

**St. Thomas University
Research Ethics Board
Annual Report 2021-2022**

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Research Ethics Board Annual Report 2021-2022

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1. Responsibilities of the Research Ethics Board

Consistent with the responsibility requirements established in the Research Ethics Board Policy (approved by Senate, 2016), this report summarizes the responsibilities and activities of the REB from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

The responsibilities of the St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board (REB) are outlined in Article 1.2 of the St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board Policy (see Appendix A). It reads as follows:

“The St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board (REB) is responsible to the President through the Associate Vice-President (Research) of St. Thomas University for:

- developing policies regarding ethical issues relating to the use of human participants in research;
- reviewing all protocols requiring the participation of human participants for ethical approval;
- reviewing annually all policies regarding ethical issues relating to the use of human participants in research projects to ensure that policies remain current;
- dealing with matters concerned with human-based research referred to the REB by the President or their designate of STU;
- monitoring ongoing research and terminating any project that does not conform to ethical standards;
- responding to inquiries from external agencies with responsibility to monitor ethics review procedures at the University;
- preparing an annual report for submission to the President or their designate;
- participating in continuing education matters relating to ethics and the use of human participants;
- organizing educational outreach opportunities for members of the STU community in matters relating to research ethics.

The policies and practices adopted by the STU REB will be consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (current version).”

2. Research Ethics Board Members, 2021-2022

<i>Member</i>	<i>Representation</i>	<i>Expiration of Appointment</i>
Nick Sehl	Community Rep	June 30, 2022
Donna Curtis Maillet	Community Rep	June 30, 2024
Stephen Pidwysocky	Criminology/Criminal Justice	April 30, 2022
Linda Caissie	Gerontology	December 31, 2022
Renee Bourgoïn	Education	December 31, 2022
Lisa Mitchell	Education	January 20, 2023
Clive Baldwin, Chair	Social Work	June 30, 2024

Changes to membership

Stephen Pidwysocky finished in April 2022.

Clive Baldwin had his term renewed as Chair until June 30, 2024.

Donna Curtis Maillet was re-appointed to the Board as a community representative until June 30, 2024

Nick Sehl finished his term June 30, 2022.

3 General information

The University endorses the ethical principles cited in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and has mandated its Research Ethics Board (REB) to ensure that all research investigations involving human participants are in compliance with the Statement.

Scope of REB Review

The STU REB has jurisdiction over all STU Research involving human participants. As per the REB Policy (see Preamble), “STU Research” is that which is conducted:

- by members of the STU community (including faculty, students, and staff);
- by researchers in formal collaboration with STU members (e.g. co-investigator from another university or organization); or
- at STU or otherwise through the STU community (e.g. recruitment from STU community).

All STU Research which involves human participants must have ethical approval from the REB prior to commencement. In the case of undergraduate research that does not pose more than minimum risk to participants, ethics approval may be granted by a research ethics committee at the departmental or program level, as per Section 2.7 of the REB Senate Policy (2016).

4 Activities of the REB: July 1, 2021– June 30, 2022

1) Review of research ethics applications and management of active files

A central activity of the REB is reviewing research ethics applications presented by STU researchers and those wishing to conduct research within the STU community. All such research involving human participants must be approved by the REB before it can commence.

During the last year, the REB reviewed and 32 files, 28 were approved, the Board requested further information or revisions to the application from four applicants, but either received no reply or the project was placed on hold. Researchers reported 16 studies concluded and had their files closed and 41 files were renewed for another year.

The REB had 69 active research files as of June 30, which includes the administrative work of renewing and closing existing files, as well as ongoing consultation with researchers involved in existing projects.

Ten requests for amendments were submitted and approved.

Two applications submitted were returned to the department for approval because they were student led research projects and submitted as below minimal risk.

There has been an uptick in the number of enquires to the REB regarding the necessity to submit student thesis proposals for REB review and from faculty about current and future research proposals. We have not, until now, made official note of such enquiries but will look to do so in the future.

2. Delegated review.

STU has reciprocal arrangements with UNB regarding ethical approval of research proposals. This does not extend currently to other Universities. Following multiple requests for ethics approval from researchers from other Universities already with ethics approval from their home institution, the REB decided that such applications need only go to the REB meetings if the two delegated REB reviewers identified outstanding ethical issues or STU-related ethical issues.

3. Policies and procedures

The Board discussed and agreed a policy on MSW student applications.

The Board reviewed and revised the REB policy (Approved 2016) and has submitted the revised version to the AVP Research for consideration at the Senate Research Committee.

