

April 1, 2020

Aurora College Research Ethics Committee (REC) COVID-19 Response Plan

The following actions will be taken by the Aurora College REC to support research during the coronavirus pandemic:

1. The REC can continue to review remotely as per the existing schedule
2. The REC will approve research that complies with the recommendations and orders of the Chief Public Health Officer of the Northwest Territories (CPHO) including physical/social-distancing (eg. no in-person data collection.)
3. The REC will *only provisionally approve* research that complies with TCPS but does not comply the recommendations and orders of the CPHO including physical/social-distancing (eg. researchers preparing to conduct research in the future when in-person data collection is possible) - these protocols will be moved to approval when the CPHO announces that physical/social-distancing measures are relaxed and the REC agrees that participants will not be at risk from COVID-19.
4. Should Aurora College researchers become involved with essential new research on COVID-19, the REC will convene as needed to expedite the review of the research.
5. The Manager, Research Ethics will add the following statement to the website and email it to all principal investigators who hold active protocols:

Aurora College Research Ethics Committee Guidance and New Procedure During COVID-19 Pandemic

The Aurora College Research Ethics Committee (REC) recognizes that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic poses an extraordinary and serious safety and public health threat to our communities. The REC will continue to operate normally as much as possible, however some changes are necessary. Please also note that there may be delays in responding to e-mails and processing reviews at this time due to a high volume of requests. Your continued patience and cooperation is appreciated.

Effective immediately, the Aurora College REC will now require that investigators eliminate all personal contact, in-person data collection, or site visits with study participants. This also means that research involving physical assessments or the in-person use of equipment or devices must be suspended.

In-person participant interactions should, if feasible, be replaced with telephone, videoconference or other digital communication. In doing so, researchers should be mindful of the nature of their protocol and any additional risk that may arise from switching from in-person to virtual communication, including risks to privacy. Revised participant consents or consent addendums may be required (e.g., to update privacy considerations for the use of different communication channels).

The REC will *only provisionally approve* research that complies with TCPS but does not comply with recommendations and orders made by the Chief Public Health Officer of the Northwest Territories (CPHO), including physical/social-distancing recommendations. These protocols will be moved to approval when CPHO announces that physical/social-distancing measures are relaxed and the REC agrees that participants will not be at risk from COVID-19.