

The “REC-P” Review Process

Research Ethics Committee-Psychology (REC-P)
ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE
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Preamble

The SLC Research Ethics Board (SLC-REB) is required to review research¹ involving human participants conducted under the auspices of St. Lawrence College. The Research Ethics Committee – Psychology (REC-P) is a subcommittee of the SLC-REB. It is delegated its authority to review Behavioural Psychology students thesis research that poses no greater than minimal risk to their participants. The TCPS2 defines minimal risk as “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.”

REC-P Membership

The REC-P consists of two Co-Chairs and two members. At least one member of the REC-P is a standing member of the SLC REB and the other members are faculty member from the Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology Program or a cognate college program. The REC-P is supported by the Research Services Office: all research submissions, review decisions, revisions, approval letters, and project termination forms are submitted through the Research Services Office.

What does the REC-P do?

The REC-P reviews the student research proposals for any areas of ethical concern. Typically, the ethical review does not include a review of the methodology for the project. However, on occasion, ethical concerns may coincide with underlying methodological issues. The ethical review will evaluate:

- voluntary consent process (including consent forms and steps to ensure that the voluntary nature of participation is protected by the researcher);
- any recruitment scripts (e.g., posters, emails);
- assessment of risk versus benefits for the participants;

¹ The TCPS2 defines research as “an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation.”

- mitigation of any risks for participants;
- whether the research involves participants who might be vulnerable due to their situation or circumstances;
- confidentiality & privacy;
- data safeguarding measures; and
- potential conflicts of interest.

The REC-P Application Form, Informed Consent Form(s), and Thesis Proposal

Will be reviewed to ensure that:

1. There is a clear statement of purpose for the research (i.e., what is the research question or hypothesis?).
2. There is a clear description on the participants and how they will be recruited to the research study.
3. The research method has been described in detail, including how the data will be collected and analyzed.
4. The level of risk to the participants has been identified clearly and the plans for how risk(s) will be mitigated/minimized, including plans to safeguard data and protect participants' privacy and confidentiality throughout the life cycle of data retention.
5. The Informed Consent Form is written in lay language, is clear, and concise.

The REC-P Process

The review of the REC-P applications is completed between September and November over an 8-week period. During review cycles, students submit their applications to the Research Services office, the applications are distributed and reviewed, and decisions are rendered during a REC-P meeting. After review, a decision letter will then be sent to the student. Revisions requested by the REC-P are processed through the Research Services Office via email. Once all of the revisions are complete, a final Letter of Approval is issued by the Co-Chair of the REC-P. Research may only begin once the

Letter of Approval is received. The specific steps in the review process are outlined below.

1. Submission to Research Services Office:

Once the college supervisor gives their approval, the application can be submitted. Students must include all of the following in their application package:

- (1) REC-P application
- (2) Thesis proposal
- (3) Informed Consent Form(s) and Child Assent Form (if applicable).
- (4) Measurement tools
- (5) Any other supporting documents (e.g., recruitment materials, telephone scripts, email scripts)

The application package must be submitted to the Research Services Office via email. To be reviewed during the week, applications must be received before Monday at noon. Late applications received after that time will be accepted for review in the *following* week. The last week for submission is usually the second week in November. Students must plan accordingly.

Application should be emailed to Jeremy Butler, Research Ethics Officer, at JButler@sl.on.ca. The student's college **supervisor should be copied on all emails to the Research Services Office.** Each application is assigned a number (i.e. 20XX-REC01) and confirmation of receipt of the application is emailed to the student.

2. Distribution of application to REC-P members:

The applications are distributed to the reviewers along with the 'reviewer package'.

3. Review of application:

If any student research proposal poses greater than minimal risk, the REC-P Committee members may recommend having the application sent to the SLC-REB for full board review. Typically, using the checklists, REC-P applications are reviewed by REC-P Committee members. The committee on each campus meets to discuss the application and reach a consensus about the decision and possible recommendations to students.

