

## **Guidelines for Filling out Application Forms (Request for Ethical Review of Human Subjects)**

**Please read this – it contains information that will assist you in filling out the application form and avoiding common mistakes. We also recommend that you complete the TriCouncil Policy tutorial before filling out the application form ([www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial)).**

### **The Form**

There are two types of forms available to download. Use the MSWord form if you are filling it out on your computer and the PDF form if you need to fill it out by hand (MSWord form is preferred as it is easier to read). If you have problems downloading the form or technical problems with filling out the form, contact the REB Coordinator for help. (For Mac users there seems to be some problems with the TWU logo showing up and the formatting may go out of alignment a bit.)

Make sure you have filled out the form completely. This means checking off the boxes on the checklists to show that you actually used the checklist (and do use the checklists – they are there to help you make sure your application is complete). If a checklist item is not applicable write in “n/a”.

Remember to sign and date the form, and to get the other required signatures.

### **Question #4**

Dates for conducting the proposed research refers to the date you anticipate that you will start your research with human subjects (including the recruitment process), not the date you started filling out the form or started working on your thesis. The end date refers to anticipated completion of your research and analysis. ***Do not start your research until you have received notification from the REB Chair or Coordinator that your application has been approved and they tell you that you can begin.*** This means that you need to plan for adequate time for the approval process (see heading below) before you need to start. Please take this requirement seriously, no matter how innocent and harmless your research may be. Conducting research with human subjects only after REB approval is a TriCouncil Policy ([www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm)) that all universities are required to abide by, and starting without ethical approval means that you put the University in violation of those regulations. If you were not aware of this regulation and have mistakenly started your research already, stop immediately and inform the REB Chair or REB Coordinator of your error. The REB Chair will inform you of what steps you need to take to correct your error.

### **Question #5**

Do not put, “the purpose is to fill the requirements of my ... degree.” Instead describe what you are trying to accomplish through your research.

### **Question #15**

If you are accessing an organization’s files, clients, members, patients, students or constituents in *any* way, you need the organization’s *written* approval. Often people

do not think they need to obtain organizational approval when in fact they are using facilities, talking to clients, or using their help in some way (i.e. having a friend who works there help them gather data or contacts from the organization without actually asking the organization for its approval.) The consent letter from the organization must have a current date, and include your name and the name of your research project (or a description of your research project – ex. “Joe Student’s research on the long term psychological effects of going through an ethics approval process”) so that it is clear to the REB that the organization is aware of the fact that you are the person carrying out the research and that they know what that research will be. The letter must be signed and the person from the organization who is signing the letter must include their title so that it is clear that they are someone who has the authority at that organization to give permission.

### **Question #16**

When describing the potential risks do not put “not applicable” or “no risks.” Even if you feel that there are no risks to the participants, it is better to put “there are no anticipated risks.” This also applies to the statement of possible risks that is to be included in your letter of consent. Consider possible emotional, psychological and employment risks to participants.

### **Other Common Errors**

Check for spelling errors and typos, especially in consent forms and recruitment letters. If the reviewers find these, they will require you to correct them. It reflects on the care you take as a researcher. If you haven't taken the time to look for errors in your documents, potential subjects may conclude that you will be careless in your research. It can also suggest to them a lack of professionalism.

On your consent form do not put “date of approval by REB,” just put the date itself as header or footer. Using that phrase can be viewed as coercion (i.e. it may communicate the idea that “this has been approved by a Research Ethics Board so you really can't have any legitimate objection to participating”).

### **Approval Process**

Allow **a minimum of three weeks** for the approval process (i.e. from when the REB receives your application). Because of the volume of applications we receive it actually does take this long. It may take longer than this if:

- ⇒ Modifications are required by the REB reviewers, depending on the extent of modifications required. If you have an obligatory start date, assume that there will be modifications required and apply earlier. Most applications do require some modifications.
- ⇒ You are applying during a busy time of the semester (e.g. final exams). The reviewers are also professors and their workload is higher during these times.
- ⇒ You apply before or during the Christmas season. The reviewers are often off campus and taking their Christmas holidays.
- ⇒ You apply during the summer. The reviewers may be on vacation or away from the campus on research trips and it may take some time before there are two reviewers that are available to look at your application.

When you have completed your research and analysis, remember to submit the Final Project Report Form (which can be found on the REB website on the same page as

the application for approval) to the REB Coordinator. Make sure you put your file number (found on your certificate of approval) and the completion date on your form, and that you sign and date the form (and if you are a student, that your supervisor signs and dates the form).