



Research Ethics Board

Standard Operating Procedure

SOP File #	REB.SOP.401
Title	Delegated Review
Effective Date	September 01, 2021
Next Review	2026
Next Administrative Review	2023

1. Purpose

This standard operating procedure (SOP) describes the processes for determining when research meets the criteria for delegated ethics review and the associated delegated review procedures.

2. Definitions

See the MSVU **REB Glossary of Terms (REB.INFO.001)**

3. Scope

This SOP pertains to Research Ethics Boards (REB) that review human participant research in compliance with applicable policies and guidelines.

4. Responsibilities

All REB members and REB Office Personnel are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this SOP are met.

The REB Chair or designee is responsible for determining if research is eligible for delegated review. The REB Chair or designee may delegate this task to REB Office Personnel; however, the responsibility for oversight remains with the REB Chair or designee.

The REB Chair or designee or REB member(s) is responsible for conducting the delegated review.

5. Procedures and/or Specific Policies

REBs should adopt a proportionate approach to ethics assessment based on the general principle that the more invasive or harmful the proposed and ongoing research, the greater should be the care in assessing the research. Full Board review by an REB should be the default requirement for all research involving human participants unless the REB decides to authorize delegated review based primarily on the harms that are expected to arise from the research. While all research must be reviewed adequately, requirements for proportionate review allow the REB to provide a higher level of scrutiny, and correspondingly more protection, for the most ethically challenging research.

In practice, the proportionate review implies different levels of REB review for different research projects. The two levels typical used by REBs are Full Board review or delegated review by one or more experienced REB members, as determined by the REB Chair or designee.

5.1. Determination of Qualification for Delegated Review

- 5.1.1. Full Board review is the default for most new research projects submitted to the REB; however, some research may be eligible for delegated review;
- 5.1.2. Submissions that meet the following criteria may be eligible for delegated review:
 - Research projects that involve no more than minimal risk,
 - Minor or minimal risk changes to approved research,
 - Continuing review of approved minimal risk research,
 - Continuing review of research that is more than minimal risk when there has been little or no modification of the research; and when there has been no increase in risk to or other ethical implications for participants since the initial review by the full REB, and where the REB Chair has determined that delegated review is appropriate.
- 5.1.3. When determining if initial review of research or modifications to previously approved research are eligible for delegated review, the REB Chair or designee will take into consideration the methods used to conduct the research, recruitment practices, participant population, confidentiality of data, and all ethics guidance and requirements as applicable.

5.2. Delegated Review Process

- 5.2.1. REB Office Personnel will perform an initial screening of the submission. Those submissions that meet a pre-defined set of criteria for delegated review (see Section 5.1.2) may be sent for delegated review. For all other submissions, the REB Chair or designee will make the determination of whether the submission meets the criteria for delegated review;
- 5.2.2. For research that meets the criteria, delegated review may be conducted by the REB Chair, designee or by one or more REB members as designated by the REB Chair or designee;
- 5.2.3. The REB Chair, designee or REB member(s) reviewing research under delegated review must not have a Conflict of Interest in the research;
- 5.2.4. In reviewing the research under delegated procedures, the REB Chair, REB member(s) or designee may exercise all of the authorities of the REB, except that they may not disapprove the research; the research may be disapproved only after it has been reviewed by the REB at a Full Board meeting;
- 5.2.5. REB member(s) conducting a delegated review will contact the REB Chair or designee to request the expertise of an ad hoc advisor, if applicable. Ad hoc advisors may not participate in the final decision regarding approval of the research;
- 5.2.6. If the REB Chair or designee subsequently determines that the level of risk for the submission is greater than minimal, the submission will be referred to a Full Board meeting for review;
- 5.2.7. The decision regarding the designation of the research (i.e., either requiring Full Board or delegated review) and the outcome of the review will be recorded. The REB Office Personnel may issue the review or decision letter.

5.3. Notification of the REB

5.3.1. The REB will be informed of research that was reviewed and approved using delegated review procedures in a timely and appropriate manner.

5.4. Documentation

5.4.1. The type of REB review conducted (i.e., Full Board or delegated) will be documented in the REB records and noted in the decision letter issued to the Researcher, where appropriate;

5.4.2. The REB meeting agendas and minutes will include a list of submissions that were reviewed and approved using delegated review procedures.

6. References

See References listed (if applicable)

7. Acknowledgements

The development of this document has benefited directly from similar documents made public by the Tri-Council, as well as several Canadian universities. In some instances, specific formulations drawn from these sources have been incorporated into this document. Specific iterations were drawn from the following:

- Standard Operating Procedures for Observational Health and Non-Clinical Trial Research Ethics Boards - [N2/CAREB-ACCER REB SOPs – Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards](#) (retrieved July 2021)
- N2/CAREB-ACCER REB SOPs - N2 Network of Networks - [Resources - N2 Canada](#) (retrieved July 2021)

8. SOP History

SOP Number	Key Changes	Effective Date
REB.SOP.402	New SOP #, extensively revised	September 2021
REB.SOP.145	Original –2014	January 2014

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