Progress has been made on shaping a review process for the REB. Dr Andrea Trenholm presented on Appreciative Inquiry and a draft framework for further discussion has been prepared.

4. The TCPS2 (2018): Professional Development

As this document guides all activities, policies, and procedures of the REB, measures are taken each year to ensure familiarity and compliance with the Policy Statement. These include:

CORE Tutorial Certification

All members of the STU REB are required to complete the TCPS2 CORE (Course on Research Ethics) tutorial and submit completion certificates to the Office of Research Services. This has been updated to CORE22, and all REB members have been encouraged to complete the new course.

Following, the June 2016 changes to the REB Senate policy that require the closure of all REB files that have been active for five years or more, two researchers were contacted and asked to reapply with updated documentation.

4.2 Professional Development

The REB Coordinator completed Gender-Based Analysis Plus training, Bias in Peer Review training and attended the CAREB conference online with three Board members.

5. Plans for REB in 2022-2023

5.1 Review of research ethics applications and management of active files

The REB will continue the work of reviewing research files and consulting with STU researchers. As of July 13, 2021, Dr Clive Baldwin, Social Work, was re-appointed as Chair of the Board.

5.2 Recruitment of a replacement member for the committee.

The Committee is currently dominated by the social sciences. Recruitment for the replacement member will thus focus on the arts and humanities. Further, due to the number and frequency of applications from the Department of Psychology, it would be helpful to have a member of the Board from that Department. With Stephen Pidwysocky and Nick Sehl completing their terms, the REB is operating on a minimum number of members. Three further members will complete their terms in Dec 2022 and Jan 2023. It is therefore imperative that new members be recruited or serving members be allowed to renew their terms. Nick Sehl, Renée Bourgoïn, and Linda Caissie have all requested that their terms be renewed.

5.3 TCPS2 (2014) Compliance

As part of the REB's annual efforts to ensure compliance with the TCPS2 (2018), a number of review and revision processes are planned for the 2021-2022 year. These include the ongoing development and maintenance of the REB website and online application form. Best practices continue to be recorded and developed alongside research ethics resources.

6 Educational Activities & Professional Development

The REB plans to continue to provide opportunities for ethics education through a variety of activities:

6.1 Preparation of Interpretation Documents

In response to frequently asked questions from STU researchers, the REB will continue its efforts to provide online resources for some of the more common terms and questions found concerning the TCPS2 (2014). Resources are posted on the ethics section of the STU website.

6.2 Presentation at 2022-2023 Chairs & Directors and AMC Meetings

Prior to Covid, it was regular practice for the REB Chair to present to the Departmental Chairs & Directors at one of their monthly meetings (preferably in the Fall term), as well as the administrative teams at an AMC meeting. This has not happened for the last two years. It is strongly recommended that ongoing efforts are made to continue REB education at the upper administrative and faculty levels.

6.3 Training Seminar/Workshop

It has also been a regular practice over the past few years for the REB to organize educational seminars and workshops for the STU community. This year, the Chair of the Board has presented on research ethics to the Dept of Sociology honours student seminar, the Dept of Psychology honours student seminar, the School of Social Work students on social action placements, and worked with the Department of Economics in their departmental approval of student thesis proposals.

6.4 CAREB and CARA Conferences Attendance

In keeping with past practice, participation at both the regional and national research ethics conferences will be encouraged for the REB Chair, REB Coordinator, and all REB members (funds permitting).

6.5 Modernization and Documentation of REB Processes

Work is continuing with Josh Leslie of Stewardly, a social purpose business in the human subjects research administration field, to streamline the processing and review of submissions.

The current jotform used for REB applications is continually monitored and amended and further guidance on making REB applications will be provided if required.

The Board discussed and agreed a policy on MSW student applications requiring all MSW thesis proposals that involve human subjects to be reviewed by the REB following sign off from the thesis supervisor in the School of Social Work.

7. Departmental Reviews

Psychology:

- 1) Supervisor Dr. Sandra Thomson. Student: Precious-Gift Obiora Project title: Examining the effects of environmental context change on face recognition.
- 2) Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Thomson. Student: Caitlyn Levesque-Brown, Project title: The effects of naturalist gesture on the recall of event-related details.
- 3) Supervisor: Dr. Tyler Bancroft. Student: Tabatha Blaney-Gale, Project title: Is the word “not” more difficult to remember? Investigating negation-related memory deficit.

Economics:

- 1) Supervisor Dr Fariba Solati. Student: Maria Guerrero. Project title: Women in the informal market of Ecuador.