MPA Research Reports Ethics Submissions Guide

You should read this document if you are an MPA student who has not yet completed his/her Research Report work AND anticipates doing work for the report that requires ethics review; OR if you are a supervisor of such a student.

Do I require ethics review?

MPA students require ethics review for their Research Report work IF the work involves surveys, focus groups, or interviews that are more than just informational (ie, you are asking about recollections and opinions, rather than just collecting factual information / data).

If your work does **not** involve any of the above (for example, if you're only using documents, written reports, media articles, and/or previously gathered statistical data), you do not need ethics clearance, and you do not need to read the rest of this Guide.

The new process

As of March 2016, any MPA Research Report work that requires ethics clearance must go through the University-wide Research Ethics approval process. This process is substantively similar to the old Department-level process; the intellectual work that you have to do as a student or supervisor is virtually identical. However, it is (unfortunately) administratively a bit more complicated. The purpose of this guide is to give you a (hopefully) straightforward set of guidelines for how to complete an ethics submission.

Timeline / deadline

The vast majority of our students will qualify for a "delegated" ethics review process. There is no University deadline for ethics submissions to the delegated process, and we are told that turnaround time is a matter of a week or two. **Only** if your research involves interacting with "vulnerable populations" (eg, interviewing children, homeless people, or other individuals who might be considered vulnerable) will you need to go through a longer "full board" review.

Given the learning curve surrounding the new process, we have shifted our suggested deadline for ethics submission to **April 15**. This deadline (which can be further revised in consultation with your supervisor) is for students who aim to complete the Report by the end of July.

I'm a supervisor. What do I need to do?

1. The supervisor helps the student to decide whether ethics review is necessary; if it is, the supervisor helps the student as necessary through the process of designing the research strategy and developing the documents (eg., Letter of Information; consent form; survey).

2. In addition, for ethics purposes, ONLY the supervisor can be "Principal Investigator" (PI) on student projects. What does this mean? It means two basic things:

a. The supervisor must have, or establish, a personal profile on ROMEO, the on-line ethics submission system. If you are a supervisor who doesn't have a profile on ROMEO, go to this page to make one (it only takes a couple of minutes):

http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/romeo/romeo_new_investigator_form.html

b. The student will fill out the ethics submission form and attach necessary documents (see below). However, the supervisor must be the one to **submit** the ethics documentation, both in initial form, and once any revisions requested by the Office of Research Ethics have been made.

   How does this work? The student will list the supervisor as PI on the student's project. The student will inform the supervisor when the ethics documents are ready for submission; the supervisor will then log in to the ROMEO system, review the documents as he/she deems necessary, and press the "submit" button. Same process if the student is required to make any revisions by the Office of Research Ethics.

I'm a student. What do I need to do?

1. Determine whether or not your research will require ethics review.

2. If you require ethics review, establish a ROMEO account. This is quick. Go here:

   http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/romeo/romeo_new_investigator_form.html

   Within a day or so of submitting the form, you will receive an email to your UWO account with your login information.

3. Log in to the ROMEO system and click on the "Apply New" button at the top right. Familiarize yourself with the various tabs in the form and the information that you will be required to provide. The entire form (with all tabs rolled into one document) is attached to this email. It looks very long, but NOTE that many of the questions are optional and may not be relevant for you. This is why you should look at the form on-line as well – *the only mandatory questions are the ones with red asterisks beside them*.

4. Fill in the form. Note that you can save, exit, and then re-open the form later (by logging in to ROMEO and clicking "edit" on your application), so you don't need to do it all at once. IMPORTANT: List your supervisor as Principal Investigator for the project. List yourself as "Research Support Staff". Yes, it's strange, but apparently this is only way that feedback on the proposal will be e-mailed to you.

5. Attach a Letter of Information (LOI) and Consent Form and – if relevant – your survey or questionnaire. If you're using a survey or questionnaire, you don't need a separate written consent form – you'll just note in your LOI that completion of the survey/questionnaire implies consent. If you're doing interviews, you will need to develop a consent form and bring it to the interview to be signed. You can find

guidelines and a template for the LOI and Consent Form here (under the "Consent Documentation" tab):

http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/nonmedical_reb/NMREB_Templates.html

Since the guidelines are rather lengthy, I am also attaching a sample Letter of Information (from an old research project of mine) to this e-mail so you can visualize how one of these letters might look. Please note that this is just a sample; your letter will likely differ in numerous ways from this, depending on the nature of your project. (For example, unlike me, all of you will note in your letter who is supervising you, and will provide contact information for **both** the supervisor and yourself).

6. Let your supervisor know that your ethics submission is ready to send in; your supervisor will log in to ROMEO, review the submission, and press the "submit" button.

7. Within a week or so, you should receive an email notification that your submission has been reviewed. Log back in to ROMEO and see whether it has been approved as-is, or whether you need to make any revisions. If you need to make revisions, the process for doing so is described pretty clearly and succinctly on pp. 6-7 of the following document:

   http://www.uwo.ca/research/_docs/ethics/Non-Medica_REB_Researcher_Guideline_final_July%2023_2013.pdf

   (This document also describes the earlier stages in the process in greater detail, so you can refer to it if this guide leaves questions unanswered).

8. Assuming you've made acceptable revisions, you should receive an e-mail notifying you that you have ethics approval within a few days. You're good to do your research!