Research Ethics Annual Report 2015-16

Research Ethics, Dalhousie University

Research Ethics advances the strategic objectives of Dalhousie Research Services by providing knowledgeable guidance and timely research ethics review and oversight of research involving humans.

Catherine Connors, Director
July 2016
Annual Report 2015/16

Research Ethics, Dalhousie University

Fast Facts

- 3,000+ reviews (306 new submissions, 174 amendments, 292 continuing reviews, 323 final reports)
- 18 day average turnaround time for initial REB review to researchers
- 2 Research Ethics Boards (Health Sciences, Social Sciences & Humanities)
- 22 Board meetings per year
- 28 Board members (average of 2 new projects for each REB member to review each month)
- 1,101 researchers completed the TCPS online course on research ethics
- 37% of new projects reviewed are funded research (20% are tri-agency funded)

Summary

Research Ethics at Dalhousie University is managed with 2.2 full-time equivalent staff members: a director (80%), a manager (40%) and an administrative coordinator (100%). The staff coordinates and supports the work of two Research Ethics Boards: Health Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities. There are 22 Board meetings scheduled each year and 28 Board members (22 of whom are members of the University; 6 are community members). The Research Ethics Boards and administrative staff conducted over 3,000 reviews, including review of 306 new research projects, 174 amendments, 292 continuing reviews and 323 final reports during the past year. Research Ethics authorized release of funds agreements with researchers to permit research-related activity to proceed prior to the requirement for research ethics review; the office also coordinated the peer review process on behalf of the University Committee on Laboratory Animals.

This report offers an overview of the activity of Research Ethics over this reporting period, from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

Core Principles:
Respect for Persons
Concern for Welfare
Justice
Appointments

There was a change in the leadership of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board. Dr. Valerie Trifts (Rowe School of Business) ended her term as chair in June and Dr. Karen Beazley (School of Resource and Environmental Studies) was appointed to assume the chair in July. Dr. Brenda Beagan continued as chair of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board.

There was also a change in the staffing of the Research Ethics office. Sharon Gomes, administrative assistant with Research Ethics since the office was established in 2000, retired in December. Angela Hersey was appointed as administrative coordinator in January.
Accomplishments & Initiatives

**Updated REB submission documents** The REB chairs and director finalized new submission forms in July, including: application forms and supporting guidance, annual/final report forms, and fillable amendment request forms. A application new form was created for research involving secondary use of data to better help researchers and the Board consider the ethical implications of secondary use research. Consent form templates were also created as resource tools for researchers. Changes were communicated widely with researchers. Within the first month, 80% of new submissions were received on new forms.

**Options Overview for Electronic Submission and Review** The director prepared a discussion document for the Associate Vice President Research and the VPR team in May.

**Launched electronic submission and review** Electronic submission process was launched in September, meeting the University’s goal to achieve a paperless submission process by fall 2015. A supporting electronic review platform was also developed for REB reviewers.

**Working groups** The director was involved in working groups including: a U15 working group to examine opportunities for harmonized/coordinated ethics review among the U15; the Maritime SPOR (Strategy for Patient Oriented Research) ethics working group that developed a best practices document for REB review of projects involving secondary use of health-related data context of large administrative databases among the Maritime provinces.

Educational Activity

Research Ethics supported educational opportunities for Board members, staff and the research community. The director and the Research Ethics Board chairs were all involved in presentations and discussions regarding research ethics principles and the review process with members of the University research community, especially students.

Educational activities included:

- Presentations on research ethics to students and/or the University community.
- Invited speakers and webinars for REB members. For example, Information Technology Services and the University Librarian were invited to the Social Sciences and Humanities REB to discuss best practices in data security and privacy.
- Completion of the TCPS online Course on Research Ethics by all Board members.
- Researchers were encouraged to complete the TCPS online Course on Research Ethics; 1,101 Dalhousie researchers completed the course over the year; 3,760 researchers completed the tutorial since its inception in June 2011.
- REB member orientation program for incoming members.
Profile of New Research Ethics Submissions

**Board Assignment**

- Social Sciences and Humanities: 51%
- Health Sciences: 49%

**Proportionate Review (Full Board vs Delegated Review)**

- Full review: 14%
- Delegated review: 86%

**Researcher Profile**

- Faculty/Staff: 51%
- Student - Grad: 35%
- Student - U/Grad: 14%

**Review Summary**

- Two reviews: 72%
- Three or more reviews: 12%
- Approved as submitted: 11%
- Withdrawn: 5%

“We thank you for your valuable comments that will definitely enhance our study and mitigate any potential risks to participants.” (Faculty member)
Submissions by Faculty

“Thank you, as always, for the time you give to ensure the rigour and thoughtfulness of research involving humans at Dalhousie. I always find the preparation for the process an important opportunity to think through my work. The quick turnaround has been greatly appreciated.” (Faculty member)
### Health Sciences Research Ethics Board

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<th>Chair</th>
<th>Member 1</th>
<th>Member 2</th>
<th>Member 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda Beagan</td>
<td>Gord Gubitz</td>
<td>Sherry Stewart</td>
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<td>Martha Brillant</td>
<td>Tannis Jurgens</td>
<td>Julie Vandervoort</td>
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<td>Merle Emms</td>
<td>Michel Ladouceur</td>
<td>Lori Weeks</td>
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<td>Jacqueline Gahagan</td>
<td>Audrey Steenbeek</td>
<td>Swarna Weerasinghe</td>
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<td>Edward Gores</td>
<td>Sam Stewart</td>
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(*Membership as of March 31, 2016)

### Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board

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<td>Karen Beazley</td>
<td>Jeff Karabanow</td>
<td>Tracy Taylor-Helmick</td>
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<td>Scott Comber</td>
<td>Dennis Phillips</td>
<td>Grace Warner</td>
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<td>Steven Dukeshire</td>
<td>Matthew Schnurr</td>
<td>Cathie Watson</td>
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<td>Jean-Sebastien Guy</td>
<td>Don Sinclair</td>
<td>Diane Zwicker</td>
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<td>Stephanie Jones</td>
<td>Binod Sundararajan</td>
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