Research Ethics Board

Research Ethics – Human | Frequently Asked Questions

(For Research Participants)

Important Notice

Mount Saint Vincent University's Research Ethics Office has compiled these frequently asked questions (FAQs) from the perspective of participants, to provide information to participants before and after taking part in a research study. The Participant FAQs are meant for information and guidance purposes only. Specific questions about the research study should be directed to the appropriate Principal Investigator (PI), Research Lab, or additional research study personnel (this information is normally found in the recruitment materials, information letter and/or the informed consent letter).

For information concerning your rights as a participant, please contact ethics@msvu.ca.

The development of these questions was aided by MSVU's Research Ethics Board (REB) and information from publicly available documents at Canadian Universities, such as Carleton University, Queen's University, and Dalhousie University.

Contents

General Inquires

1. What is the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)?

The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) instills the ethical standards for research across Canada, created by three (3) federal agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Institutions and researchers must abide by these policies as a condition of funding.

There are three (3) core principles that create the foundation for the TCPS, and in turn, that researchers must abide by:

Respect for Persons	Respect for Persons includes a commitment to accountability and transparency in the ethical conduct of research. This is upheld by recognizing the intrinsic value of human beings, respecting autonomy, and ensuring freedom of choice towards participation.
Concern for Welfare	Concern for Welfare ensures participants are not exposed to unnecessary risks and that researchers minimize risks associated with participation. Factors of welfare include physical, mental, and spiritual health, as well as physical, economic, and social circumstances.
Justice	Justice refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably. Researchers must be aware of power imbalances between researcher and participant to avoid injustices.

For more information, please review TCPS Chapter 1: Ethics Framework.

2. What is a Research Ethics Board (REB)?

Research Ethics Board's (REB) are typically housed within an institution. Mount Saint Vincent University's REB includes several in-house researchers and external community members. The purpose of the REB is to ensure each research study that is affiliated with MSVU meets the ethical requirements set out by the TCPS, including the three (3) guiding principles mentioned above in question one (1).

Researchers submit a research ethics application for each study they wish to conduct. Each application is reviewed by multiple members of the REB. Reviewers assess the application to ensure that the overall research study is ethical, and that the demands on participants are appropriate to the research question. Research studies are assessed for potential risks and benefits, with

unnecessary risks minimized. Foreseeable risks with answering the research question must be balanced with benefits. Participants have the final judgement about the acceptability of risks and benefits.

3. What is a consent form? Do I have to sign one?

A consent form or informed consent letter details the purpose of the study, the procedures and methods for data collection, any risks or benefits, and privacy and confidentiality, among other items.

The Principal Investigator (PI) or 'lead researcher' for the study is identified in the consent form, as well as additional research personnel or co-investigators. Their contact information is provided in this document. If you have any questions regarding the specifics of the research study, please reach out to the PI.

If you wish to participate in a research study, you must sign a consent form. Signing a consent form involves writing your signature*. However, consent can be captured in numerous ways, such as verbal consent or the completion/submission of a survey.

Consent is free, informed, and ongoing. If you have questions when reading the consent form, please ask the research study personnel to clarify any section. If you wish to withdraw from participating after you have signed the consent form, you are free to do so. The procedure for withdrawing will also be detailed in the consent form.

*Note: some studies may require you to sign a consent form multiple times throughout one research study session. When a research study requires multiple sessions, you may be asked to sign a consent form at the beginning of each session, or review orally the consent. At any point in time, you are free to withdraw from participating in the study. The informed consent will detail what happens to any of your data collected.

4. I am participating in a research study on campus, and I am not sure where to go.

Each research study can take place on or off campus, as well as virtually or over the phone, depending on the study. If you are required to participate in-person at MSVU, please review the Campus Map. The specific location will be included in the consent form or will be given in some form prior to the research study session.

Listed below, in order from bottom of the hill to the top of the hill, are the main campus buildings, abbreviations for those buildings, and the corresponding number code to the Campus Map.

- Advancement House: 8

- Sheila A. Brown Centre for Applied Research: 7
- Seton Academic Centre (SAC): 5
- McCain Centre (MCC): 1
- Rosaria Student Centre (ROS): 19
- Evaristus Hall (EVR): 12

If you are unsure of where to go once arriving on campus, please reach out to the appropriate research study contact listed on your informed consent. In other instances, please see Security in Assisi (18 on Campus Map).

5. I am attending a research study session on campus. Are there COVID-19 restrictions?

As of September 4, 2022, masks are required in small gathering spaces, including classrooms and lab spaces. Masks are not required but strongly recommended in larger, communal spaces.

If you are unable to participate in a research study session due to contracting COVID-19, please email or call the appropriate Research Lab or Principal Investigator (PI) as soon as possible.

Before the Study Begins

1. I have questions regarding a specific study. Who do I contact?

Specific research study questions should be directed to the Principal Investigator (PI). This can be found either in promotional/recruitment material for the research study or in the consent form.

2. I have questions regarding participant rights and the treatment of participants during a research study. Who do I contact?

If you have general questions regarding your right as a participant or the treatment of participants during the research study, please reach out to Ms. Brenda Gagné, MSVU's Research Ethics Coordinator.

3. What if I want to stop participating during the research study?

You are free to withdraw from a research study at any point in time. However, there may be procedures for withdrawal, and limitations to removing your data if withdrawing after participating. Every research study is unique and requires a different set of procedures. If unsure, or if wishing to withdraw from a research study, please contact the PI or discuss this with the appropriate research personnel.

4. Will my information be confidential? What happens if I think my information has been compromised?

Your information is normally confidential throughout the entirety of the research study, and typically de-identified. De-identifying your data is the process of keeping personal information separate from the information collected during the research process; typically, a random ID code will replace your name.

However, there are limits to confidentiality, which will be included in the consent form. In all other instances, your information will remain confidential.

It is very inportant that you read the consent information before you agree to particpant. The process of maintaining privacy and confidentiality, including any limitations to confidentiality, will be detailed in the consent form. If you have any questions, please discuss this with either the Principal Investigator (PI) or the appropriate research study personnel.

5. Will I be compensated for participating in a research study?

Research studies may offer compensation or incentives for participation. Information regarding compensation or incentives if applicable, will be included in in the informed consent document.

After Your Participation

1. Can other researchers access my information?

Your data may be available to other researchers who work in similar fields. Data can be provided to researchers who are working in similar fields for their upcoming or ongoing research studies.

Details on the sharing of data or future use of data will be in the consent form. If you agree to participate and then change your mind later, please reach out to the Principal Investigator (PI) to discuss.

2. How do I find out the results from the study I participated in?

If applicable, this will be included in the consent form, Research findings cannot be formed until data collection is done, which may take several months or years depending on the type of study. The research team often provides research results summaries to participants. Please review the consent form and ask the Principal Investigator (PI) or the appropriate research personnel to discuss further.