitment, purpose, and procedures is different for each student's project, provide a general template. Please also ensure that the consent form clearly indicates which course students are conducting the research for and that the purpose of the research is pedagogical. See the Informed consent form guidelines for further detail.
Box 9.5	If students will receive templates, such as surveys or interview scripts, they need to be included in the ethics review. Attach here.

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."

As the RISe renewal form was designed with stand-alone research projects in mind, rather than course-based projects, we provide some guidelines below on how to fill it out. On the Post Approval Application (PAA) Coversheet:

Box 1.1 (qualification for minimal risk review)	Respond "yes."
Box 1.2 (participant recruitment)	Respond "N/A" and "course-based application" where further details are requested. Box 1.2.2 should be "no" Box 1.2.3 should be "n/a" in both places. Box 1.2.4 should be "No"
Box 1.3 (Progress of study)	Provide a brief description of how the projects went in the previous year.
Box 1.4 (unanticipated events)	Respond "No."
Box 1.5 (changes in conflict of interest)	Respond "N/A."
Box 1.6 (lapsed studies)	Respond as appropriate.
Box 1.8 Is your application 6 years or older?	If the answer is "Yes" you will need to submit an amendment to the ethics application as well as the Annual Renewal.

The renewal PAA will be sufficient in most cases. An amendment is needed if the instructor changes or if the parameters of the course-based project change (but continue to be minimal risk). If two or more instructors rotate each year teaching a course, list one as the Principal Investigator and the others as Co-Investigators. An amendment to change the PI each year is not necessary, as long as the instructor is listed in either role. See Post Approval Activity Guidance Notes.

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

Appendix
When is medium research risk acceptable?

Although research containing a 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 instructors wish to broaden the parameters of the student projects by engaging in higher than low-research risk projects, they will need to make a strong case for doing so. For example, students in a particular cohort may have prior academic experience applying slightly higher risk research methods, such as focus groups. In such cases, you will need to provide information on how students will mitigate the additional risks and include the students' qualifications to handle these projects. Use Page D to describe the details of risk (e.g. loss of confidentiality). Explain how the instructors and students will address the risks, and describe any extenuating circumstances (student experience or expertise) that would justify the additional risk.

Is medium or high participant vulnerability ever acceptable in Course-Based research?

Most applications where students intend to involve vulnerable populations while learning how to do research will be rejected by the BREB. If a student is interested in engaging vulnerable populations in

their research project, they will need to reach out to the BREB <u>before</u> starting their application to see if their application would even be considered.

At minimum, a student would need to address the following criteria before the application will be considered for review:

- 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 BREB is guided by the TCPS2 definition of participant vulnerability, which describes a person's diminished ability to fully safeguard their own interests, whether because of limited decision-making capacity or limited access to human rights, opportunities, and power. Individuals or groups may experience vulnerability to a different degree and at different times, depending on their circumstances and on the type of research they are being asked to participate in. 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