

Research Ethics Board

Guidelines and Procedures for Course-Based Student Research Activities Involving Human Participants (June 19, 2014)

Some Mohawk courses include class projects or activities designed to develop research skills, which might be carried out by individual students, small groups, or as a single class project. These class projects or activities might not fit the standard definition of research in the sense that the results are not intended for publication or for generalization to other situations. However, if the potential exists for risk to humans who participate in these course-based projects or activities, these projects or activities should undergo ethical review.

Course-based research projects or activities vary in scope but may include:

- having students conduct interviews, administer standard tests, or distribute questionnaires to develop interview or questionnaire design skills;
- conducting mini research projects where students pose research questions,
- gather data from human participants, and analyse the data for presentation; or
- other activities that would be considered research within the disciplinary traditions in which the course is taught.

A. Distinguishing Research from Professional Practice/Skill Development

Students engaged in professional practice are not considered to be engaged in research. A student is engaged in professional practice when learning or doing the work of the profession. In general, professional practice for students involves the development of skills, which are considered standard practice within a profession or field, and includes information-gathering processes that are typically a part of the normal relationship between a student in a field and the people with whom the student interacts in that context. Examples of this include clinical practice in nursing, the collection of information for journalistic purposes, marketing surveys, the provision of advice to a client, and the process of evaluating or auditing in conjunction with professional course work or field placement. Activities considered to be professional practice should follow the ethical standards and guidelines found within the profession.

The following criteria can be used to assess whether information-gathering activities within a Mohawk course are part of a research project or are intended for the teaching of professional skills (i.e., for pedagogical purposes) alone.

Information gathering activities are classified as research when:

- 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 are more effective;
- the results or findings are written in a format that would be acceptable for a research journal or academic conference presentation; or
- primary data is collected and organized for analysis and distribution or dissemination/publication.

Information gathering activities are classified as professional skills development and not research when:

- 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); or
- the information gathering processes are part of the normal relationship between the student and participants (e.g., classroom teacher and students, nurse and patient, lawyer and client).

Instructors who are uncertain if their classroom project or activity falls within the category of research, according to the criteria outlined above, should contact the [REB Coordinator](#).

B. Criteria for Student Research

If a class project falls under the definition of research described in section A above, the following guidelines and procedures may be applied.

The instructor may oversee the conduct of his or her individual student's research by completing the Request for Ethics Approval of Course Based Student Research and submitting it for approval to the [Mohawk College Research Ethics Board](#).

Requests for Ethics Approval of Course Based Student Research must comply with the following criteria.

- The research project must involve no more than minimal risk. The standard of minimal risk is defined in TCPS2; Chapter 2, p. 23.

If potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.

- The student project must not involve any personal, sensitive or incriminating topics or questions that could place participants or researchers at risk.
- The student project must not manipulate behaviour of participants beyond the range of "normal" classroom activity or daily life.
- The student project must not involve physically invasive contact with research participants.
- The student project must not involve deception.

If the class project falls under the definition of research described in section A above and any of the criteria in Section B are not met, Mohawk's Research Ethics Board must review the project or activity.

C. Required Permissions

If a student project is to be carried out at another institution or agency (such as school, hospital, government agency, etc.), students should be aware that approval or permission to access the

premises or obtain private information from another institution might be required. Such approval should be obtained in advance and submitted to the Mohawk College Research Ethics Board.

D. The Application Process

1. The course instructor assumes the role of principal researcher and submits Mohawk's Request for Ethics Approval of Course Based Student Research on behalf of his/her class.
2. The course instructor signs the application form and includes samples of free and informed consent forms, information letters for participants, questionnaires/surveys or other research instruments that might be used in the research project.
3. If there are different projects, the course instructor should outline what is the same for each student and what makes each project different (research question, methodology, participant groups, etc.)
4. The Request for Ethics Approval of Course Based Student Research must be signed by the Course Instructor, the Program Coordinator and the Associate Dean or Dean. The Program Coordinator and Associate Dean or Dean must be aware the research is being conducted and that an REB application has been submitted.
5. The application is submitted to the [Mohawk College Research Ethics Board](#).
6. Ethical approval for Course Based Student Research can be maintained for three years, provided that there are no changes to the course assignments. If changes are made, a new ethical review application must be submitted. New applications for course-based research must be re-submitted every four years. All sections of the course, whether on campus or not, must follow the procedures and all instructors must ensure that these policies are followed.

All questions and clarifications concerning the interpretation of these guidelines should be directed to the REB Coordinator of the Mohawk College Research Ethics Board at ext. 20304 or email reb.coordinator@mohawkcollege.ca.