

Guidance for Student Research

PURPOSE

This guidance outlines the principles and procedures of obtaining appropriate research ethics board (REB) approval prior to commencing student research* and highlights the importance of ensuring required REB approval coverage of thesis/dissertation projects by the relevant institutions.

***Student research:** any directed or independent research intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge and is conducted by students to satisfy course or degree requirements, such as masters' theses and PhD dissertations.

BACKGROUND AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

BC Cancer REB is a University of British Columbia's (UBC's) affiliated Board and is governed by [UBC Policy LR9](#) (Research Involving Human Participants) together with the [Tri-Council Policy Statement 2](#) (TCPS2).

All researchers, including student researchers, must seek ethics approval prior to engaging in research activities at BC Cancer and must maintain approval throughout the research activity.

REBs cannot issue retroactive approvals. Failure to obtain necessary REB approvals could lead to serious implications for the student's thesis or dissertation defense and their ability to graduate.

SCOPE & APPLICATION

This guidance applies to graduate students pursuing a master's or a Doctoral (PhD) degree and conducting human research as part of their thesis/dissertation project.

Graduate students and their supervisors are jointly responsible for obtaining the appropriate ethics appropriate coverage for all components of the thesis/dissertation project by the relevant institutions. See **Appendix I** (Assessment Criteria for New RISE Ethics Applications and PAA Amendments) for guidance.

This guidance does not apply to non-graduate students, such as undergraduate students, summer students, visiting students, residents, fellows, or medical school students.

- **UBC Students:**

UBC's affiliated REBs accept each other's review under [UBC Policy LR9](#); only one approval from one of the six UBC's affiliated REBs is required (refer to the **RESOURCES AND REFERENCES** section below for links to UBC guidance).

- **Non-UBC Students:**

Review the university or institution's requirements for student research. In most cases, student research conducted under the auspices of BC Cancer only requires one REB review, either from their institution **or** BC Cancer, in alignment with the TCPS2 *Reciprocal Research Ethics Board Review Model* for Multi-Jurisdictional Research (Article 8.1).

Considerations for special circumstances

- **BC Cancer employee/intern who are also student researchers:**

Permissions to access patients' or other employee's data/records and samples that may be granted for an employment or intern role with BC Cancer does not necessarily extend to research purposes. It is the student and their supervisor's responsibility to seek appropriate advice before undertaking any research activities.

- **Quality Assurance (QA), Quality Improvement (QI), or Program Evaluation (PE):**

Non-research projects are generally exempt from REB review; however, if a QA/QI/PE activity is planned for the purpose of a student thesis/dissertation, exemption from REB review may not apply. Please contact the Research Ethics office for determination.

PROCEDURES

1. Complete the online TCPS tutorial 'CORE': <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>
2. Determine whether the student research requires an amendment to an existing application or a new ethics application submission (see **Appendix I**: Student research submission as a new application vs amendment).
3. Submit a new application or amendment for REB review using the UBC RISE system (see **Appendix II**: Research Ethics Application Submission Hints and Tips).

CONTACT

BC Cancer Research Ethics Office reb@bccancer.bc.ca

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- TCPS 2 (2022): https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html
- UBC CREB Guidance Notes: <https://researchethics.ubc.ca/clinical-research-ethics/creb-guidance-notes/ubc-clinical-research-ethics-general-guidance-notes>
- UBC Policy LR9: https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2022/05/Human-Research-Policy_LR9.pdf
- UBC BREB Guidance on Student Reserachers: <https://researchethics.ubc.ca/behavioural-research-ethics/student-researchers>
- UBC Guidance for Medical Residents doing Behavioural Research: <https://researchethics.ubc.ca/behavioural-research-ethics/guidance-medical-residents-doing-behavioural-research>

