LUREB Policy Statement on conducting research with human participants during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, current to March 26th, 2020

Public health authorities are advising against all non-essential social interactions at this time. In consideration of the risks inherent to ongoing research in both clinical and behavioural studies involving human participants, investigators are strongly advised to consider if their research protocols can be modified or delayed so as to eliminate personal contacts. Specifically, in-person participant interactions in research settings could be replaced with telephone or online communication. Considerations include the nature of your protocol, the type of participants engaged in the research, and any additional risks that may arise by switching from in-person to virtual communication (such as unsupervised physical activities or non-secure collection/transmission of personally identifying information). Revised participant consents or consent addendums may be required (e.g., to update privacy considerations with the use of different communication channels).

Please note that the VP Research office stated on March 19th that career interruption for researchers and trainees was not a sufficient justification for ongoing access to campus labs and research facilities. This reasoning now extends as well to all community-based research with human participants that anticipated face-to-face, sharing circle or focus group type interactions. Please seek advice from the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (LUREB) Chair, Rosanna Langer, Ph.D. should you have any questions about acceptable modifications, ethics@laurentian.ca.

Updated Health authority guidelines should be followed in all research contexts.

While TCPS 2 typically requires review and approval of modifications prior to implementation, an exception can be made where the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participant(s) (Article 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the REB at the earliest opportunity (within 5 - 15 business days as a guide).

Should you determine that changes in your procedures are immediately required, you may implement them, without prior approval from the REB. Please seek advice from the LUREB Chair, Rosanna Langer, Ph.D., should you have any questions about acceptable modifications, (ethics@laurentian.ca). You will need to ensure that you are **not** introducing other risks, propose new methods to mitigate new risks such as data breaches, and you may need to ask participants to sign revised informed consent forms. The changes should be reported to the REB through ROMEO as soon as possible, along with copies of any new or revised subject-facing materials.

Notification to the sponsor of the study where applicable is required. This remains the responsibility of the researchers.