

**St. Thomas University  
Research Ethics Board  
Annual Report 2016-2017**

Prepared by  
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&  
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## **Research Ethics Board Annual Report 2016-2017**

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 01, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

### **Responsibilities of the Research Ethics Board**

(Article 1.2, St. Thomas University Research Ethics Board Policy)

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).

### **Research Ethics Board Members, 2016-2017**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Representation</b>	<b>Expiration of Appointment</b>
Brian Carty	Social Work	April 30, 2017
Amanda DiPaolo*	Human Rights	June 30, 2019
Arielle Dylan*	Social Work	June 30, 2019
Erin Fredericks	Sociology	June 30, 2018
Claire Goggin	Criminology	June 30, 2018
Sharon Murray	Education	June 30, 2018
Karla O'Regan, Chair	Criminology	June 30, 2018
Alanna Palmer	Community	Sept 30, 2017
Thomas Parkhill	Religious Studies	June 30, 2017
Nicholas Sehl	Community Rep	Sept 30, 2020
Ray Williams	Education	April 30, 2017

*\* Currently on temporary or permanent medical leave*

### **New Members as of July 1, 2017:**

Beth Lyons (Community Rep) – for a three-year term expiring June 30, 2020

Martin Kutnowski (Fine Arts) – for a three-year term expiring June 30, 2020

Mihailo Perunovic (Psychology) – for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2021

Alanna Palmer, our Community Representative finished her second term on the board after six very productive years. Alanna was known for her prioritization of participant rights and her human rights background.

## **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.

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 proceeds only after ethical approval has been granted by the REB or, in the case of undergraduate research that does not pose more than minimum risk to participants, by a research ethics committee at the departmental or program level, as per Section 2.7 of the REB Senate Policy (2016).

## **Activities of the REB: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017**

### **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 approved 20 files**. Researchers reported **27 studies concluded** and had their files closed. **2 adverse events were reported** (both under current investigation) and **26 files were renewed** for another year.

The REB had **57 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.

### **2) The TCPS2 (2014): Professional Development**

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

#### *CORE Tutorial Certification*

Given how essential it is that all REB members become intimately familiar with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, as was implemented last year, 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. Although a revised CORE tutorial has not yet been released for the new version of the TCPS2 (2014), all REB members will renew their completion certificates if/when a new tutorial becomes available.

### *Senate Research Ethics Board Policy Update – Implementation Measures*

Following amendments to the Senate Research Ethics Board Policy in June 2016, all applications for ethics approval of studies deemed to be above minimal risk must be accompanied by a CORE certificate before review can begin. Also, pursuant to the changes to the Senate policy, all researchers with active for five years or more were contacted and asked to reapply with updated documentation.

### *Professional Development*

The REB Coordinator attended the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (Halifax, May 2016). This learning was shared with the full REB and permission was obtained to use posters featuring current research ethics topics.

The REB Coordinator is finishing her studies in a 2-year certification course offered through the Canadian Association for Research Administrators. Several sections of this course relate to research ethics, and the learning outcomes will serve both the Coordinator, the REB and the institution at large. Coursework will end in March 2018.

St. Thomas hosted the annual fall regional conference, CARA East/CAREB Atlantic 2016, at which both the REB Chair and Coordinator presented and facilitated sessions on research ethics. It was well attended by representatives from across the Maritimes and has led to several valuable inter-institutional collaborations and sharing of knowledge and expertise.

### **3) Educational Outreach to STU Community**

One of the key responsibilities of the STU REB, as outlined in Article 1.1 of the STU REB Senate Policy, is the participation and development of continuing education opportunities for the STU community. As part of this mandate, the REB Chair attended the meetings of the Department Chairs (Social Sciences, Humanities) in November, 2016 to discuss the role of the REB and its activities. Particular focus was placed on the scope and requirements of departmental ethics review committees. These points were summarized on a handout which was distributed at the meeting and made available electronically to the Dean for further reference.

The REB also hosted an information session and walk-thru of the new STU REB application form. The form was then beta-tested with several researchers who provided feedback for improvements to the form.

The REB Chair attended the honours research seminars for Criminology and Psychology in the fall of 2016 to discuss research ethics and the REB approval process.

A TCPS-2 interpretation document was released by the Panel on Research Ethics in Spring 2017 which now **exempts student research activities which are below minimal risk and conducted solely for pedagogical purposes from REB review**. Various efforts were undertaken to raise awareness about this change.

## **Plans for REB in 2017-2018**

### **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. To facilitate this process, a “reviewer checklist” is being updated to be better aligned with the new REB application form. A new guide is being designed to direct individual REB members in their review of files as well as provide direction for REB discussions of ethics issues during file reviews at the Board level.

### **2) TCPS2 (2014) Compliance**

As part of the REB’s annual efforts to ensure compliance with the TCPS2 (2014), a number of review and revision processes are planned for the 2017-2018 year. These include amendments to the REB Senate Policy document, the REB application form, and the REB’s Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs). In addition to adhering to the TCPS2 (2014) requirements, this review process should also increase St. Thomas University’s conformity to national research ethics practices and procedures.

### **3) Educational Activities & Professional Development**

The REB plans to provide further opportunities for ethics education for its Board members as well as other members of the STU community through a variety of activities:

#### Presentation at the Fall, 2017 Chairs Meeting and January 2018 AMC Meeting

Continuing with the practice established in past years, the REB Chair will once again request the opportunity to present to the Departmental Chairs at one of their monthly meetings in the Fall term.

#### Preparation of Interpretation Documents

In response to a number of 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.

#### Winter REB and STU Researcher Training Workshop

A workshop is planned for February 2018, titled “Research ethics, images, and social media” by Katie Warfield, Journalism & Communication Studies and Director of The Visual Media Workshop at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Two morning sessions will be for Faculty and the afternoon sessions will be REB training. The cost to bring Katie to New Brunswick will be shared with Mount Allison University, who is hosting her on her second day to deliver a similar workshop.

#### Collaborative Ethics Policy with Journalism

In collaboration with the Acting Journalism Chair Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, the and the Office of Research Services the REB continues to develop protocols for ethical review of journalism related applications.

### CAREB and CARA Conferences Attendance

As in past years, participation at both the CAREB 2017/2018 conferences will be encouraged among all REB members (funds permitting).

### Modernization and Documentation of REB Processes

Work is planned for the Summer of 2017 with Josh Leslie of Stewardly, to document all processes relating to the application and review of submissions. Stewardly is a social purpose business in the human subjects research administration field. Stewardly provides services and Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions for researchers, research ethics boards (REBs) and REB administrators, research organization leadership and research administrators. Work with Stewardly will also lead to the implementation of an online application form and ideally, the formalization of a one-year pilot program for multi-jurisdictional research review to be co-led by STU and UPEI REBs (to reduce administrative burden and streamline review of low-risk studies looking to recruit on more than one Atlantic Canadian campus).

### **4) REB Administration**

To facilitate a more equitable and efficient file review process, the REB continues to seek volunteer for the position of “Vice-Chair” in this upcoming year. This is a position that is common to many other REBs in Canada and ensures a more coherent transition process between Chair terms. Workload continues to be a deterring factor. In response, the REB Chair has submitted a request to the Academic Vice-President for course release, as outlined in Article 17 in the full-time Faculty Collective Agreement.