

Hello McMaster Researchers,

This FAQ contains important information about MREB research ethics review procedures and requirements during the disruption caused by COVID-19. For updated information on McMaster University's response to COVID-19 visit <https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/>. Please contact the MREB Secretariat (ethics office) with any questions about ethics review during this disruption – ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca.

Q. Is MREB operating as usual?

A. The MREB ethics office on campus is closed and in-person support will not be provided. The ethics office staff are working remotely and will continue to respond to your questions by email and are able to meet with you by phone. Review of new applications and other forms will continue as usual.

Q. What if I need to change study procedures due to COVID-19 and/or social distancing requirements?

A. McMaster's directive is to cease all face-to-face research, which may also affect other parts of your approved protocol, such as how team members are accessing study data. See the [Research FAQs for COVID-19](#) for full details. Should you need to change your recruitment, data collection, informed consent, data security, or other study procedures, please submit an Amendment form for review. The change must be reviewed by MREB before implementation. The MREB Chairs will prioritize review of amendments for studies requiring changes due to COVID-19.

Examples of changes that could require an Amendment include:

- Poster or in-person recruitment to email/social media recruitment
- In-person interviews to telephone or online interviews
- In-person/lab-based studies to online studies
- Focus groups held in-person to an online or teleconference format
- Written Consent to Verbal Consent using a Verbal Consent Log
- Changes to incentives or how they will be given to participants

If you need to make changes to a recently submitted application that is still in the review process, please send an email to ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca and we can advise you on how to proceed depending on where it is in the process.

Q. What if I am only changing the study dates due to COVID-19 or making a similar minor administrative change?

A. If you are only delaying your study or making another minor change that does not substantively change the protocol or documents, then you could submit a For Information Only form instead of an Amendment. This form is used to update the file with new information that does not require REB review. If you are unsure if your change can be submitted via a For Information Only form, please contact the ethics office at ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca.

Q. What if I need to modify the study procedures immediately in order to protect participants from COVID-19 transmission?

A. The TCPS2 does allow an exception where a change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participants and there is no time for an amendment review (TCPS2, Art. 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the REB at the earliest opportunity (ideally within 5 business days). To report this type of protocol deviation to MREB use the Reportable Event form (a sub-form within MacREM, accessed the same way as an Amendment or Annual Report).

Q. What if I have COVID-19 related research that is time sensitive and requires MREB approval?

A. Please contact ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca at the time of submission to inform us of the need for a prioritized review. The ethics office staff will make every effort to find reviewers who can do a timely review of the protocol and the MREB Chairs will prioritize the application when providing MREB feedback.

Q. Are there any other actions I should take due to COVID-19 and the social distancing guidelines?

A. Please continue to monitor the University's [COVID-19 site](#), McMaster's [Daily News](#) and the University's [Research & Innovation](#) site for the most current directives.

Please contact the MREB ethics office if you have any questions about the above – ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca.