

Psy-REC General Guidelines

How to complete a research ethics application for the Psychology Research Ethics Committee (Psy-REC) – 2026/2027

Psy-Rec strives to align our policies and procedures with those of the human/behavioural USask Human Research Ethics Office and Board - <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/human-ethics.php>. For research involving humans, we rely on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2022) - https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html. In cases where non-human animals are involved in research, you must consult with the Animal Care and Research Support office and board - <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/animal-care-and-research-support1.php>.

Application Form

Any question/statement in the ethics application that contains a * next to it MUST have a response from the researcher(s). Student researchers must submit their TCPS2 CORE (2022) Certificates as an Appendix with their application. Certificates prior to 2022 will not be accepted. Any changes to your study after you've received ethics approval from Psy-REC must be submitted via an amendment form (found here:

<https://artsandscience.usask.ca/psychology/students/undergraduates/psy-rec.php>).

Key Information

- You must provide a title that you are comfortable showing participants as it must appear on all study materials.
- Your study must be “minimal risk” or below to be reviewed by Psy-REC. Otherwise, you must submit it to the Research Ethics Office/Board for review and approval. Please consult with the Psy-REC Chair if you're unsure about the risk level of your study. If we deem a project to be above minimal risk, we will send it to the Research Ethics Office/Board.
- You must provide a Start and End Date that corresponds with your thesis or course timeline.
- Psy-REC is aware that all applications are time sensitive given the timelines for thesis and course work. We strive to return initial reviews within 5-7 business days and subsequent reviews within 1-3 business days. These estimates are subject to change during busier times of each term.

1. Project Personnel

- The thesis supervisor or course instructor is the Principal Investigator. They are also the Primary Contact.
- All students involved with the proposed project must be listed.
- You must not provide personal phone numbers/cell phones.
- Only personal USask emails are permitted for contact information.

2. Funding Sponsors and Agency(ies)

- This section rarely applies to Psy-REC applications, but if it does, please ensure you confirm all details with the Principal Investigator (i.e., your supervisor or instructor).
3. Location(s) Where Research Activities Are Conducted
- You must specify all physical and online locations where the research will be conducted. This includes where the researchers and participants will be located.
 - Physical location(s) must be private to ensure confidentiality.
 - For safety reasons, students must not conduct research in participants' private residences unless they are family/friends.
4. Other Ethics Approval
- This section rarely applies to Psy-REC applications, but if it does, please ensure you confirm all details with the Principal Investigator (i.e., your supervisor or instructor).
 - If your study involves non-human animals, you must obtain a study approval certificate or exemption letter from the Animal Care and Research Support office and board and submit it as part of your application to Psy-REC.
5. Conflict of Interest
- This section rarely applies to Psy-REC applications, but if it does, please ensure you confirm all details with the Principal Investigator (i.e., your supervisor or instructor).
6. Project Overview
- You must state the primary purpose of the research is to train the student researcher(s).
 - You must state any additional purpose(s), objectives, and potential significance of the research.
 - You must explain all components of the research design and methods to be used.
 - You must specify the maximum time commitment for participants.
 - Please clearly state if your study is completely online (i.e., questionnaire), remote (i.e., zoom), in-person, or a mix AND if your study has multiple stages (e.g., online then in-person) you must clearly label and separate these stages as there may be different ethical requirements.
 - You must provide enough details so reviewers (and participants) who are not familiar with your area of research can understand what you hope to do and achieve. This means you must operationally define terms and spell out acronyms.
 - You should ensure you have the proper permissions/copyright to use data collection materials you propose for your study. You must ensure you are properly trained/qualified to implement clinically restricted tests/assessments.
 - You must provide all data collection materials as Appendices. For materials you plan to use that are online (e.g., Youtube videos, Stroop effect experiments, etc.) you must provide screen shots of what participants will be exposed to and/or links to the websites if they are publicly available and something reviewers can access without logging in.
 - Examples of research that does not require ethics approval: environmental scans; naturalistic observation of people in public places where there is no expectation of privacy

where researchers do not intervene and individuals cannot be identified; scoping reviews; literature reviews; meta-analyses; and research that relies exclusively on publicly available information.

