



Women's and Gender Studies
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GUIDE FOR ETHICS COMMITTEE REVIEW OF HUMAN RESEARCH

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The principles and procedures described here were first developed on the basis of existing guidelines in the Departments of Sociology and Anthropology and Psychology. The Women's and Gender Studies Research Ethics Committee (WGST-REC) gratefully acknowledges that foundation. We have based revisions largely on our experience with the course applications submitted by instructors and independent research projects submitted by students in WGST. These guidelines conform to the ethical principles incorporated into the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS-2 (2018).

These procedures were first created and approved at a meeting of the WGST-REC on April 16, 2004. They were approved by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (UW-REB) on May 5, 2004. They were revised in January 2011 and approved by the UW-REB in January 2011. Amendments to the forms and policies were carried out again in 2017 and 2019 with the approval of the UW-REB. They will apply to all research conducted by undergraduate students in Women's and Gender Studies courses. Decisions of the WGST-REC are in accordance with the policies of the Office of Research Ethics as passed by the REB, the TCPS2 and the Responsible Conduct of Research <https://rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/framework-cadre.html>.

Any subsequent changes to these procedures must be approved by the Women's and Gender Studies Advisory Committee, and by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (University REB).

All quotations and references are from the 3rd edition of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human. The TCPS-2 (2018) is available at <https://ethique.gc.ca/eng/documents/tcps2-2018-en-interactive-final.pdf>. You must successfully complete the TCPS2 introductory tutorial at <https://tcps2core.ca> and obtain your certificate before submitting your application.



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Women's and Gender Studies REB Mandate

The mandate of the Women's and Gender Studies Research Ethics Committee is to protect human subjects while **facilitating** and **furthering** ethical research. As defined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement, research is "defined as an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation" (TCPS-2, Article 1.a). As undergraduates learn to do research, we must ensure they learn and follow ethical research practices.

Ethical practices in social research involving human participants are:

Respectful of the dignity and privacy of human participants;

Voluntary, informed, and consensual;

Non-exploitative and transparent in its process (i.e., free of unwarranted deception);

Responsive to the needs of research participants, especially needs that arise in or that relate to the process of research; and

Responsible and reflexive – acknowledging, taking into account, and taking measures to minimize any foreseeable risks.

Terms of Reference

Scope of Ethics Review: All research involving humans as research participants must be reviewed by either the University REB or the WGST-REC. What requires review is research by Women's and Gender Studies undergraduates that involves experimental or ethnographic methods, questionnaires, interviews, or secondary use of data that are not in the public domain. Research involving human participants where the Principal Investigator is a faculty or staff member or where the project contains more than minimal risk, must be submitted to the University of Windsor main REB on University of Windsor REB forms. See below for further details.

(TCPS-2, Article 2.1, 2.2 – 2.6, 6.11).

The Women's and Gender Studies REB is comprised of three faculty members from the Women's and Gender Studies Advisory Committee, including at least one person from a social science discipline.



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Selection of Members: Members (and any necessary replacements) shall be nominated by the Women's and Gender Studies Advisory Committee and shall serve for staggered 2-year terms. Terms are renewable. Membership shall be reported to the University REB.

Other responsibilities: The WGST-REC will ensure that sessional instructors have access to and are aware of these policies.

Undergraduate Research: The Women's and Gender Studies REC shall review research conducted by undergraduate students when:

- 1) it is conducted as part of an undergraduate course offered by Women's and Gender Studies, and
- 2) it is not part of a faculty member's research program already subject to review by any other Ethics Board (TCPS-2, Article 6.1).

Parameters for Women's and Gender Studies Undergraduate Research Projects Involving Human Participants:

- 1) Consent will always be obtained in writing and all requirements of the University REB will be fulfilled.
- 2) Projects involving human participants who are unable to give informed consent or who are in a controlled institutional environment (e.g., mental health facility, prison, etc.) must apply to the main University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.
- 3) Projects involving more than minimal risk¹ must apply to the main University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.
- 4) No participants will receive compensation although a token of appreciation may be provided if appropriate.

Application and Decision-Making Procedures:

1. Applications

- A. For independent student projects and seminar courses we encourage the undergraduate researcher to make the application, but the supervisor or course

¹ "minimal risk" research is defined as 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." (TCPS2, 2018, p. 22)

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instructor must sign the final application.

