

These **course-based research guidelines** provide advice to Professors looking to determine whether research in their courses requires: (1) no REB review, (2) course-based REB review, or (3) full-form REB review. Several considerations help to determine which protocol is required for course-based research activities and the ethical procedures that need to be followed. These guidelines serve as a quick reference for course-based research. For further clarification, refer to the TCPS-2 2022 or consult the Nipissing University Research Ethics Board (NUREB).

What is Research?

The Secretariat for the Responsible Conduct of Research defines research as “an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation” ([TCPS-2, Article 2.1](#)).

Why have ethics review for course-based activities?

Research ethics review is limited to activities defined as “research” involving “human participants.” It includes course-based research activities, in which the primary purpose is pedagogical, but a possible risk is present to those recruited to participate in such activities, where such activities may appear indistinguishable from those that meet this Policy’s definition of research (Application of [Article 6.12](#)). Therefore, course-based activities may require an ethical review.

What kinds of course-based activities involving human participants require ethics approval?

Not all course-based activities involving human participants require ethics approval. Course assignments or activities that involve research participants from **outside of the classroom where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy require ethics approval** (see TCPS article 2.2 for definition). The assignment or activity may include all or some elements of the research process (e.g., recruitment, data collection, analysis, reporting). **If findings of the course-based research will be disseminated, in any manner, a full research review is required.** See below for a Decision Table.

What kinds of course-based activities involving human participants do not require ethics review?

Skills development in a client-based setting does not require ethics approval. This refers to skills that are considered standard practice within a profession e.g., observation, assessment, intervention, evaluation, or information-gathering (nurse to patient, teacher to student).

Research skills practice within the classroom between fellow students does not require ethics approval if: 1) the activities (e.g., in-class interviewing or focus groups) involve **no more than minimal risk** and 2) **do not involve deception**. Both conditions must be met. In addition, the findings from the practice activities cannot be shared outside the classroom.

The use of **publicly available data** (e.g., public datasets, observation in a setting where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy) does not require ethics review. However, in cases where **data are publicly available, but the specific population or culture from which that data arises is identifiable, the instructor has an ethical responsibility to engage with that population.** Therefore, although the project may not require REB review, researchers are required to engage with the population or their representatives during the research process (TCPS 2, Chapter 9).

Course-Based Ethics Protocol

A Course-Based ethics protocol is required when the course assignment or activity involves **no more than minimal risk** and **does not involve minors who lack decision making capacity, vulnerable populations, or deception**.

Minimal risk research is “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research are no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research”(TCPS-2.8).

A full form ethics application should be submitted if the research involves any of the conditions listed below:

- Participants from vulnerable populations which typically include persons with diminished capacities for consent or persons with limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities, and power.
- Participants who are minors with a diminished or a lack of capacity to provide consent.
- The research involves forms of deception.

The Course-Based Research Protocol may cover both full-class projects and individualized projects within the course. Instructors of graduate courses and honours seminar may submit a Course-Based Research Ethics application for research activities that primarily have pedagogical purpose. However, honours theses, MRPs, Masters theses, and dissertations require Full REB approval.

The Full-form protocol or Secondary Use of Data protocol is required:

If the course activity involves **a) greater than minimal risk, minors lacking decision making capacity, vulnerable populations, or deception, OR b) the findings from the activity will be disseminated outside the classroom** then the instructor must submit a full-form REB protocol application.

If the instructor is providing **data from another project** then a Secondary Use of Data Research Ethics Protocol must be submitted.

If the course-based research results are going to be **disseminated beyond the classroom** then a Secondary Use of Data REB protocol application shall be submitted with approval acquired **before** proceeding. Therefore, think about where you would like to disseminate your results prior to submitting a course-based research application to the REB. This also includes projects that are done in partnership with community groups or industry.

Supervisors of Honours Theses, MRPs, MA theses, or dissertations must submit the Full-form REB protocol application.

