

**Terms of Reference
Research Ethics Board – Nova Scotia Agricultural College
December 2008**

1. Introduction

NSAC has implemented a formalized process for the review of research projects using human subjects. This review is based on the four principles of ethical interaction which include:

- the respect for persons,
- non-maleficence (doing no harm to others),
- beneficence (doing good to others), and
- a just distribution of benefits and burdens.

Consistent with the Federal Granting Agencies Memorandum of Understanding, the President of NSAC has established a Human Research Ethics Board, hereafter referred to as the REB. At NSAC, the REB is appointed by, and reports to, the President.

All research which involves human subjects for purposes other than quality control (e.g., course evaluation forms) or day-to-day operational practices of the university must be reviewed by the NSAC REB. In addition, NSAC researchers involved in collaborative projects in which another party conducts research with human subjects must ensure that the work is done in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. This may, but will not necessarily, require review by the NSAC REB.

This NSAC Policy allows NSAC faculty and students doing scholarly research using human subjects to continue to receive funding from the national funding agencies (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research).

2. Mandate & Authority

The mandate of the REB is to:

- review all research proposals that involve human subjects in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans;
- meet on a regular basis;
- monitor approved research proposals;
- communicate and educate the NSAC community regarding research ethics; and
- recommend to the President appropriate REB membership, terms of reference and ethics review policy consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

The REB has the authority to prevent and stop research projects not complying with

NSAC ethics policy in accordance with procedures outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This should be done in consultation with the Office of Research & Graduate Studies.

3. Membership

- at least three members of the NSAC faculty with broad expertise in the area, one of whom will serve as the Chair of the REB
- one person with sufficient knowledge in the field of ethics
- one person who is a lawyer (but not the institutional legal counsel)
- one community member
- one NSAC graduate student

Appointments are for a three year term with the exception of the student member, who will be appointed for the academic year. Membership will be staggered to ensure continuity.

4. Member Responsibilities

The Chair:

- calls and chairs meetings of the REB
- maintains and coordinates communication with REB members and with the Research and Graduate Studies Office
- communicates REB decisions to the researcher
- recommends experts to the REB as needed to supply expertise in specific areas
- initiates information and educational sessions for the campus community
- ensures that the official copies of REB minutes and decisions are sent to the Research and Graduate Studies Office for filing purposes
- ensures the guidelines posted on the website are reviewed regularly and the documents kept up to date

Vice Chair:

- will assume the responsibilities of the Chair in his/her absence

The Members of the Board:

- attend all meetings of the Board
- read all submissions prior to the meeting
- contribute to the discussion of the submission in an informed and unbiased manner
- provide guidance to the Board based on his/her designated role on the Board (for example, as the ethicist, a colleague with an understanding of the research and/or teaching environment)
- ensure that there is consistency in the decisions taken by the REB

- announce all conflicts of interests
- work together to carry out the full mandate of the REB

5. Operation

The REB will schedule monthly review meetings normally within two weeks of the submission deadline. Meetings will not be scheduled for July and August unless exceptional circumstances warrant (e.g in the case of adverse events or substantial changes to a previously approved submission due to unforeseen events). Monthly submission deadlines will be posted on the website annually.

The REB meetings will normally occur in a face to face format with all members present. Hence the Chair will:

- ensure that the full REB will be present for all meetings where a proposal will be reviewed.
- where due to extenuating circumstances the full REB can not meet, a quorum of 4 members will be sufficient to allow a meeting to proceed. Where a review meeting is conducted in the absence of one or more of the non-NSAC members, then the Chair must consult with the members who were absent. If concern or disagreement is evident, the decision will be delayed until the next meeting of the full Board. At least one subject matter specialist must be in attendance.

6. Proposal Review & Monitoring

The REB has the authority to use both delegated and full reviews. Consistent with the Tri-Council Policy, NSAC subscribes to the concept of proportionate review according to risk.

Proponents should assume that full Reviews will be used to evaluate all new submissions and previously approved proposals where a significant change to the survey protocol is to be implemented.

Refer to the Guidelines for Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects posted on NSAC's website under Research and Graduate Studies for details on the review process.

6.1 Delegated Reviews

Delegated Reviews will be conducted at the discretion of the Board. Revisions to submissions and submissions that have undergone multi-institutional review may be subject to delegated review. Additionally, delegated reviews will be used:

- 1) to assess undergraduate submissions involving only minimal risk
- 2) to approve minor changes made by the researcher at the request of the REB

3) to ratify course based research proposals involving only minimal risk

The Chair will review the submission and if the project is only minimal risk, then the Chair and another Board member will be responsible for approving the submission. A copy of the submission will be sent to all Board members who have the option to provide input into the decision. The Chair will report the decision to the Board at the next meeting.

Either the Chair or the other Board member may recommend that the proposal be reviewed as a full proposal at the next Board meeting. Due to time constraints from receipt of the submission to the date of the next meeting, the Chair or the Board member must be prepared to state within two days of receiving the submission that he/she feels the submission requires full Board approval. This allows sufficient time for the Board to read the submission before the next meeting.

The recommendations arising out of delegated reviews will be taken to the next meeting of the full REB to allow the REB to monitor the decisions made on its behalf.

6.1.1 Delegated Course Project Review

Research projects conducted as part of course work (undergraduate) will be reviewed by either the Social Science Course Project Review Group or the Sensory/Biological Course Project Review Group. The Social Science Course Project Review Group will be chaired by a NSAC faculty member of the REB. This group will consist of at least two other members who have a background in social science research. The Sensory/Biology Course Project Review Group will be chaired by a NSAC faculty member who has a background in nutrition, food chemistry, edible horticulture or equivalent. He/she is appointed by NSAC's REB and has a background in research ethics. All course project group members will receive training in research ethics involving human subjects. All undergraduate projects will be submitted to the Chair of NSAC's REB via the REB Secretariat. The Chair will circulate the documents to the appropriate review group.

6.2 Approval in Principle

In cases where a research proponent would like funds released from a research account that will be used for a project involving human subjects, an "Approval in Principle" procedure will be made available by the REB.

6.3 Process for Tracking and Monitoring

The REB will ensure that all approved research projects involving human subjects will be monitored in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy.

For minimal risk projects, proponents are required to submit a final report according to the guidelines provided by the REB on the Office of Research & Graduate Studies

website. For other projects, the REB will assign a monitoring procedure on a case-by-case basis. This may involve other NSAC staff as required.