

University of King's College Research Ethics Policy

1. Introduction

The University of King's College is committed to ethical practices in research and we subscribe to the guidelines presented in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Second edition, 2010, known as TCPS 2), the basic guiding document for researchers in Canada. This document is currently found on the internet at <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/> and should be consulted by all researchers who involve humans for research purposes at the University of King's College.

This foundational document outlines essential principles regarding *respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice*, to be considered in relation to such issues as autonomy, lack of coercion, full and informed consent, and privacy.

All research projects involving humans are governed by the protocols outlined in TCPS 2 and should be overseen by a duly constituted research ethics board. Such activity includes grant-supported research, independent research, and research undertaken as part of normal teaching activity, including undergraduate courses.

The University of King's College is too small to have a fully developed set of panels and procedures for ethical conduct for research involving humans, yet we are committed to its principles. So we have turned to Dalhousie University for specific policies and for a review structure.

2. Research Ethics Policy at the University of King's College and Dalhousie University

The College currently has four active undergraduate programs in arts (Foundation Year, Early Modern Studies, Contemporary Studies, and the History of Science and Technology) all of which are part of a "College of Arts and Sciences" at Dalhousie, specifically part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and subject to regulations of Dalhousie Senate.

We also have a School of Journalism, the undergraduate program directly part of King's, and the graduate program part of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Dalhousie University. For purposes of academic management, only undergraduate Journalism is not subject to review by the Senate of Dalhousie University. In the matter of academic integrity, however, Journalism is now managed by a joint agreement with Dalhousie.

Because almost all of our courses and research activity is tied so tightly to Dalhousie University, the University of King's College therefore undertakes to follow the *Dalhousie University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans* (approved by Senate, May 14, 2012; available online

at the Dalhousie website and also on the King's website) to provide guidance for principles and policy. Exception is made for professional practice in the School of Journalism (see section 4 below, and Appendix A to this document).

3. All Research Ethics Reviews to be Undertaken by Dalhousie University

By agreement with Dalhousie (as summarized in Appendix B), any University-level (as distinct from Unit-level) research ethics review required for research conducted by faculty, staff or students will be undertaken by the appropriate Research Ethics Board of Dalhousie University.

4. Journalism and Professional Practice

For purposes of research ethics in relation to humans, the School of Journalism will follow the approach taken by King's generally, but for purposes of professional practice, the School will follow the approach outlined in Appendix A.

5. Oversight through a King's Research Ethics Committee

The policies and practices in relation to research ethics require continuous oversight and a mechanism for review at the local level. This work is to be undertaken by a Research Ethics Committee. This committee, appointed by the Faculty of the University of King's College, will have three members of faculty, two of whom are members of the School of Journalism. The Committee will meet as needed to review current practices at King's, will provide guidance to those seeking guidance in relation to research ethics and/or professional practice in Journalism, will ensure that policies are properly disseminated (via the College website) and will produce a short written report once a year to Faculty at King's. The Committee may consult with the Dalhousie Director of Research Ethics or designate as needed.

The Research Ethics Committee will also serve as the Unit-level Ethics Committee for undergraduate courses at King's, as described by the *Dalhousie University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans*.

5.2.7 Responsibility of Supervisors of Undergraduate Student Researchers

Supervisors of undergraduate students engaged in undergraduate thesis, or independent research projects must ensure that their students conduct the research in an ethical manner and also have sufficient training and competency to do so. The Supervisor must also ensure that the research is reviewed at the appropriate level, initially consulting with the standing Unit-level Ethics Committee in this regard, prior to its being initiated. Where undergraduates are engaged in non-thesis research, supervisory responsibility rests with course instructors.

Instructors must also ensure that an appropriate review is carried out, initially consulting with the standing Unit-level Ethics Committee in this regard.

Appendix A: Journalism Ethics Policy and Professional Practice

1. Preamble

This document is to be read as Appendix A of the University of King's College Policy on Research Ethics. This University policy follows ethical practices for research based on the Dalhousie Research ethics policy (2012), in turn based on guidelines from the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics Policy (2010). For reasons outlined below, the Tricouncil guidelines that apply to regular scholarly research would render the teaching and practice of journalism impossible. The following thus outlines the ethical guidelines for professional practice in relation to the School of Journalism. These guidelines are in line with standard professional practices as followed by university journalism schools across Canada.

2. Ethics and the Practice of Journalism

Journalists have a great responsibility in our democracy to reveal what is unknown, to hold those in power to account, and to minimize any harm to individuals resulting from their practice.

Ethical journalism strives for:

- A commitment to researching and verifying information before publication.
- A consistent practice of providing rebuttal opportunity for those being criticized, and of presenting alternate perspectives, interpretations and analyses.
- The use of plain language, and story-telling techniques, as a means to attract a broad rather than an expert audience.
- An honest representation of intent to sources.
- A practice of conveying the source of facts.
- A practice of correcting errors.

