

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 strongly recommend that you complete the TriCouncil Policy tutorial before filling out the application form (www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default).

The Form

The MSWord form is set up so that you can fill it out on your computer. The field will expand as you type. Do not fill out the form by hand as you won't have enough room to answer the questions. It also saves you a lot of time if there are revisions required for questions on your form (a quick edit in a saved document as opposed to writing it all out again).

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" by hand.

Answer the questions fully so that the REB reviewers will have enough information to know what you are doing. The more complete your answer, the fewer questions the REB will have and the more quickly the review of your application will go. Think in terms of an answer that requires a paragraph as opposed to one that requires a one or two sentence answer.

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

Name and Contact Information

Please fill this out in full. The REB will use this information to contact you about revisions, and send your certificate of approval to.

Section A

Question #3

Other investigators are those who are collaborating with you on your research project. Do not put your thesis supervisor's name here unless he/she is actually doing the research with you.

Question #4

Dates for conducting the proposed research refers to the date that you anticipate starting 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. Use a complete date, i.e. day, month and year.

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/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default) 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.

Section B

Question #1

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

Section C

Question #3

Do not paste your recruitment materials into the form. Attach them as separate documents. Submitting an attachment will make submitting revisions simpler, and it allows you to spell check your document. Also, letter and flyers must be submitted in the form that they will be given to the research participants. For example, if you will be using letterhead, it must be submitted on the letterhead being used. If you are using graphics in your advertisements, the graphics must be included, not just the text.

Section E

Question #1(c)

Do not paste your consent letter or script into this question. Attach them as separate documents. Attach the letter as it will be given to the research participants (including letterhead if that will be used).

Question #1(e)

For the required date on your consent letter, on the version you submit with your application put "Approval date." On the final version of your consent letter *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").

Don't use a date field on your documents. If you use a date field it will update automatically to the day you open your document. Consent letters must have the date you received approval on them.

Question #2

This is a letter from the organization to the Research Ethics Board, not a letter from you to the organization.

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 permission letter from the organization must have:

- a current date;
- 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 the organization knows what that research will be;
- the signature of someone in authority at that organization; and
- the printed name and title of the person signing (so that it is clear that they are someone who has the authority at that organization to give permission).

Section G

Question #1

Debriefing involves informing/reminding the research participant of the purpose of the study and the anticipated findings. It provides them more information than you were able to share at the beginning. You should also provide information on how they can contact you for more information or if they wish to withdraw from the study (if you are able at that point to separate their responses and remove them).

Section H

Make sure you've included all required attachments with your application. Incomplete applications will not be forwarded to the REB reviewers until all missing attachments have been received by the REB Coordinator.

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 it looks like you haven't taken the time to look for errors in your documents, potential research participants may conclude that you will be careless in your research. It can also suggest to them a lack of professionalism.

Consent Form Template

This template is found at www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/guidelines-for-informed-consent.html.

Only use the phrase “or parent/guardian” if you are doing research with children or adults who do not have the capacity to give consent for themselves.

Approval Process

Allow **a minimum of four weeks** for the approval process (i.e. from when the REB receives your application, not when you hand it to your supervisor). 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 (May – August). 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. There are no new REB applications accepted during the month of July.

Final Report

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). The Final Report form should be filled out at the point where you know that you will no longer need to go back and collect more data from research participants. If you are a student, you can use the date you defend your thesis for clarity.