Individual student applications will be cleared for the specific time period that is necessary to conduct the research as outlined in the application.

- B. For large generic² class projects (for several students or a whole class) the instructor will prepare the application and instruct students about ethical principles and procedures early in the term. The research may not begin until the WGST-REC or the University REB (if the application has been referred there) has cleared the protocol.

Applications for generic course projects (e.g. methods courses) will normally be approved for three years barring any change in the course instructor(s) or significant changes to the original protocol. **A new course instructor or changes that would require submitting an addendum must take the form of a new application.** After three years, course applications must be resubmitted for evaluation.

2. Submission

Students or Instructors will submit one electronic version of the WGST application form (found at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/wgst/ResearchEthics>) with attachments (scanned to ensure the files are virus free) to the Chair of the WGST-REC with an electronic copy to the Women's and Gender Studies email account (wgst@uwindsor.ca). In all cases this must be followed by one hard copy of the application signed by the course instructor or the faculty supervisor sent to the Women's and Gender Studies office (CHS 250). Applications should be sent to the Chair of the WGST-REC as soon as possible at the start of each term and at least four weeks before the research is to be started. Please remember that revisions may be required and that this will affect the speed of clearance.

The Application for Ethical Review Must Describe:

- The purpose and duration of the study.
- How research participants will be recruited.
- The methodology, including a copy of any written instruments to be used (e.g., survey questionnaires, interview schedules or guides).

² By "generic" we mean a course project that is set by the instructor where the method to be used is identical (e.g., a semi-structured interview of one individual who is over the age of 18) however the topic studied may or may not change according to the course content and the interests of the students with the approval of the instructor.



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- The process for obtaining consent, including a copy of any proposed information letter and consent form (see the simple sample consent form at the end of WGST-REC application form at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/wgst/ResearchEthics>).
- How data and participants' identities will be kept confidential.
- Possible benefits of the study for research participants or the community.
- Possible risks and how they will be minimized.
- How the results will be disseminated (e.g., honours thesis, class presentation, class essay or report).
- Whether or how participants will be informed of research results.
- How students have learned about ethical issues in the research (e.g., having the student read and discuss the TCPS-2 or other material relevant to ethical concerns in social research).

** Be sure to explain how students will learn:

- a. Minimal risk / realistic appraisal of potential risks
- b. Meaningful and voluntary consent
- c. Confidentiality
- d. Data security and plans for data management (such as storage during and after data collection, ownership etc.)
- e. How to use the method so that data will be meaningful

Describe how this information will be communicated, for example, "I will assign X reading which covers interviewing skills and Y reading on general issues of research ethics" or "Dr. Z will attend class (or I will give a lecture on) and give a 60 minute talk on research ethics including risk, consent, confidentiality and data security".

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NOTE. Experience tells us that instructors who have never completed an Ethics application or taught students about research ethics before may find this a daunting process. In 2019, the WGST-Research Ethics Committee instituted a new 3-step process with the aim of making the review more straightforward and less stressful.

Begin by developing a rough idea of which research method (e.g., interviews, survey) you will be asking students to learn. From there, we suggest you:

1. Read over the WGST-REC Guidelines and complete a rough draft of the REC application. Insert Comments where you have questions. Send your draft to the WGST-REC Committee Chair.
2. Attend a meeting with the WGST Research Ethics Committee to 'workshop' your application and get the advice you need to finalize it.
3. Revise and submit your final application as per the guidelines for submission of completed REC forms.
4. Remember to leave enough time for this development process! The submission is due at least 4 weeks before the research/class projects are due to begin.

3. REB Decisions

Whenever possible, the committee shall make decisions in face-to-face meetings (TCPS-2, Article 6.10). Approval requires at least two approving votes. However, it is anticipated that the REB will normally reach a consensus and, if necessary, will work with the applicant to improve the initial proposal.

If the REB is reviewing an application in which a Committee member has a personal interest, that member shall not be involved in the decision, as mandated in the TCPS-2 (Article 7.4). The WGST Director or her Delegate will in these instances serve as a Proxy Member.

4. Appeals

Every attempt shall be made to work with the applicant to reach agreement through discussion, revision, and reconsideration. When agreement cannot be reached, decisions of the Women's and Gender Studies REC may be appealed to the University REB, whose decision shall be final.

Reconsideration of these procedures: These procedures shall be reviewed no later than Fall 2023.