

June 15, 2020

COVID-19 UNBC Chair Bulletin #2

Dear UNBC Researchers and Staff,

In response to the Provincial Health Officer's implementation of Phase 2 of BC's Restart Plan following the declaration of a state of emergency, UNBC's Office of Research has modified its requirements regarding in-person data collection accordingly. Researchers should be aware that we may return to the original restrictions outlined in our March 28 bulletin or be required to adopt new procedures at any time, should the COVID-19 situation change, as monitored and updated by the Provincial Health Officer.

- All research activities and new recruitment of participants to research should avoid in-person interactions.
- No travel between communities should occur that is not essential.
- No new studies involving **in-person interaction** with participants in the province will receive a Certificate of Approval and recruitment may **not** begin unless the research proposal includes a plan that addresses the requirements outlined by the Provincial Health Office for all four phases of the provincial restart plan. The phase status will change over the course of the research project, and immediate action will be required by the researcher to remain in compliance with the Provincial Health Office. Please refer to the provincial website for information on the requirements of each phase. ¹
- No new studies involving **in-person interaction** with participants outside the province will receive a Certificate of Approval and recruitment may **not** begin unless the research proposal includes a plan that addresses the requirements of the research location, and a travel plan for the researchers conducting the research activities. Please refer to the provincial website for information on the requirements of each phase.¹

¹ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan?bcgovtm=20200506_GCPE_AM_COVID_9_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC_NOTIFICATION#phases

- Researchers are encouraged to consider the additional burden placed on potential research sites during the COVID-19 situation and to consider the timing of their research and plans for data collection. All necessary consents for the site of the research activities need to be updated to include any site COVID-19 considerations.
- Researchers are encouraged to consider the influences of COVID-19 on the level of comfort of their potential participants when designing in-person data collection, and the level of comfort of the communities when researchers intend to visit to conduct their in-person research interactions. The researcher needs to ensure they feel safe to participate in the in-person research activity.
- The REB will **continue to review** new research ethics applications and work with PIs to bring their study into compliance with the TCPS2, and COVID-19 related considerations if in-person interactions are identified a part of their research project.
- New studies that **do not involve in-person** interaction with participants, and do not pose any risks to researchers or research staff, will be reviewed using standard procedures and research can begin once a certificate of approval is received.
- We ask that any New Applications or Amendment Applications, or e-mails sent to the REB that relate to issues or queries relating to COVID-19 are named accordingly so that they can be easily identified.
- Studies of COVID-19 health outcomes will continue to receive an expedited review, as per the provincial plan.

Please remain aware that, as the ongoing situation is fluid, these interim measures will change, and we will update you as necessary in future bulletins. Should you have any questions about these policies or other issues, please do not hesitate to contact Isobel Hartley, Research Ethics Officer, at isobel.hartley@unbc.ca, or email reb@unbc.ca.

Dr. Henry Harder,
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Dr. Kathy Lewis,
Acting Vice-President, Research