
Capstone & Research Methods Ethics Workflow Policy

1. Policy Statement

The **Capstone & Research Methods Ethics Workflow Policy** establishes the procedural framework by which all student and faculty research activities at the **Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies (GNI)** are reviewed, approved, and monitored for ethical integrity.

This policy ensures that every research project—particularly those conducted within the BA Major in Sikh Studies Capstone Seminar, Research Methods, and other course-based projects—meets the ethical standards outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2, 2022)* and GNI’s *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy (ADM-018)*.

2. Purpose

This policy:

1. Defines the **step-by-step ethics approval workflow** for all student and faculty research projects.
2. Integrates the workflow into the academic calendar and course delivery cycle.
3. Clarifies the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors, instructors, and the **Research and Ethics Committee (REC)**.
4. Ensures that no data collection begins before formal REB approval.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all undergraduate and faculty research involving human participants or identifiable data;
- classroom-based or community-based capstone projects;
- interview, focus group, or survey research;
- research that collects or analyzes personal narratives, photographs, or archival materials.

It does **not** apply to projects using publicly available data or theoretical work with no human data; such projects are designated *Exempt* by the course instructor.

4. Guiding Principles

All research conducted under this workflow must observe the following:

- **Respect for Persons** – voluntary, informed consent.
- **Concern for Welfare** – protection of participants’ physical, emotional, and cultural well-being.
- **Justice** – equitable recruitment and fair treatment.
- **Academic Integrity** – honesty, accuracy, and acknowledgment of all contributors.
- **Cultural Sensitivity** – respect for Sikh, Indigenous, and multicultural ethical traditions.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Student Researcher	Complete TCPS 2 CORE certification; submit ethics application and consent materials; comply with REC conditions.
Course Instructor / Supervisor	Provide ethics orientation; pre-screen applications; ensure student submissions meet requirements; verify completion of ethics review before approving project launch.
Program Coordinator	Track submissions, ensure deadlines are met, and report non-compliance to the VP Academic.
Research Ethics Committee (REC)	Review and approve or return applications; maintain records; issue decision letters.
VP Academic & Quality Assurance	Ensure oversight, provide resources, and monitor compliance as part of institutional quality assurance.

6. Ethics Workflow Stages

6.1 Stage 1 – Preparation and Training

- Students complete the **TCPS 2 CORE Certificate** prior to submitting any proposal.
- Instructors provide in-class training on ethics principles, consent, privacy, and data handling.
- Capstone syllabus must specify ethics milestones and deadlines.

6.2 Stage 2 – Application Submission

- Student completes the **Student Research Ethics Application Form** and attaches:
 1. Research proposal summary (max 3 pages).
 2. Consent form and recruitment materials.
 3. TCPS 2 CORE completion certificate.
- Instructor reviews for completeness and endorses with signature.

- Applications are forwarded electronically to the **REC Secretary** via Moodle.

6.3 Stage 3 – Review Process

Type of Review	Reviewer	Timeline	Type of Review
<i>Exempt</i>	Instructor/Program Coordinator	≤ 5 business days	<i>Exempt</i>
<i>Expedited</i> (minimal risk)	Two REC members	≤ 10 business days	<i>Expedited</i> (minimal risk)
<i>Full Board</i> (greater risk or vulnerable populations)	Entire REC	≤ 30 business days	<i>Full Board</i> (greater risk or vulnerable populations)

Decisions are recorded as **Approved**, **Approved with Modifications**, **Deferred**, or **Rejected**.

6.4 Stage 4 – Approval and Conditions

- Upon approval, an **Ethics Clearance Letter** is issued to the student and instructor.
- Approval remains valid for **12 months**.
- Students must not begin recruitment or data collection before receiving this letter.

6.5 Stage 5 – Conduct of Research

- Students must adhere strictly to approved procedures.
- Any change in research design, sample, or methods requires **REC Amendment Approval**.
- Supervisors monitor ongoing compliance and may suspend activities if ethical issues arise.

6.6 Stage 6 – Completion and Archiving

- Upon project completion, students submit a **Research Completion Form** summarizing outcomes, consent documentation, and data-storage location.
- Data must be retained securely for **one-year** post-completion, then destroyed or de-identified.
- Copies of all forms are archived by the REC for five years.

7. Integration into Course Delivery

Each term, the Capstone or Research Methods course syllabus must include:

1. A dedicated **Ethics Module** covering principles, consent, and privacy.
2. Submission timelines aligned with the institutional REC meeting schedule.
3. Instructor checklist for ethics compliance before final grading.

4. Notation in student transcript: “*Capstone completed with approved ethics clearance.*”

8. Non-Compliance

Students or supervisors who begin research without ethics approval or who deviate from approved protocols are subject to sanctions under the **Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy**, which may include:

- invalidation of research results;
- grade penalties or suspension from research activities;
- referral to the VP Academic for disciplinary review.

9. Education and Support

GNI’s **Research & Ethics Committee** provides:

- TCPS 2 CORE registration guidance;
- sample consent and recruitment templates;
- annual workshops on ethical research design;
- Moodle integration for digital submission and tracking.

10. Reporting and Quality Assurance

- The REC Chair submits an annual summary of student ethics approvals, compliance rates, and identified challenges to the **Academic Council**.
- These data inform the **Institutional Quality Assurance Report** to the **Board of Directors**.
- Continuous improvement actions (e.g., revised templates, improved turnaround time) are tracked and published.

11. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed every **five years**, or earlier if there are changes in TCPS 2 guidelines, program structure, or DQAB requirements.

Appendix A – Ethics Workflow Overview

1. Complete TCPS 2 CORE certification
2. Instructor orientation & proposal approval
3. Ethics application submitted to REC
4. Review (exempt/expedited/full board)
5. Decision issued & approval letter released
6. Conduct research per approved protocol
7. Submit completion form & archive data
8. Annual REC reporting to Academic Council

Appendix B – Related Documents

- ADM-004Institutional Quality Assurance Policy
- ADM-017AcademicFreedomand Integrity Policy
- ADM-018Research Ethics and Integrity Policy
- ADM-024REC Terms of Reference
- Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (2022)