# Aurora College REC Guidance for Applications for Research Ethics Review: Completing an application for review

The information presented in this guidance document is designed to help researchers complete the application form for research ethics review by the Aurora College REC. The application form presents a full research protocol that should contain, but not be restricted to, the information presented below.

The Aurora College Research Ethics Committee reviews research according to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS)(<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>) and the Aurora College Policy I.04 Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects (<http://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/_live/pages/wpPages/PoliciesResources.aspx>). The committee strongly recommends that all applicants have a working familiarity with both documents

1. **Applicant Information**

* Provide applicant’s details
* The principal investigator of the study should be the person applying for ethics review

1. **Funding and Licensing Details**

* Indicate status of funding
* Name the sponsor (if applicable)
* List data collection locations (consider a map if it will be outside the community)
* Indicate status of research license

\*Please be aware that a research license is required to conduct research in the Northwest Territories; the licensing process is separate from the research ethics review process and can be found here: <https://polar.nwtresearch.com/>

Applicants are not required to submit a research license to the REC.

1. **Project Details**

* Include anticipated start and finish dates – the start date should be a future date (this may need to be amended if revisions delay the start date)
* Title of project

1. **Summary of the purpose, objectives and aims (300 words max.)**

* Use language that can be understood by a non-specialist
* Explain reasons for conducting the research project taking into consideration current scientific knowledge on the subject - what does the research project hope to achieve or to know?
* Describe the relevance of the research
* Provide specific research questions asked in the research project
* Include any hypotheses that will be tested
* Describe the expected outcomes of the research project
* Describe the methodology, including detailed procedures, measurements, methods, etc., used during the research project - how will the objectives be measured?
* Include instruments to be used to collect information (surveys, discussion guides interview guides)
* Estimate the timing of procedures and expected duration of the research project
* Explain plans for analysis
* Include any methods and measures taken to minimise bias

1. **Estimation of Risks**

According to TCPS Chapter 2, *minimal risk* research is defined as “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.” Some research may pose more than minimal risk to participants: this type of research is permitted, provided that the principal investigator understands the risks fully, informs participants of the risks, and has planned to appropriately mitigate the risks as much as possible.

* Include consideration of any and all possible risks associated with the study, including risks the participants may face during research activities (field trips, interviews, activities on the land, etc.)
* Consider whether interviews or focus group topics could lead to upsetting conversations, even unintentionally (ie. education research often spurs discussion of residential schools, health research may lead to conversations about alcoholism and/or abuse)
* If participant contributions are reported in the study (ie. not kept confidential), consider the risks associated with being publicly tied to their contribution for life
* Any manipulation and/or deception must be reported
* Consider social risk and possible loss of privacy that could occur at any point during the life of the research project
* Identify potentially coercive relationships up front

1. **Risk Mitigation**

* Describe the protocols in place to mitigate each of the identified risks
* Provide participants with mental health and counselling resources, if necessary
* Attach any local or organizational policies/procedures that will be in place to keep participants and researchers safe
* Indicate whether you plan to follow-up with participants in the future
* Indicate whether you will conduct *formal debriefing* with participants
* Describe any follow-up or debriefing procedures you may have planned

\*Please note: TCPS Article 3.7B: Debriefing must be a part of all research involving an alteration to consent requirements (see Article 3.7A) whenever it is possible, practicable and appropriate. Participants in such research must have the opportunity to refuse consent and request the withdrawal of their data and/or human biological materials whenever possible, practicable and appropriate.

1. **Recruitment of Participants**

* Describe the research population (sample size, etc.)
* Include participant inclusion and exclusion criteria
* Describe recruitment methods, activities, communications
* Include a copy of your recruitment notice, advertisement, information sheet, as well as that used by a sponsor or supportive organization, if applicable.
* Explain any remuneration or compensation; justify the amount chosen
* Describe accommodations made for participants’ language and/or cultural needs should be made
* Explain how you will mitigate any possible selection bias or discriminatory recruitment (especially if you propose to use snowball or convenience sampling methods, or if you are referring recruitment to a third party)

1. **Informed Consent**

* Describe the process to be used to obtain consent from participants in each phase of the study
* Explain any special consideration made for participants’ language and cultural needs
* Include a copy of information sheet and consent form and/or script for verbal consent
* Include a descriptions of the assent and parental consent process for minors
* Include details of participants’ right to withdraw and associated procedures, including what happens to data contributed before withdrawal and honoraria in the event of withdrawal   
  \*Please note: there is almost always a point after which the information *cannot* be withdrawn, whether that is upon aggregation of the data, upon analysis of the data, or upon submission or publication of the final report – be explicit

1. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

* Use the checkboxes to indicate how participant contributions will be handled Please note: anonymity is the strictest level of confidentiality - contributions are only considered anonymous if the participant’s identity is not known by *anyone in the research team* and their identity cannot be traced back to their data by even the researcher (this data also cannot often be withdrawn, as it is not identifiable)
* Provide justification for public and cited contributions where participants are not provided the option for confidential participation
* Indicate whether there are limitations on confidentiality and explain how you will address them
* Describe how raw data will be used in reports and products of the research
* Describe how participants can review their contribution before inclusion, if applicable
* Explain security procedures for the data
* Include data management plans, details of disposal of the data, details of any record-keeping that may contain information about the study participants

1. **Community Involvement**

* Describe how you will work with NWT communities, community members, and/or organizations
* Describe the terms of the community partnership, specifically, how you will address the OCAP principles (visit the First Nations Information Governance Centre website for more information: fnigc.ca/ocap
* Describe any special protocol for the collection and use of traditional knowledge (TK)
* Explain how local experts will be involved in analyzing/interpreting TK

1. **Dissemination of Results**

* Describe dissemination activities at all levels (individual, community, academic, etc)
* Plan to inform participants

1. **Benefits**

* Benefits to the participants - these must be clearly and accurately stated; if there are no direct benefits to the participants, this should be stated
* Benefits for the researcher/team
* Benefits to society