4. REC-P Committee decision feedback to student:

The Research Services Office will email the REC-P Committee decision and recommendations to the student (with a copy to the supervisor). There are three decisions that can be rendered:

- a. **Approved** – no revisions are necessary, approval letter is issued
- b. **Pending** – revisions must be made to the application, approved by the supervisor and re-submitted to the Research Services Office (where they will be verified)
- c. **Not approved** – major revisions are needed

5. Revision of application:

The student can then modify and revise their application as requested. **All revisions must be reviewed by the supervisor.** Revisions must be highlighted using ALL CAPS in the PDF REC-P Application. Revisions to the consent form or other supporting documents should be highlighted in yellow. Deletions in Word docs should be indicated with a ~~strikethrough~~ (use of track change mode in Word is advisable).

6. Re-Submission of revised application by student:

All resubmissions must be reviewed and approved by the student's college supervisor. The student's college supervisor must also be copied on all emails to the Research Services Office. The revised application is re-submitted by the student to Jeremy Butler in the Research Services Office. Please always reference your REC-P research file number (i.e., YEAR-REC-01) in the email. Revisions can be submitted at any time and will be reviewed in a timely manner as they are received. Revisions are verified by the Research Services Office (RSO) and forwarded to the REC-P for final review. If further clarification or further changes are required, the student and supervisor will be informed via email.

7. Final approval:

Once all of the required changes are confirmed by the RSO, the student and supervisor will be issued a REC-P Letter of Approval. Only after you have received the REC-P Letter of Approval for your proposed research project may you begin recruitment of your participants (i.e., assuming no other REB approvals are required).

8. Amendments to Approved Research Protocols:

If you require to make any changes to your approved research protocol, then you will be required to submit an Amendment Request Form to the REC-P. Email the completed Request for Amendment Form and supporting documents (if any) to the Research Services Office. All research activity must stop until the Amendment Request is approved. If approved, you will receive a REC-P Letter of Approval for the requested amendment. Once approved you can implement the proposed change(s) and continue with your research.

9. Research Completion Report:

Once your research is complete. That is to say, you have finished collecting and analyzing the data and you have no further contact with your participants. Students must submit an end-of-study report or [SLC-REB Termination Completion Form](#) to the Research Services Office, Jeremy Butler, at JButler@sl.on.ca and copy your supervisor on this email.

10. Thesis Research Completion:

Your data collection is completed, your data is analyzed, you have submitted the Termination Completion Form and closed your REC-P research file, and you have written and submitted your thesis to your supervisor to be graded:

- Ensure that any identifiable data and consent forms are securely stored for the duration of your required retention period.



Helpful Tips:

- Make sure that all of the information provided in your thesis proposal, REC-P application, and Consent Forms is consistent across documents.
- Check all of your documents for grammatical errors. Grammatical errors can slow down the review process substantially.

REC-P application tips:

- Use current version of the REC-P Application Form.
- Provide as much detail as possible about the intervention procedures (e.g. time, place, repeats, duration, and a description of the intervention itself).
- Provide detail of what is required of the participants (e.g., activities, tests, questionnaires).
- Provide information on the tools you will be using to assess how well the intervention is working.

- Provide detailed information on the data collection methods and statistics being used to analyze the data once it is collected.
- Provide details on how you will mitigate any risks to the participant.
- Be sure to include a safety/emergency plan (how to manage problems that may arise, supervision, etc.) concerning both the participants and the student researcher.
- The starting date **must be** after ethics approval is obtained. An approximation is allowed.
- Submit a clean copy of your work for review

Informed consent tips:

- Use the REC-P Guideline for Consent.
- Use available consent templates found in the BPSYC Applied Thesis Manual.
- Use clear and concise language – you need to remember the target audience and gear the language of the consent to this population. In Word documents you can use the [Flesch-Kincaid](#) Grade Level to ascertain the readability level of the document. Generally, a grade-8 reading level is often required depending on your participant population.
- Do not overstate the benefits of the research – it “might” help the participants and it “might” help in the future (e.g., “participant may benefit indirectly by knowing that they helped contribute to...” the advancement of understanding in a specific area of research or results from the research may go to guiding policy makers, improving services).