Renewals & Modifications of Course-Based Research Protocols

The approved Course-Based Ethics Protocol is renewable up to four times, provided that the project and the course do not change. Any changes to the project or course will require a new Course-Based Ethics Protocol. If there are minor or insignificant modifications made to the assignments (such a

minor change in a skills development exercise) that do not have an impact to the overall project, a new protocol submission is not necessary, but it may be necessary to communicate modifications to the Research Coordinator.

A request for modification to an approved protocol must be submitted if the instructor of the course changes. Proof of TCPS core 2022 certification is required from the new instructor. The NUREB Chair or a Vice-Chair may converse with the new instructor to ensure that they understand that the new instructor assumes responsibility for the ethical training and ethical conduct of the research outlined by the approved Course-Based Ethics Protocol.

Additional Considerations

Submitting a Data Management Plan: If a research project qualifies for no REB review, it is still necessary to follow Nipissing University's policies and procedures for the submission of data management plans.

Skills Development for Clients: if the activity is minimal risk and designed for the purpose of student skills development then it is critical to consider who owns the intellectual property (IP) for a research project. For instance, if students own the IP and could use the data to publish, then they must complete a full form ethics application.

Glossary of Key Terms

Publicly Available Information: Any existing stored documentary material, records, or publications, which may or may not include identifiable information, and that has no restrictions on its use or distribution, or that may be released under certain legal conditions (TCPS II, 2022).

Secondary Use: The use in research of information or human biological materials originally collected for a purpose other than the current research purpose (TCPS II, 2022).

Dissemination: A planned process to determine how and where research findings will be communicated to a particular audience for knowledge sharing and to influence decision-making (Wilson et al., 2010).

Closed vs. Open Setting: A closed setting is private and restricted, requiring permission to gain access to (e.g., a school), whereas an open setting is public (e.g., parks; Bell et al., 2023).

Full Form Review: A complete research ethics application. Three full-form applications currently exist, which includes an application for approval of a) Research Involving Human Participants, b) Research Based on Secondary Use of data, and c) Textual Analyses, Self-Study, Arts-Based or Arts-Informed Research.

Full Board Review: Involves the completion of a full form application that is reviewed by the entire research ethics board committee.

Decision Table for Course-Based Research Ethics Protocol

Dissemination of Findings	Level of Risk	Collection of Data	Use of Secondary Data	Observations in Public	REB Procedure
Dissemination outside of classroom setting	Above minimal risk research	Data collected from outside of classroom or in another closed setting	If secondary data is collected from another project	Interaction or intervention with public, external students, staff, or faculty	A Full Form REB (Research Involving Humans, Secondary Data Use, or Arts-Based)
Dissemination within classroom setting	Minimal risk research	Data collected from students inside of the classroom or in an open setting	If secondary data is used from another course-based project	Interaction or intervention with students within the classroom only	Course-Based REB
	Minimal risk skills development in client-based setting	Data collected in an open setting	If publicly available data is used with no existing restrictions on use	No public or student interaction or intervention	No REB

Use the NUREB form indicated on the righthand side of the highest row where any of the conditions are met. Dissemination must occur within the classroom for all course-based research, but the activity may still qualify for no ethics review if the remaining 4 conditions of the “No REB” row are met.

SUMMARY: WHICH NUREB FORM TO USE

Full-Form Ethics Application: One of the three full-form research ethics applications is required if any of the following applies: the research (1) involves dissemination outside of the classroom, (2) is above minimal risk, (3) includes original data collected outside of the classroom setting, (4) uses secondary data from another project, or (5) includes interactions or interventions with the public.

Course-Based Research Applications: To qualify for a course-based application, the research must avoid any of the conditions warranting a full-form application and must 1) be minimal risk, 2) only use secondary data if acquired from another course-based project, and 3) must only involve data collected from students inside the classroom or an open setting.

In-Class Research Activities without an Ethics Review: For research to qualify for the lack of an ethics review, the project must avoid any of the conditions warranting a course-based or a full-form application. In other words, to not necessitate an ethics review, the project must (1) **not** involve dissemination outside of the classroom, (2) be minimal risk, (3) be conducted in a closed setting, (4) **not** involve secondary data from another project, and (5) **not** involve student interactions or an intervention.