Policy: Ethical Conduct for Research involving Human Subjects

POLICY STATEMENT

Consistent with the Mission of Seneca College, research conducted by the College is primarily applied research (Seneca Academic Plan 2012-2017, Seneca Strategic Plan 2012-2017). Seneca College has a responsibility to safeguard the rights and well-being of students, Faculty and staff, and other members of the Seneca community and ensure that research projects associated with the College adhere to accepted ethical, legal and integrity standards, consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 Guidelines and as stated in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2010

The primary responsibility for ensuring that the rights and interests of all human subjects involved in research are respected rests with the individuals involved in these research activities. Seneca faculty and staff and all other persons conducting research associated with the College are responsible for the integrity of their work and upholding the principles and responsibilities as stated in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2010 (http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf)

Definition

Research involving human subjects in this context refers to research conducted within the Seneca College community or associated with Seneca College, where human beings participate in research studies, or where databases of information about them will be used as part of a research study. Data collection that is part of the core mandate and normal operations of the college is normally not considered to be research studies.

Underlying Principles

The College is committed to ensuring that the rights of all participants in research involving individuals associated with Seneca College are safeguarded. In general, this includes but is not limited to employees, students, parents/guardians of minors, alumni and clients etc.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following rights:

*Respect for Human Dignity* – is the cardinal principle of research ethics. This includes protection of the “multiple and interdependent interest of the person” (Tri-Council Policy Statement, p. 1.5), protecting their integrity and safeguarding them from physical, psychological or cultural harm.

*Respect for Free and Informed Consent.* This includes a clear disclosure of the nature of the research study, its potential impact on the participant, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from participation or refrain from answering any question(s) that are deemed by the participant to be intrusive, without
Respect for Vulnerable Persons. This refers to a high ethical obligation towards vulnerable persons, (such as children and persons who are developmentally challenged) that is, those whose capacity to make informed decisions is diminished makes them vulnerable. This may require special procedures to protect these individuals’ interests.

Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality. This includes the protection of access to, control of and dissemination of personal information. It means that participants are assured of confidentiality, anonymity and/or non-identifiability, unless they consent to disclosure in an informed, written authorization.

Respect of Justice and Inclusiveness. This means the ethics review process has fair methods, standards and procedures for reviewing research proposals, and that “no segment of the population should be unfairly burdened with the harms of research” (Tri-Council Policy p. 1.5)

Balancing Harms and Benefits. This means that the “foreseeable harms should not outweigh anticipated benefits” (Tri-Council Policy, p. 1.6)

Minimizing Harm. This involves the duty to avoid, prevent or minimize harm to research subjects. Participants should not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm.

Maximizing Benefit. This involved maximizing the benefit to the study participants and others or society. It includes providing access to the findings of the research.

Policies

1. Any individual(s) wishing to conduct research within the context of, or associated with, Seneca College is required to submit an application for ethics approval to the Seneca Research Ethics Board (via the Office of Applied Research and Innovation).

2. All applications for ethics approval pursuant to article 1 shall be reviewed by the Research Ethics Board (REB) or, in the case of Student Course-Based Research and in compliance with the procedures outlined in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2010, to the appropriate non-REB delegated reviewer for Student Course-Based Research.

3. The Research Ethics Board and non-REB delegated reviewer(s) of Student Course-Based Research will review the research application to ensure that all of the rights of human subjects identified above have been fully safeguarded.

4. All research, ethics applications, reviews, and communications shall be conducted and evaluated in accordance with the articles of the Terms of Reference for Seneca College’s Research Ethics Board.
5. The membership, governance, and protocols governing the REB and non-REB delegated review process for Student Course-Based Research shall comply with the Terms of Reference for Seneca College’s Research Ethic Board.

6. No research activities are to begin until the applicant receives written approval from the Research Ethics Board or non-REB delegated reviewer of Student Course-based Research.

7. The applicant will be notified (normally within 2 weeks) of any issues that need to be addressed, deny or grant approval to proceed.

8. The principal investigator is responsible for notifying the REB immediately if any major changes in the research methodology and procedures are anticipated and explanation of how the rights of human subjects will be safeguarded. The research may not continue until approval to do so is again granted.

9. Where the research is supported financially from external sources (e.g., CIF, OIT, Tri-Council granting agencies), the principal investigator is responsible for the approved use of these funds and for meeting all the reporting requirements of the granting agency.

10. The College shall not engage in any research involving animals.