- For studies involving transcription of data: USask IT recommends their supported tools for transcription – Zoom and Microsoft.

7. Duration and Location of Data Collection Events

- You must clarify the way in which you plan to collect research data from participants. For example, if you are conducting focus groups, you must specify if they will occur in-person or remotely (i.e., Zoom or Teams). If you are using a questionnaire, you must specify if it is completed in person via paper + pen or if it will occur online (i.e., SurveyMonkey, RedCap, SONA).
- You must specify the time commitment for each component of your data collection. If you prefer to break down singular components by time, that is fine, but it must add up to the maximum time commitment you specified in the Project Overview section and elsewhere in your application.

8. Internet-Based Interaction

- If any component of your research will occur online, including recruitment or correspondence with participants about the study, you must specify this.
- If you will potentially have email contact with participants, you must ensure you use your USask email for these conversations and that any correspondence is deleted beyond recovery once complete. You must state that if the participants contact you, the conversation will be confidential and only available to the research team.
- If you are using any online software to collect data, you must specify it as well as provide a link to its data privacy policy(ies).
- If you plan to use an online software that is not pre-approved by USask IT Services (See LTE Toolkit - <https://teaching.usask.ca/learning-technology/>), then you must submit a request to the Technology Assessment Centre (TAC) for review and approval of the online software you wish to use (see - <https://itrequisitions.usask.ca/software.php>).

9. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity = the researchers have no way to know who the participants are in the study.

Online questionnaires that do not request any personally identifiable information are one of the few methods that can offer full anonymity.

Confidentiality = the researchers will know who has participated in the study but will keep their information private.

- You must specify if participants will be anonymous in the data collection phase of the study.
- If participants are anonymous during the data collection phase of the study but might contact researchers with questions or tell them they have participated (as may occur with family/friends), then you must specify that in these cases anonymity will be lost but confidentiality will be maintained.

- You must specify potential limits to anonymity, as well as confidentiality.
- Other confidentiality limits include instances where participants are family/friends of the researcher(s).
- For videoconferencing (i.e., Zoom, Teams) data collection: Participants must be given the option to turn off their cameras if the video recording is not part of planned data analyses.

10. Risks and Benefits

- You must specify potential minimal risks. If there are no potential minimal risks, you may state this. Please ensure you have considered whether your data collection materials contain questions that may be sensitive to participants. Psy-REC will flag potential concerns we perceive and determine if they are indeed minimal risk or above minimal risk.
- If there are potential minimal risks, please ensure you confirm how they will be mitigated (e.g., participants can leave questions unanswered, participants will be directed to campus or community-based resources, etc.).
- You must specify any potential benefits of your study. It is fine to say there are no tangible benefits for participation, especially since the primary purpose of the research is to train the student researcher(s). Please do not embellish potential benefits as these will be questioned and flagged by reviewers.
- There must be no mention of participant compensation here – there is a separate section for compensation below in the Participant Recruitment section.

11. Aboriginal (Indigenous) Peoples and Community Engagement

- Psy-REC generally does not provide advice on how a study should be designed to answer specific research questions unless there are components that clearly link to potential ethical concerns. However, when it comes to the timeline for thesis and course-based research projects, there often is not enough time to conduct meaningful community-engaged research. As such, we recommend that if students wish to engage in this type of research they ensure they submit applications early or that their supervisor brings them on to a previously approved study via an ethics amendment. If the study was previously approved by the Research Ethics Office/Board, the amendment must be submitted to them with a request for an expedited review given the short timeframe for student research.
- If applications are submitted to Psy-REC that involve community engagement, a letter of intent/support from the community/organization/representative must be included as an Appendix. This is different from cases where researchers are simply asking for study recruitment materials to be shared – see Recruitment Process below.
- If your study involves First Nations, Inuit, or Métis participants, including when focusing on their community, land, or cultural knowledge, Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2 must be consulted and key components must be implemented into your study and ethics application. Common scenarios when Chapter 9 is relevant include: targeted recruitment of First Nations, Inuit, or Métis participants, data analysis that makes inferences about First Nations, Inuit, or Métis people or communities, cultural/environmental research involving materials, knowledge, or lands associated with First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples, and

collaborative/participatory research where First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples or communities are engaged or partnered on the research.

- Student researchers must consult with their supervisors/instructors on their applications if Chapter 9 must be consulted and key aspects must be implemented. You must ensure all sections of this part of your application are completed.

12. Participant Recruitment

- You must specify the maximum number of participants you plan to recruit.
- You must provide a rationale for the number of participants you plan to recruit.
- You must specify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the study. Hint: these should mirror each other.
- Please note: If you plan to recruit using the Participant Pool, there are some restrictions on inclusion and exclusion criteria. For example, if you are targeting a specific group, you can make this clear for prospective participants, but they must still be allowed to participate in the study for credit/learning purposes. Please consult the Participant Pool's policies for further information.
- You must specify EACH method of recruitment. You must clearly label and separately describe each method of recruitment to ensure Psy-REC reviewers understand your plans and can accurately determine if you are ethically compliant.
- If you plan to recruit via social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) you must ensure commenting is turned off for your recruitment post (or ask page administrators to do this), you must direct questions about the study from DMs to your USask email then delete all DMs, and you must only use your personal social media page(s) for recruitment if this is how you plan to recruit family/friends. If you plan to recruit via a social media page(s) run by an administrator(s), you must list all the pages where your study advertisement may be posted AND you must provide a letter of request to page administrators as an Appendix.
- If you plan to recruit family/friends, you must include safeguards to prevent possible undue influence, coercion, or inducement (e.g., there will be no impact on the relationship whether family/friends participate in the study or not, they can withdraw at any time without consequence, etc.).
- Please note: Instructors should not use their course lists to send students research invitations via email as this may contravene USask's privacy policy around use of student emails. As such, instructors must post invitations on their Canvas page instead.
- You must specify details about compensation or reimbursements offered to participants. It is fine to say there is no compensation or reimbursement for participants. There must be no penalty (i.e., loss of compensation) in cases where participants withdraw from the study after consenting to participate.
- In cases where the Participant Pool is used for recruitment, please consult with those guidelines for offering credits which are based on the length of time of participation in your study. You must obtain their SONA Participant Pool ID for the purposes of assigning credits – this question should occur somewhere in your data collection tools and NOT the Consent Form.
- Recruited participants may be peers of student researchers as long as the research is not solely for learning purposes – please see the following note:

- Note for course-based research exercises: For in-class exercises, such as mock interviews for practice, these are considered experiential and not research. As such they do not require ethics approval. The expectation is also that the information gained will not be used for any purpose other than learning (e.g., no publication, conference presentation, no intent for future use of the data. See the TCPS 2 Article 2.1 and 6.12 for further information. There is also an expectation that instructors will retain student submissions for 1 year in case of student appeal as per USask policies. After this time, materials may be destroyed beyond recovery.

13. Consent Process

- You must explain the process for how participants will consent to participate in your study.
- If you have different recruitment processes (e.g., Participant Pool, family/friends, general pool of participants) that yield different participant groups that require distinct participation procedures (e.g., sign up, compensation, etc.), you must develop distinct Consent Forms – one for each group. This minimizes potential confusion for participants thus increasing their ability to make an informed decision.
- With online questionnaires an Implied Consent process is recommended whereby participants read the consent form and at the end read the following: “By completing and submitting this questionnaire, your free and informed consent is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study. You may wish to save or print a copy of this consent form for your personal records.” You must explain the Implied Consent process in your application and Consent Form and include the above statement at the end of your Consent Form. There should be no checkboxes or indication that participants must indicate “Yes” or “No” to consenting in your study materials.
- For remote studies (e.g., Zoom, Teams), an Oral/Verbal Consent process is recommended whereby participants will state that they consent to participate at the start of the study – this must be audio-recorded. This process limits the amount of personal information shared online and that must be safeguarded/stored by the researchers. Participants must still be sent a copy of the Consent Form for their personal records.
- For in-person studies, physical copies of Consent Forms must be signed and dated by participants and researchers. There should be two copies: one for participants and the other for researchers.
- Please note: Psy-REC cannot review or approve any studies with deception (i.e., intentionally providing false information or omitting key information with the expressed purpose of fabricating false beliefs among participants – in other words, “gaslighting”).
- However, Psy-REC is permitted to review and approve studies which make use of incomplete/partial disclosure (i.e., withholding certain information about the specific purpose, nature, or some other aspect of the research until the debriefing phase) which is common for between subjects experimental designs with random assignment to conditions where telling participants about the different conditions would compromise the study design. If you plan to use incomplete/partial disclosure, you must 1) explain to participants in the consent form that they cannot provide all the information up front due to the study design, but that all will be revealed in the debriefing phase/form, and 2) offer participants the chance to “re-consent” after they learn about the true/full intent of the study.

- Capacity or competency to consent generally pertain to instances where your study involves what the TCPS2 considers “vulnerable groups”. Please consult the TCPS2 on your target vulnerable group(s) and recommend processes for consent. Please note, while the TCPS2 does not have age-specifications for consent to participate, there are legal protections for minors (i.e., youth aged 16 years and below) that must be followed.
- ****NEW AS OF 2026/2027**** With respect to the Participant Pool, there are sometimes cases where students are 17 years old, which previously meant they could participate in studies for credits and educational purposes, but researchers were not permitted to include their data for analyses. NOW, the policy has been updated whereby 17-year-olds may participate AND researchers may include their data for analyses.
- You must describe the process whereby participants can withdraw from your study.
- If study participation occurs in-person or remotely (i.e., Zoom, Teams, etc.) and participants wish to withdraw before the end of the study, they must verbalize this to the researcher(s) and researchers must offer participants the Debriefing Form. If participants wish to withdraw sometime after they have completed the study, researchers must explain potential limits of this. For example, is there a time limit? Is there a limit based on how the data is analyzed? This must all be specified.
- If study participation occurs via an online questionnaire, participants may withdraw anytime by simply closing their web browser. This means they can only access the Debriefing Form by contacting the researchers. You must explain this in your Application and Consent Form, and clarify that while this will compromise participant anonymity, confidentiality will be maintained. Given the anonymous nature of online questionnaires when personally identifying information is not collected, data cannot be removed. However, during the clean up of data sets before analyses, researchers may remove “incompletes”.
- ****NEW AS OF 2025/2026**** The Participant Pool has a new policy whereby Participant Pool Participants may participate in studies for credit and educational purposes but opt out of including their data in analyses. To comply with this policy, three things must occur: 1) Researchers must explain this policy and accompanying process in their application within the Consent Process section it is clear for reviewers that you understand the policy and process, 2) Researchers must explain this policy and accompanying process to participants in the Consent Form, and 3) You must include a data opt in or out question or statement at the END of your study, just before the Debriefing Form – example below:

Data Opt-in: Participants have the option to complete the study without contributing any data. That is, you would complete the survey, but your data would not be collected for analysis. You can choose whether to allow your responses to be included in our research analysis. Regardless of your choice, you will receive full credit for participation.

Please indicate your preference:

 - ☐ Include my data in research analysis
 - ☐ Complete the study for learning purposes only (data will not be used)
- If a Participant Pool Participant opts to not include their data for analysis, you must remove their data from your dataset.

14. Data Security and Storage

- You must specify everyone who is responsible for data collection and who will have access to raw data. If this changes at some point, you must submit an amendment form to Psy-REC specifying which researcher(s) will be added to your study.
- Please note: organizations like Zoom, SurveyMonkey, etc. may collect and store data, but they are not ethically responsible for data storage – only the researchers on your application are ethically responsible for data safeguarding and storage.
- If you collect paper + pen data and signed Consent Forms from participants, you must explain 1) how the data and/or forms will be transferred to an electronic format, and 2) how the physical copies of data will be safeguarded, stored long-term, and eventually destroyed beyond recovery.
- If you have electronic data, you must explain how it will be safeguarded, transferred to the Principal Investigator, stored long-term, and eventually destroyed beyond recovery. Data may be safeguarded via password-protected personal computers or USask OneDrive short-term. For long-term data storage, students must transfer data to the Principal Investigator's USask OneDrive account. All data in the possession of students must be deleted beyond recovery after this transfer is complete. Please note: minimal risk research data can be stored via OneDrive but above minimal risk data must be stored in DataStore.
- If you have online data, you must explain how it will be safeguarded by third parties (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Zoom) and include weblinks to their data storage and privacy policies. You must also explain how this data will be transferred to password protected computers or a USask OneDrive and how/when the online data will be destroyed beyond recovery.
- In cases where data is recorded via videoconferencing (i.e., Zoom, Teams), researchers must use their USask accounts and may record the data to their USask account Cloud or their password-protected personal computers.
- ****NEW AS OF 2025/2026**** Data for student researcher thesis and course-based studies must be stored for a minimum of 5-years by the Principal Investigator in their USask OneDrive in cases where the data will be published or shared in some way (e.g., conference presentation, academic publication, etc.).

15. Documents

- You must list all your study Appendices and they must be embedded into the same document as your Ethics Application. All Appendices must be clearly labelled.
- Please note: Psy-REC reviews for consistency across your application and Appendices. This means that if you state something in either your application or an Appendix, it must match what is stated elsewhere.

16. Signature

- ****NEW AS OF 2026/2027**** The Principal Investigator (i.e., Thesis Supervisor or Course Instructor) must review student researcher applications and indicate via signature they have read and approved the application as submitted to Psy-REC for completion and accuracy.

Appendices

17. Consent Form - MANDATORY

- You must follow the Consent Form template available on the Psy-REC Website under “Individual Projects” (<https://artsandscience.usask.ca/psychology/students/undergraduates/psy-rec.php>).
- As noted above, if you have different recruitment processes that yield different participant groups (e.g., Participant Pool students, family/friends, general pool of participants) that require distinct participation procedures (e.g., sign up, compensation, etc.), you must develop distinct Consent Forms – one for each group. This minimizes potential confusion for participants thus increasing their ability to make an informed decision.
- The content and language of your Consent Form must be written in plain language and adapted as needed to your target participant group.
- What you state in your Consent Form must match what you’ve stated in the corresponding sections of your application.
- Follow up: You must specify an approximate date (month + year) when study results will be available for participants.

18. Recruitment Poster/Advertisement – IF RELEVANT

- You must follow guidelines of the “Recruitment Poster Template” found on the USask Research Ethics Board website under “Behavioural Forms” (<https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/human-ethics.php>).
- The main information you must include on your Recruitment Poster is as follows:
 - Your department
 - Study topic
 - A description of what participants will be asked to do in the study
 - Details on the time commitment
 - You may mention that compensation is available, but you must not include the exact amount
 - Contact information for the researchers
 - You must include the USask logo, but do not need to include the “Be What the World Needs” logo.
- Please note: as your study is reviewed and approved by Psy-REC, you must update the poster to state this and remove any mention of the REB.
- Reminder: You must indicate to Psy-Rec everywhere you plan on sharing/posting the advertisements and that you have the appropriate permission.

19. Participant Recruitment Letter – IF RELEVANT

- The same content that you would include in a Recruitment Poster/Advertisement (see above) should appear in a Recruitment Letter, but it should be distinct from the Consent Form (see above).

20. Recruitment Assistance Request Letter – IF RELEVANT

- These are relevant in cases where you are asking individuals or groups to assist you with participant recruitment. It should contain all relevant information for the study (e.g., what you will include in Recruitment Materials) along with your request for assistance. People

who read this letter should be able to make an informed decision regarding whether they can assist you with sharing your study advertisements.

- Reminder: You must indicate to Psy-Rec everywhere you plan on sending the letter.

21. Aboriginal (Indigenous) Peoples and Community Engagement Letter of Support/Involvement – IF RELEVANT

- In cases where research is related to Aboriginal (Indigenous) Peoples or is Community-Based, letters of support/involvement which explain the level of consultation with researchers that has occurred and the amount of support/involvement being requested of the community by the researchers must be provided.

22. SONA Participant Pool Advertisement – IF RELEVANT

- Like recruitment posters/advertisements (see above), you must include all relevant information so participants can make an informed decision about whether they are interested in participating (e.g., time commitment, compensation, study name, study type, description of the study and what participants are expected to do). Please consult with SONA as they have their own guidelines for how these advertisements are templated.

23. Data Collection Material(s) – MANDATORY

- Psy-Rec Reviewers must be able to review all data collection materials (e.g., online and paper+pen questionnaires, interview guides, focus group guides, observational checklists, videos, images, etc.) participants will be exposed to. You must submit them all as text, images, and in some cases provide website links.
- If your data collection materials are available online or via a computer program, you must provide screenshots and or weblinks (if available and not behind a login or paywall for reviewers) of sample materials participants will be exposed to.
- Psy-REC generally does not provide advice on how a study should be designed to answer specific research questions unless there are components that clearly link to potential ethical concerns. Common areas of concern for data collection materials include potentially sensitive topics/questions and demographics such as sex, gender, ethnicity, culture, and sometimes even political orientation. The most common pieces of feedback Psy-Rec have given in the past include:
 - For demographic questions, you must replace the “Other, please specify” option with something like, “None of these. I identify as...”, or you may also provide an open- rather than closed-response option.
 - Sex (i.e., male, female, etc.) and gender (i.e., man, woman, non-binary, etc.) are often conflated. If you wish to measure sex or gender, please ensure you use the correct response options for each. If you wish to measure both, please ensure they are distinct and correct. You may also provide an open- rather than closed-response option.
 - To avoid pan-Indigenization when asking about ethnicity, race, or culture, please provide distinct response options for First Nations, Inuit/Inuk, or Métis identifications.

- When asking about ethnicity, race, or culture, Psy-Rec recommends you follow the recommended guidelines from Statistics Canada. You may also provide an open- rather than closed-response option.

24. Debriefing Form - MANDATORY

- For student projects, debriefing forms are required as this is considered an important part of research training.
- Debriefing forms are especially important in cases where incomplete disclosure is applied to a study design (e.g., between-subjects experiment).
- If you plan to use the Participant Pool for recruitment, you must follow their policy for developing Debriefing Forms. They specify that Debriefing Forms: a) must be close to one-page in length, b) must adequately explain your study in detail as well as the benefits to research or the population as a whole, c) must be written in plain and easy to understand language and not use sophisticated or technical terms, and d) must ensure participants keep a copy of the debriefing form (i.e., electronically saved, printed physical copy).
- If you're not using the Participant Pool, the following policies must be adhered to: a) you must adequately explain your study in detail as well as the benefits to research or the population as a whole, b) you must be written in plain and easy to understand language and not use sophisticated or technical terms, and c) you must ensure participants keep a copy of the debriefing form (i.e., electronically saved, printed physical copy).

25. TCPS 2 CORE Certificates - MANDATORY

- Currently, only students are required to submit these. They must be from 2022 onwards. If certificates prior to 2022 are submitted, students will be required to complete the TCPS 2 CORE 2022 online module and submit their updated certificate prior to study approval.