2015 Annual Report of the Research Ethics Board, George Brown College May 2016

A Message from the Chair

This is my last message as the Chair of the George Brown Research Ethics Board. This past year has been a wonderful year with several opportunities for this Board to engage the George Brown College community in various workshops and learning sessions. The REB has welcomed researchers to meet with board members on an individual basis and/or with the entire Board to ease the process of meeting the requirements of ethical research review. This has permitted those researchers who are new to research to increase their awareness and capacity of complying with the TCPS2.

The Board would like to announce that we have had some membership changes over the year with Dr. Zeenat Janmohamed leaving and accepting a Chair position at the college and our community member Ms. Julie Moore stepping down. We are very pleased to welcome back Dr. Mariana Ionescu and to welcome Dr. Robin Yap to the Board.

Over the past year the REB has worked on several projects including creating some new forms to ease the process of review and instituting the revised and updated multi-site form as the GBC standard research application review form for both multisite and single site application.

The REB was also a direct contributor to the very successful Heads of Applied Research ethics research subcommittee PD event held at the Waterfront Campus in May 2015. We look forward to hosting this event again this upcoming June.

As always I would like to extend many thanks to Ms. Baaba Lewis for all the hard work of coordinating and administrating the REB requirements. Baaba has always provided exceptional attention to the details and requirements of applications forwarded by researchers, maintained communications between all parties, attended to concerns and queries with the utmost accuracy. Dr. Robert Luke, Vice President of Research, has maintained his commitment to the REB throughout the years. This year was especially significant with the direct recognition of the contributions of the chair of the Board.

The REB is looking forward to continued work with the George Brown Community in the upcoming academic year 2016-17. The Board, recognizes that the more informed researchers are, the better suited they are for getting their projects started and meeting all the necessary ethical research parameters. Therefore, the Board is looking at creating some online visual resources to assist the researchers, along with continued PD sessions and ongoing collaboration and communication between researchers and the REB.

In summary, I have thoroughly enjoyed being given the opportunity to chair this very hard working Board. This experience has expanded my knowledge and respect for all those who work towards making research ethically sound. As I leave this position, I wish the new Chair Ms. Barbara Godfrey all the best in her new role.

Sincerely yours,
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Sarah Evans RN, MN, EdD
Chair, Research Ethics Board

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About this Report

This report is published annually to inform the George Brown College community, research staff and other interested stakeholders of the achievements, forward-looking plans and role of the George Brown College Research Ethics Board (REB). Far more than a summary of the REB's activities, this report documents how various departments and divisions at GBC are engaged in research and are working together to foster and strengthen a rich ethics culture within the College. This report will provide a brief summary of the role, procedures and activities of the REB, as well as outline proposed activities for 2016.

Overview of Research Ethics at George Brown College

GBC is committed to the highest ethical and academic standards for its students, faculty and staff. GBC respects the academic freedom of all research conducted with its support, and ensures that this research meets the highest academic standards. The College requires research involving its employees, students and/or equipment and facilities to be conducted using ethical and moral research practices. The conscious commitment of GBC to upholding modern standards of research ethics has led to a policy obliging all research projects conducted under the auspices of the College, irrespective of the source of financial support or location of research, to undergo a research ethics review.

The REB is a vital part of research at the College and reports directly to the President. The primary purpose of the REB is to ensure that ethical principles are applied to research. The REB endorses and uses the *Tri-Council Policy 2 Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2)* as a guide. In the event of a problem or discrepancy with a research protocol, researchers and the REB consult the TCPS 2.

George Brown College's Research Ethics Policy

GBC's research ethics policy, *Ethics Guidelines & Review Process for Research Involving Human Subjects,* applies to all faculty, staff and students regardless of where their research is conducted. The policy states that all research involving humans, even when conducted by researchers who are not affiliated with the College but who may access its resources (either equipment or personnel), falls within the jurisdiction of the GBC REB. The policy clearly states that no research on human participants shall be undertaken without the prior approval of the REB.

The REB ensures that the highest ethical standards are met and maintained from the time the research proposal is submitted, throughout the data collection stage, to the dissemination of results. The Board is accountable to ensure that all research involving human subjects conforms to the ethical standards outlined in the College's policy. In reviewing each research protocol the Board ensures compliance by articulation of TCPS 2 guidelines. The core guiding principles outlined in the Tri-Council Policy 2 Statement include:

- Respect for Persons,
- Concern for Welfare,
- Justice.

The Research Ethics Board

The REB functions with the commitment and hard work of all its members, who each have experience with the due diligence involved in human research. The Board has shown continued commitment to meet the challenges and ensure consistent conformity to the TCPS 2 ethical guidelines.

