

## ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS POLICY

This document is the parent policy for any College or Divisional procedures. Questions regarding this policy are to be directed to the identified Policy Administrator.

<b>Functional Category:</b>	Academic
<b>Approval Date:</b>	January 24, 2013
<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 1, 2013
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Vice President, Teaching and Learning
<b>Policy Administrator:</b>	Senior Manager, Academic Research and Development

### Objective:

The ethical conduct of research is a vital concept of the Applied Research mandate of NorQuest College (College).

It is the intent of the College, where research involving human participants is conducted under the auspices of the College, to ensure that:

- the safety, welfare and rights of participants are protected,
- before beginning research, the amount and kind of information that is communicated to participants is appropriate to ensure that free, full and informed consent can be granted,
- participants are made aware that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences to the individual, and
- multi-centred research projects and research under other jurisdictions also receives appropriate ethical approval from those centres and jurisdictions.

Authority to establish this policy is derived from the [NorQuest College Board of Governor's Policy No. 5](#), which delegates authority to the President and CEO to establish policies and procedures for the College's management and operation.

### Policy:

This policy governs the conduct of research involving humans. Research involving human participants at the College will at a minimum be conducted in accordance with the most current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement for the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans<sup>1</sup>.

#### Guiding Ethical Principles

Researchers contribute to human welfare by acquiring knowledge and applying it to human problems. Ethical research with human participants is guided by the following principles:

- The cardinal principle of contemporary research ethics is respect for human dignity. This principle requires researchers to protect the multiple and interdependent interests of the person – from bodily to psychological to cultural integrity – as they may be affected by the research.
- Individuals are generally presumed to have the capacity and right to make informed decisions on their own behalf. Respect for persons therefore means respecting the exercise of individual free and informed consent. Individuals have the right to refuse to participate in a research study.
- Respect for human dignity entails high ethical obligations towards

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

vulnerable persons – to those who have diminished competence and/or decision-making capacity which make them vulnerable. Those who are vulnerable are entitled, on the grounds of human dignity, caring, solidarity and fairness, to special protection against abuse, exploitation or discrimination. Ethical obligations to vulnerable people in the research enterprise may translate into special procedures to protect their interests.

- Respect for human dignity also implies the principles of respect for privacy and confidentiality. Standards of privacy and confidentiality protect the access, control and dissemination of personal information. In doing so, such standards help to protect the physical, social and/or psychological integrity of participants.
- Justice connotes fairness and equity. Procedural justice requires that the ethics review process have fair methods, standards and procedures for reviewing research protocols, and that the process be effectively independent. Justice also concerns the distribution of the benefits and burdens of research. Distributive justice requires that no segment of the population should be unfairly burdened with the harms of research and also imposes duties neither to neglect nor discriminate against individuals and groups who may benefit from advances in research.
- The analysis, balance and distribution of harms and benefits are critical to the ethics of human research. Contemporary research ethics requires a favourable harms-benefits balance – that is, that the foreseeable harms should not outweigh the anticipated benefits. Harms-benefits analysis thus affects the welfare and rights of research participants and the informed assumption of harms and benefits. There is often uncertainty about the magnitude and kind of benefits and harms that may result from proposed research and about the balance of benefits and harms. This uncertainty imposes an obligation to conduct research at a high level of competency in order to maximize the potential benefits of the research.
- Research participants must not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm, and their participation in research must be essential to achieving scientifically and societally important aims that cannot be realized without human participants.
- The principle of beneficence imposes a duty to benefit others and, in research ethics, to maximize benefits. Human research is intended to produce benefits for the participants themselves, to other individuals or to society as a whole, or for the advancement of knowledge.

### **Free and Informed Consent**

Researchers' respect for human dignity is conveyed, in part, by adhering to the following ethical standards for free and informed consent that are aimed at protecting human participants.

- Research shall begin only if potential participants, or authorized third parties, have been provided the opportunity to give free, full and informed consent about participation and their free and informed consent has been given and is maintained throughout their participation in the research.
- Free and informed consent must be voluntarily given without manipulation, undue influence, or coercion.
- Subject to all applicable legislative and regulatory requirements, research involving emergency health situations shall be conducted only if it addresses the emergency needs of individuals involved, and then only in accordance with criteria established in advance of such research by the REB.
- In research studies which include randomization or blinding in clinical trials, neither the research participants, nor those responsible for their

care know which treatment the participants are receiving before the project begins. Such research will not be regarded as a waiver or alteration of the requirement for consent if the participants are informed of the probability of being randomly assigned to one part of the study or another.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

- The inherent dignity and autonomy of human research participants is the ethical basis of the respect for the privacy of research participants. Privacy is a fundamental value, perceived by many as essential for the protection and promotion of human dignity.
- Researchers who wish to utilize information that falls under Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act) (see especially Section 42 'Disclosure for research or statistical purposes') shall provide documentation to the REB of approval to access such information by the College Divisional Head responsible for the records. REB approval does not constitute FOIP approval.

### **Inclusive Research**

Researchers shall not exclude prospective or actual research participants because of such attributes as culture, religion, race, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, sex or age, unless there is a valid reason for doing so.

### **Research Ethics Board**

The College has an agreement with the Red Deer College Research Ethics Board to conduct our research ethics reviews.

Projects conducted by external researchers who have documented prior institutional ethical review board approval from outside the College who access College resources (including personnel, equipment, programs, or students) are reviewed by the College for institutional, administrative and operational purposes to help ensure that local issues and values are taken into account.

### Authority of the REB

- The Red Deer College REB will act as the College REB for internal research. The REB is to approve, reject, propose modifications to, or terminate any proposed or ongoing research involving human participants, which is conducted under the aegis of the College, using the Tri-Council Policy as the standard. Depending on the location of the research and other parties involved additional review may be required.
- The College remains responsible for the ethical acceptability and ethical conduct of research undertaken within its jurisdiction or under its auspices irrespective of where the research is conducted.
- The College may refuse to allow certain research within the jurisdiction, even though the REB found it ethically acceptable.
- In the event that actions are taken by researcher(s) which are contrary to the College Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants Policy or to the policies of the Red Deer College REB, the College Applied Research Office is responsible for suspending the project and for all communications regarding the suspension to the researcher, the respective REB and any funding agencies.
- The College will accept the review of other institutions REBs constituted under the Tri-Council Policy Statement if it so wishes. The approval of such research will take place through procedures established by the College Applied Research Office.

### **Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada**

The College adheres to the minimum standards for research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis and any other Aboriginal peoples of Canada, and adopts the guidelines in letter and spirit of the Tri-Council Policy Statement.

#### **Definitions:**

**Research:** involves a systematic investigation to establish facts, principles or generalizable knowledge using an established method.

#### **Related Information:**

- [Academic Freedom Policy](#)
- [Applied Research and the Promotion of Innovation Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [Integrity in Research and Scholarship Policy](#)

#### **Related Procedures:**

- [Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants Procedure](#)

#### **Next Review Date:**

December 2015

#### **Revision History:**

January 2013: New  
August 2013: update for document links and branding  
November 2014: update for change in policy administrator and document links