(What is Journalism? A Report of the Ethics Advisory Committee of The Canadian Association of Journalists. <.source.ca/article/what-journalism>. Retrieved 6 November 2013.)

In addition to these commitments which are embedded in regular professional practice, the King's School of Journalism also has an *Ethics Code* at <<http://ethics.kingsjournalism.com/>>. This code is broadly modeled on guidelines of such major media outlets as the Globe and Mail, the CBC and the Toronto Star. The King's *Ethics Code* covers issues of

- plagiarism
- gifts
- conflicts of interest
- respect for sources

- honesty and transparency in requesting of interviews
- bias
- importance of hard work, courage, and human decency as conditions of work.

All journalists try to present accurate information at all times. The School of Journalism also follows widely accepted professional practice in its corrections policy. School-controlled publications are called upon to publish corrections to errors of fact in a timely manner, on all platforms on which the story was published *or* archived, in keeping with the Canadian Association of Journalists' paper on this topic (<http://www.caj.ca/?p=1866>).

As these principles indicate, journalistic professional practice has a lot in common with ethical research. But the process of following ethical journalistic practice is affected by two important differences from university research.

The first is timeliness. Journalists must work quickly, must find and interview sources under pressure of deadline and must make decisions to speak to new sources, not previously contemplated, in the field. As such, journalists must have agency to make decisions quickly, in consultation with editors, producers, or, in the case of journalism students, their professors. There is little time to produce refined research plans for approval. The research is shifting as it progresses.

A second consideration is the approach to identification of sources. One of the ethical underpinnings of journalism is that those who speak to journalists speak publicly, and must take responsibility for their words. Thus, when a source speaks to a journalist for publication, that is the same as speaking the words publicly and no formal releases are called for or expected. Only when publication of information is significantly in the public interest *and* the source could suffer serious personal or professional harm (such as loss of a job or physical harm) is anonymity accepted as part of journalistic practice. The protection of sources in this latter condition is a powerful ethical belief in contemporary journalism.

3. Ensuring ethical practice

The School of Journalism teaches ethical principles as an essential feature of its curriculum, both through formal ethics training in courses and through a robust program of closely supervised writing and reporting assignments that begins as soon as students start their studies.

All students in the School of Journalism are required to take JOUR 3122 (in the 4-year BJH curriculum) or JOUR 5121 (in the one-year BJ curriculum) as part of their degree requirements. This course uses a topic- and case-based approach to instill responsible professional practices in all students.

For routine undergraduate and graduate assignments, the Director and faculty engage in a continuous dialogue to ensure that assignments meet professional ethical standards.

The work of reviewing and maintaining ethical practices in the School of Journalism is undertaken by the King's Research Ethics Committee.

4. Research in Journalism

As is appropriate in an academic environment, Journalism is also an area for research, in addition to being a professional practice. So, for research projects which arise in the work of faculty members or in student research projects undertaken in the graduate program, such work will be reviewed by the King's Research Ethics Committee (two of the three members of this Committee are members of the School of Journalism), and where a research project is found to fall under the Tricouncil guidelines and not to constitute professional practice in journalism, a recommendation will be made to refer this project to the appropriate research ethics board at Dalhousie.

Appendix B: Outline of Proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Dalhousie University

Definitions:

“Dalhousie’s Ethics Review Policy” means Dalhousie University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, as approved by Dalhousie’s Senate

“Dalhousie Research Ethics Boards” means the Dalhousie Health Sciences Research Ethics Board and the Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board or either of them

Basic Terms:

1. All student research involving humans that is course-based research in a King’s course, that poses minimal risk and that does not involve a vulnerable participation, will be reviewed by the King’s Research Ethics Committee. In so doing, the King’s Research Ethics Committee is acting as a “Unit-Level Research Ethics Committee” under Dalhousie’s Ethics Review Policy. The King’s Research Ethics Committee will follow the Dalhousie Ethics Review Policy in this regard, with the exception of the requirement to provide reports to the Dalhousie Research Ethics Boards. Ethics review for these types of projects will remain with King’s.
2. All other King’s faculty, staff and student research involving humans will be referred to the appropriate Dalhousie Research Ethics Board. The determination of whether a research project meets the criteria for referral to Dalhousie will be made by the King’s Research Ethics Committee.
3. Dalhousie will provide research ethics review by one of the Dalhousie Research Ethics Boards for all research projects referred to Dalhousie by the King’s Research Ethics Committee under the MOU.
4. King’s researchers referred to Dalhousie will be required to follow the Dalhousie Ethics Review Policy and all supporting procedures and guidelines.
5. King’s shall be responsible for, and have exclusive authority over, all aspects of the actual conduct of the research and for the administration of any research funding.
6. The term will be five years, with automatic renewals, and an opportunity for early termination on notice.