



This comes into effect for the
2026-2027 academic year.

Terms of Reference for Undergraduate Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Effective Date: September 1, 2015

Approved by: Research Ethics Board, December 12, 2014

Approved with revisions: October 3, 2025

A. Introduction:

The Terms of Reference for Undergraduate Research Ethics Committees (URECs) at Lakehead University is established by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Lakehead University and complies with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2022 (TCPS2).

Departmental undergraduate ethics review is detailed in the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (REB) Terms of Reference, Section F:

The REB delegates the ethical review of undergraduate research projects of minimal risk to Undergraduate Research Ethics Committees (URECs) which are responsible for reviewing any undergraduate course-based research projects and honours theses that involve research with human participants, and/or are a component of the pedagogical process.

Delegation to URECs is not appropriate when a student's project is part of a faculty member's own research program. Such research must receive ethics approval from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.

URECs are responsible for referring to the REB any matter of ethical concern that the UREC is, by reason of disagreement or otherwise, unable to resolve, or is greater than minimal risk as defined by the TCPS2.

Academic units regularly engaged in human participant research are to maintain an active UREC charged with the review and monitoring of undergraduate research. Each UREC shall consist of a minimum of three faculty members who have completed the TCPS2 Course on Research Ethics (CORE). Each UREC must be registered with the REB, keep formal records of their deliberations and decisions, and submit a list of approved projects to the REB once annually, in June. Departments not regularly involved in human participant research are required to forward undergraduate research proposals involving human participant research to the REB for review.

B. Mandate, Authority, Accountability, and Reporting:**1) Mandate**

The mandate of the URECs is to review the ethical acceptability of all minimal risk research involving human participants conducted by undergraduate students (under the supervision of a faculty member). This includes approving, rejecting and proposing modifications to protocols, or terminating any proposed or ongoing research involving humans that is deemed to be non-compliant with the TCPS2.

Projects led by faculty members with undergraduate students as Research Assistants are not eligible for UREC review and must be reviewed by the REB.

For projects not deemed research as defined by the TCPS2, the URECs can provide letters of waiver of ethics review in accordance with Chapter 2 of the TCPS2.

2) Authority

The Board of Governors at Lakehead University has established the REB to ensure competent and independent research ethics review (TCPS2, Article 6.2). The REB, as per its Terms of Reference delegates the review of undergraduate student-led research and pedagogical (course-based) undergraduate research activities (like class projects or assignments) to Lakehead University's departmental level Undergraduate Research Ethics Committees (URECs). Academic units regularly engaged in human participant research are to maintain an active Undergraduate Research Ethics Committee.

Actions and decisions of the URECs shall be documented and formally reported to the REB. The REB maintains oversight into the decisions made on its behalf so as to protect the interests of participants. The REB is ultimately responsible for the ethics of all research involving humans within Lakehead University's jurisdiction.

3) Accountability

In keeping with the TCPS2 the UREC Chairs are responsible for ensuring that the UREC processes conform to the requirements of TCPS2. The UREC Chair is accountable to the REB for the integrity of its research ethics review process.

For oversight and risk management purposes when immediate or incidental reporting is required, the UREC Chair will notify the REB Chair.

4) Forms and Reporting

Undergraduate Research Ethics Committee forms including the application form, renewal form, amendment form, and final report form are found on the Office of Research Services [forms webpage](#). URECs can create their own internal forms if the forms contain, at a minimum, the information contained in the Office of Research Services forms.

At the beginning of each academic year (September), all University Departments will be asked if they have established a UREC. If yes, they must register the UREC with the Office of Research Services. A list of members and their Chair will be requested and copies of their TCPS2 Tutorial Certificates must be submitted.

A list of approved projects will be requested of the UREC Chair by the REB Facilitator annually in June. The report will request the following:

- Supervisor name
- Student name
- Project title
- Date approved by the UREC

URECs are required to keep a formal record of their deliberations and decisions. These records are subject to random review for compliance by the REB.

Departments which do not establish a UREC and are not regularly involved in human participant research are required to forward undergraduate research projects involving human participants to the REB for review.

All projects approved by the URECs are subject to the **Continuing Ethics Review Program (CERP)**. This program provides ongoing oversight of research projects after ethics approval. Its purpose is to ensure studies continue to meet ethical standards throughout their entire lifecycle—from data collection to final publication. This process allows the REB to monitor new risks, protocol changes, or unexpected events, helping to protect participants and maintain research integrity. By requiring active follow-up, the CERP ensures that ethical responsibilities are upheld well beyond the project's approval.

Every second year, a completed UREC project will be randomly chosen and reviewed in the fall quarter.

C. Reconsideration and Appeal Process:

The UREC's appeal board is the Research Ethics Board. The REB provides the final decision on the appeal.

D. UREC Meetings and Membership:

1) Meeting Schedule and Notice

The UREC will meet as often as needed to review projects. It is understood that departments have varying levels of submissions with varying levels of complexity, thus the meeting schedule should be adapted as deemed necessary.

Three (3) days' notice shall be given for all meetings, except that a meeting may be held at any time, if required, without due notice if quorum is met.

2) Meeting Decisions

Decisions related to the UREC's mandate shall be by consensus as declared by the Chair. In accordance with TCPS2, if a minority within the UREC membership considers a research project unethical, even though it is acceptable to the majority of members, an effort should be made to reach consensus. Consultation with the instructor, or supervisor and student or further reflection by the UREC may be helpful. If the UREC is unable to come to a decision, the project will be referred to the REB.

3) Quorum

Quorum is met when the majority of members are present. When there is less than full attendance, decisions should only be made at that meeting if the members present have the specific expertise, relevant competence and knowledge necessary to assess the project.

Non-members attending UREC meetings, such as observers and staff, shall not be counted in the quorum, nor should they be allowed to vote on UREC decisions. Decisions made without a quorum are not valid or binding.

4) Composition and Appointment of Members

The membership of each UREC is designed to ensure competent and independent

Each UREC shall consist of a minimum of three faculty members who have completed the TCPS 2 Course on Research Ethics (CORE) and have knowledge either through practice or teaching of human participant research.

For those Departments which have limited faculty members (unable to form a three-member committee), collaboration with other Departments with similar limited circumstances is encouraged in order to fulfil the three-faculty membership mandate.

5) Chair

The UREC Chair is responsible for ensuring that the UREC review process conforms to the requirements of TCPS2. Their role is to provide leadership and to facilitate the UREC review process, based on institutional policies and procedures and the TCPS2. The Chair should monitor the URECs decisions for consistency and ensure that these decisions are recorded accurately and communicated clearly to researcher as soon as possible by the Chair or his or her designate.

If the Department currently has a faculty member on the REB, it is advantageous to request the faculty member also be a member of the UREC.

6) Chair Selection

The Chair shall be a faculty member selected amongst the UREC members.

E. Conflicts of Interest:

Any UREC member who has a personal/professional interest or a real or perceived conflict of interest with a research project under review (i.e. as Supervisor, co-supervisor) shall not be present when the UREC is making its decision.