Following are the members for 2016 and for the coming year:

Name	Department/Institution
Barbara Godfrey, RN MScN	Chair, Centre for Health Sciences
Sarah Evans, RN, MN, EdD	Centre for Health Sciences
Taras Gula, M.Ed.	Centre for Health Sciences
Paul Horbal, B.A.Sc., M.Sc. (Elec. Eng.), J.D.	Bereskin & Parr, Intellectual Property Law
Csilla Reszegi, Doctor Pharm., M.B.A.	Centre for Prep. & Liberal Studies
Paula Johnson, M.B.A., Ph.D.	Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts
Rose-Marie Nigli, M.T.S, Ph.D. (c)	Academic & Student Affairs
Mariana Ionescu, PhD	Centre for Business
Robin Yap, MSc, LLB, DM	Centre for Business

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Total Research Ethics Submissions

Table 1 displays the total number of new research applications, annual renewal applications and study completion reports received by the REB from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. Included on table 1 are new metrics the board is collecting: amendments, uncertainty, approval in principle and withdrawn applications. On average the REB reviewed 5.0 new REB protocol applications per month. This excludes July and August, when the REB is on summer break.

Types of application	Total
NEW RESEARCH PROTOCOLS	51
ANNUAL RENEWALS	19
STUDY COMPLETION REPORTS	29
AMENDMENTS	10
UNCERTAINTY APPLICATIONS	4
WITHDRAWN APPLICATION	1
APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE	3

Table 1. Total number of REB applications, renewals and study completion reports from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Yearly Research Ethics Submissions Data

Figure 1 displays historical data of applications submitted from 2007 to 2015. In 2015 the REB received fifty-one (51) applications the highest number in its history which is closely followed by forty-nine (49) submissions in 2014. The third highest submission was forty-five (45) applications in 2007.

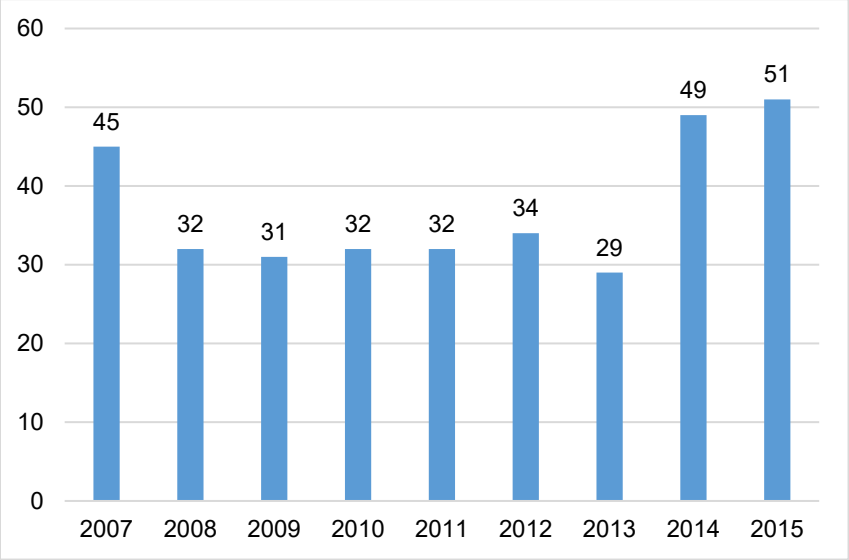

Figure 1.
Applications submitted from 2007 to 2015.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Type of Research Ethics Submission

Twenty-two Ontario colleges have agreed to accept the multi-site application to streamline ethics application process in member colleges. The REB received four applications requiring full board review; all other applications were reviewed under the delegated process. A delegated review is conducted by one member of the REB and the Chair. Risk is the primary criterion used to determine if a protocol may be reviewed through the delegated process rather than by the full Board. The Tri-Council 2 Policy Statement states that: “if potential subjects can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research, then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.” Reviews may also be delegated if:

- The review is an annual renewal of a project previously approved by the REB, and the “open file” is up to date;
- The research involves only review of patient records by hospital personnel; or
- The Principal Researcher submits a letter of affirmation confirming that conditions laid down by the REB have already been approved by another institution or funding agency.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Institutional Origin of Research Submissions

Forty percent of all proposals reviewed by the REB this year were collaborative projects between GBC staff and other institutions (Figure 2). Researchers based at other institutions submitted thirty-four percent applications and GBC staff submitted a total of twenty-six percent of the protocols.

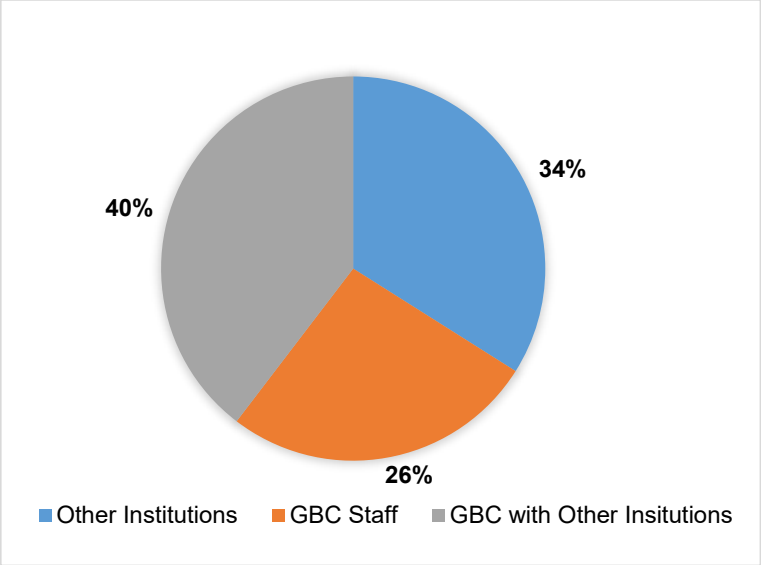

Figure 2.
Institutional origin of REB applications from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

Breakdown of REB Submissions by GBC Centre

This year the REB has had more applications than any other year. Health Sciences continues to be very active submitting fifteen percent of applications followed by Community Services & Early Childhood and Liberal Arts with a total of eleven percent each (Figure 3). For the first time, we have received applications from Information Technology and Registrar's Office.