APPENDIX I: Student research submission as a new application vs amendment

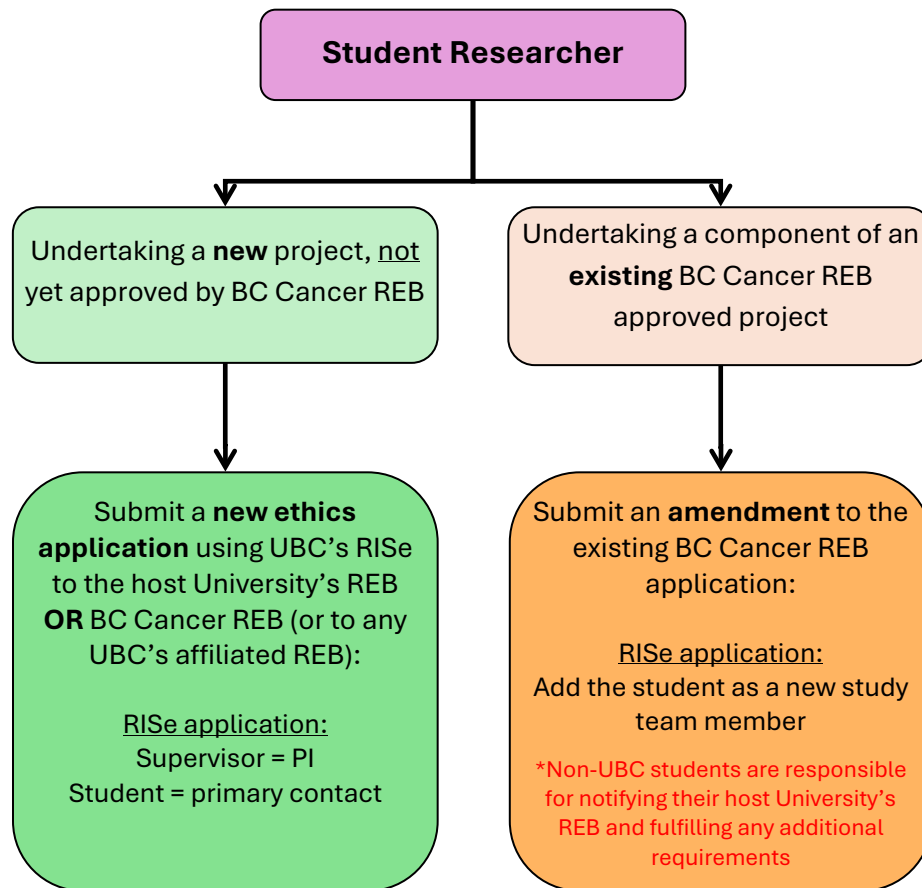


Figure 1. BC Cancer REB Student Research Submission Flow Chart

A **new ethics application** must be submitted if the work being undertaken by the student is:

- for the sole purpose of conducting directed or independent research (e.g. completing a thesis), **OR**
- not covered by any existing approved project (e.g. **new or additional** hypotheses, questionnaires, participant groups).

An **amendment** can be submitted to add a student to an existing BC Cancer REB application if their supervisor is a BC Cancer-affiliated PI or Co-I on that application **AND**:

- the student's work is not for the sole purpose of fulfilling their course or degree (e.g., student is acting in the role of a research assistant or collaborator on the project or is undertaking a co-op or work experience placement); **OR**,
- the student's work is for the sole purpose of fulfilling their course or degree, but the work is a component of the already approved study without needing to change the study or adding new components to fulfill the thesis/dissertation requirements.

APPENDIX II: Research Ethics Application Submission Hints and Tips

Required information for each submission:

- Details of the University and degree the student is undertaking the research for
- Grant funding applications and approvals associated with the research project (if applicable)
- Research project protocol/proposal (if submitting a new application)

New Application Hints and Tips:

- Box 1.1: (Principal Investigator): list BC Cancer supervisor as the PI on the application, because they must take primary responsibility for the study. The PI must also satisfy [BC Cancer REB PI requirements](#).
- Box 1.2 (Primary contact): list the student as the primary contact.
- Box 1.3 (Co-Investigator): include the student as co-I on new applications
- Make it clear in the research summary that the study is being conducted for thesis/dissertation purposes.
- Summarize the research proposal in the application.
 - The ethics application requires concrete and specific information to provide a high-level overview for the REB to assess.
 - Be concise by providing enough detail and removing any irrelevant information.
- REB Board of Record: the RISE system will choose the REB (one of the six UBC's affiliated REBs) based on the content. Contact the REB Office if the PI disagrees with the REB assigned to review; applications can be re-routed to any of the UBC's affiliated REBs.