UVic Human Research Ethics COVID-19 Bulletin #1

Date: March 23, 2020
To: Faculty and Student Researchers
From: Sandra Gibbons, Chair, Human Research Ethics Board
       Chris Lalonde, Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

You are receiving this bulletin because you or your student has submitted a research ethics application to the UVic-RAIS online system.

In addition to information you have been receiving from UVic, we would like to inform you of new procedures and options outlined in this bulletin.

Effective March 20, 2020

- All on and off-campus research that involves in-person activities, interactions are suspended until further notice as per the memo from Dr. Lisa Kalynchuk, Vice-President, Research.
  [https://www.uvic.ca/covid-19/faculty-staff/research/index.php](https://www.uvic.ca/covid-19/faculty-staff/research/index.php)

- Human Research ethics homepage

  The moratorium applies to: i) studies that were issued research ethics approval prior to March 20, 2020 and involve any in-person activities, interactions (e.g., recruitment, data collection, community engagement etc.) and ii) studies in-review.

  Exceptions to the moratorium may include special situations such as research arising from, or about COVID-19. Please contact ethics@uvic.ca about initiating COVID-19 research.

- No new studies involving in-person interactions with participants and communities will receive a Certificate of Approval and in-person activities may NOT begin until further notice.

- Faculty, students and staff still have the ongoing option to conduct research that does not involve human participants or does not involve in-person recruitment and/or data collection activities. Please see examples of research that, under normal circumstances, do not involve human participants or human biological materials.
  [https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review_exemptions_and_requirements.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review_exemptions_and_requirements.pdf)
As the current COVID-19 situation is very fluid, and your research may be taking place in different locations within or outside Canada these interim policies may be subject to change. We will update you as necessary in future bulletins.

What does the moratorium mean for you? What options do you have?

**New Studies: You have received your Notice of Ethical Review and you have submitted required changes**

- Until further notice, only studies that do NOT involve in-person recruitment and/or data collection activities will be approved and issued a Certificate of Approval.

- If you decide to make *minor elective changes* to replace all in-person activities with remote activities/formats (e.g., changing in-person interviews to telephone or skype or to remove in-person observations etc.) please do so now. *We will review the elective changes and may have additional requirements.*

Note that if the elective changes are not minor or reflect a different study altogether from the original study that was reviewed, the Board reserves the right to take additional time or instruct you on what is required.

- **Options:** If you decide not to replace in-person activities at this time, prefer to make a decision later based on context or timing of your program completion, or to wait until the moratorium is lifted, please do NOT send back your application to us.

  Reasons: You will be able to decide whenever it suits you, research partners or communities. As UVic-RAIS is an electronic system, researchers can only make changes to the application when it has been returned to them.

- Faculty, students and staff still have the ongoing option to conduct research that does not involve human participants or does not involve in-person recruitment and/or data collection activities. Please see examples of research that, under normal circumstances, do not involve human participants or human biological materials.  
  [https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review-exemptions_and_requirements.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review-exemptions_and_requirements.pdf)

**New Studies: You have received your Notice of Ethical Review and you have not submitted required changes**

- We will review your application based on the study that you submitted. We will issue you a Notice of Ethical Review.

- If you need to make *minor elective changes* to replace all in-person activities with remote activities/formats (e.g., changing in-person interviews to telephone or skype or to remove in-person observations etc.) please submit *elective changes* together with required changes that still apply. *We will review the elective changes and may have additional requirements.*
Note that if the elective changes are not minor or reflect a different study altogether from the original study that was reviewed, the Board reserves the right to take additional time or instruct you on what is required.

- **Options:** If you decide not to replace in-person activities at this time, prefer to make a decision later based on context or timing of your program completion, or to wait until the moratorium is lifted, please do NOT send back your application to us.

Reasons: You will be able to make a decision whenever it suits you, research collaborators or communities. As UVic-RAIS is an electronic system, researchers can only functionally make changes to the application when it has been returned to them.

- Faculty, students and staff still have the ongoing option to conduct research that does not involve human participants or does not involve in-person recruitment and/or data collection activities. Please see examples of research that, under normal circumstances, do not involve human participants or human biological materials. [https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review_exemptions_and_requirements.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/research/assets/docs/Ethics/research_ethics_review_exemptions_and_requirements.pdf)

**New Studies:** You have submitted your application and have not received your Notice of Ethical Review

- No changes to the review or the application’s place in the queue.
- You will be provided with options at the time of Notice of Ethical Review so that you can make decisions at that time.

**Post Approval Activities: Amendments to studies that have been approved**

If you decide to make minor elective changes to replace all in-person activities with remote activities/formats (e.g., changing in-person interviews to telephone or skype or to remove in-person observations etc.) please submit an amendment.

- If you do not have time to submit the elective changes via an amendment before engaging with participants remotely, you are permitted to make the changes without research ethics amendment when the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participants [TCPS2 Article 6.15].

You will be temporarily granted a maximum window of 10 business days to submit an amendment that will be reviewed.

You are still required to follow university and public health requirements, and to keep current on changes to the local and international pandemic situation.

Note that minor elective changes to eliminate immediate risk, specifically pandemic risk of exposure to COVID-19 applies chiefly to the adoption of remote technology methods (e.g., telephone, skype, email, teleconferencing etc.).
It does not apply to replacing in-person interviews/focus groups with in-person interviews/discussions augmented by social distancing practices or de-sanitizing procedures, out-of-doors, at lab on or off campus, or at another location.

**Post Approval Activities: You have submitted a renewal for an existing study**

The ethics office will process the renewal with the following limitations:

If your approved study involves in-person activities with participants and their communities, the moratorium applies to your study. You are not permitted to continue activities involving in-person contact with participants or communities until further notice.

You may, however conduct the following: enter data into bases/programs, transcribe data, conduct data analysis, write up findings.

You have the option of amending the study to remove in-person activities at this time. Please see “Amendment to studies that have been approved.”

**Questions**

We are available to support you including via telephone. Please contact the staff via email as all are working remotely.

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