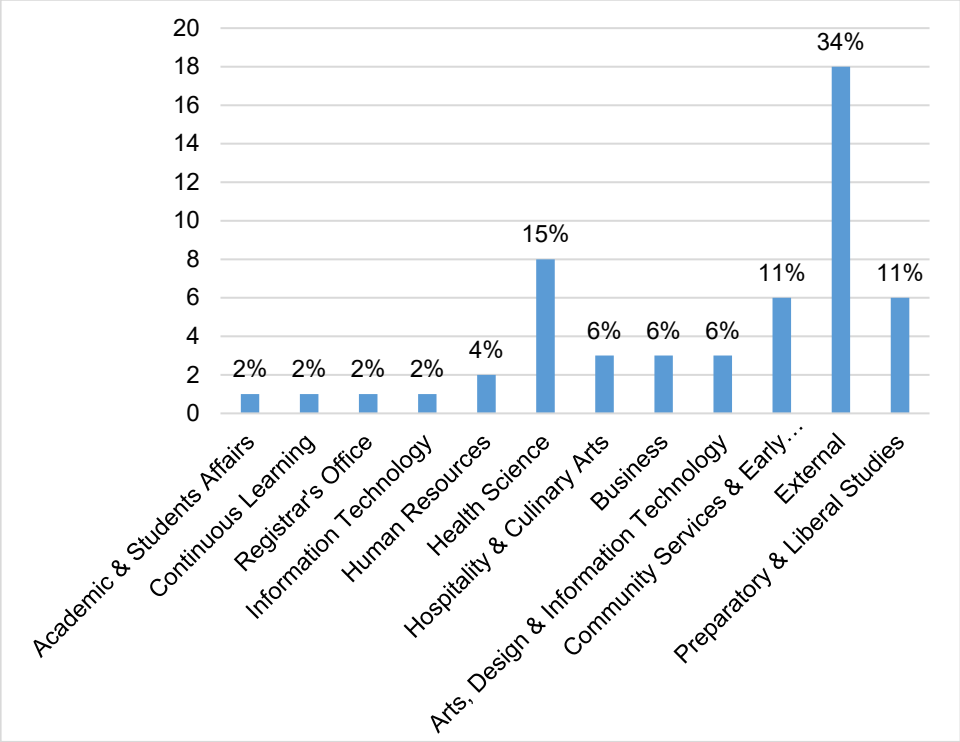

Figure 3.
Breakdown of REB submissions by GBC divisions from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016, in percent.

Achievements in 2015-16

The Board was able to dedicate its ninth year to improving processes. Some of our most important achievements were:

- Capacity building via recruitment;
- Revised the multi-site form and developed sensory food tasting application form;
- Board members met with potential researchers to offer advice and guidance to strengthen researchers applications;
- Provided workshop to staff;
- Participated in the Colleges Ontario Heads of Applied Research (HAR) REB subcommittee conference. Representatives from Ontario colleges provide structure and process to support quality ethics reviews across the College system, safeguarding research participants and demonstrating consistent and reliable research ethics quality assurance to funders and other institutions;
- Facilitated concurrent sessions during the HAR REB subcommittee conference; and
- Hosted 2015 HAR REB subcommittee conference at George Brown College.

Goals for 2017

Our goals for the coming year are to:

- Provide increased resources and infrastructure to foster research excellence;
- Facilitating education about topical issues in research ethics;
- To enhance the ethical environment for research in institutions;
- Help resolve ethical conflicts and answer ethical questions;
- Promote a positive ethics culture throughout the institution;
- Ensuring that systems and processes contribute to/do not interfere with ethical practices;
- Promoting ethical leadership behaviors, such as explaining the values that underlie decisions;
- Stressing the importance of ethics, and promoting transparency in decision making;
- Recruit and train professors now to slot into existing tiered membership types (core or alternate) to have a pool of successors from 2017 onwards; and
- Develop job aids that can be handed to interested staff and faculty on the topic of REB process, appropriate language use, reference list, etc.

Conclusion

In 2015-16, we had two members joining the board. Overall, the Board members have provided extremely positive feedback about their experiences as members of the REB. We hope that the proposed improvements and activities for 2017 will help educate GBC staff and students about research ethics and further promote the college's research culture. As more researchers become familiar with our process, we are certain that the significance of the REB will be recognized in the College research community. As we move forward with the new leadership, we will renew and strengthen our commitment to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.