

MEMO

ATTENTION: Senate,
c/o Kate Ross, Registrar and Secretary of Senate

FROM: Charles Goldsmith, Chair, Research Ethics Board

RE: Annual REB Senate Report 2012/13

DATE: October 8, 2013

Dear Kate Ross:

In accordance with Policy R20.01, "Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Subjects", Section 14.7, I am submitting, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board, the Annual Report to Senate. The report spans the time frame September 1, 2012 to August 31, 2013.

Sincerely,



Charles Goldsmith, Ph.D.
Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Enclosure

/bjz

Annual Report to Senate

September 1, 2012– August 31, 2013

Over the past year, the SFU Research Ethics Board (REB) has refined its policies and procedures to clarify its standard requirements for research submissions, kept abreast of national and provincial changes in guidelines and legislation that impact research ethics, provided ongoing education and continued to be responsive to the inquiries of our research community.

Many changes to the REB and the Office of Research Ethics (ORE) have occurred in the past year. After 13 years of service in the department, the Director, Hal Weinberg, retired in March 2013. In June 2013, the SFU REB underwent a dramatic change in membership. The Chair, Dr. Simon Verdun-Jones, who had served on the REB for 6.5 years, and the Deputy Chair, Dr. Gary McCarron, both stepped down after the end of their term on May 31, 2013. They were both thanked for their efforts and contribution to the management of the REB.

The current membership of the REB, most of whom were elected in June 2013, and current ORE staff can be found below. The current Chair, Charles Goldsmith, was elected June 2013.

Current Members

Elected by/from Faculty	Faculty	Term Ends
Charles Goldsmith (Chair)	Health Sciences	May 31, 2016
Andrew Blaber (Deputy Chair)	Science	May 31, 2016
Ron Wakkary	Communication, Art and Technology	May 31, 2016
Mirza Faisal Beg	Applied Sciences	May 31, 2016
Wendy Thornton	Arts and Social Sciences	May 31, 2016
Peter Hall	Arts and Social Sciences	May 31, 2016
Norm O'Rourke	Arts and Social Sciences	May 31, 2016
Kim Trottier	Business Administration	May 31, 2015
Maureen Hoskyn	Education	May 31, 2015
Jeremy Snyder	Health Sciences	May 31, 2016
Paul Li	Science	May 31, 2016
Nadine Schuurman	Environment	May 31, 2014

Student Members Elected by Senate

		Term Ends
Ehsan Jozaghi	Graduate Student	May 31, 2015
Marc Legacy	Graduate Student	May 31, 2015

Elected by Senate from Community Outside SFU

	Term Ends
Margit Nance	May 31, 2016
Sarah Dadkhah	May 31, 2016
Vivian Lo	May 31, 2016

Office of Research Ethics

Dina Shafey, Associate Director	Janet Yule, Ethics Assistant	Paola Pinto Vidal, Office Assistant (1/2 time)
Barb Zollinger, Ethics Manager	Angela Tai, Office Assistant	

Demand For Research Ethics Review

All SFU Faculty, staff and students, who are conducting a new research study involving human participants, submit an initial application for ethical review, which must be reviewed and approved by the SFU REB and the Director/Associate Director, ORE, before any research-related procedures can begin. Applications for amendments to previously approved studies are also received throughout the year for studies that require changes to the research protocol, consent form(s) or other documentation. All amendments must be approved prior to implementation.

From September 1, 2012 to August 31, 2013, 535 requests for initial ethical review of research were received and reviewed by the SFU REB/ORE. Additionally, there were 14 REB approved courses this past year. The volume of initial ethical reviews remained above 500 studies for the second consecutive year (Figure 1, Figure 2). A decrease in the number of studies reviewed in the 2012-2013 year may be partially attributed to the revisions to R20.01, which specifically exempt quality assurance, quality improvement and program evaluation studies from research ethics review. By permitting studies that involve assessments of the performance of an organization or its employees or students, within the mandate of the organization, or according to the terms and conditions of employment or training to be exempt from research ethics review, has permitted the REB and ORE to focus more attention on ensuring the rights of participants and researchers are protected in true research studies. All studies that were reviewed eventually received approval.

Figure 1: Minimal Risk Study Approvals by Academic Year September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2013

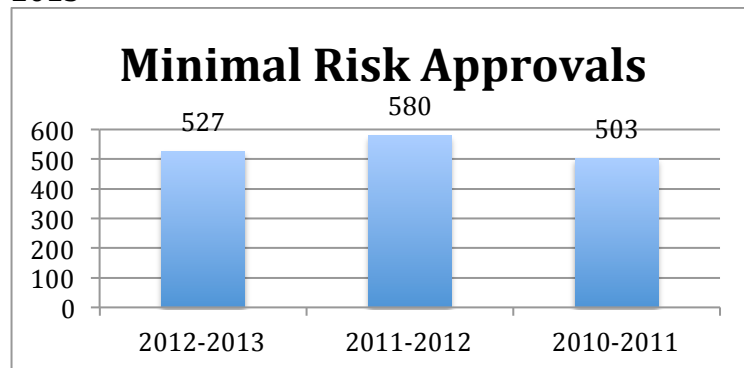
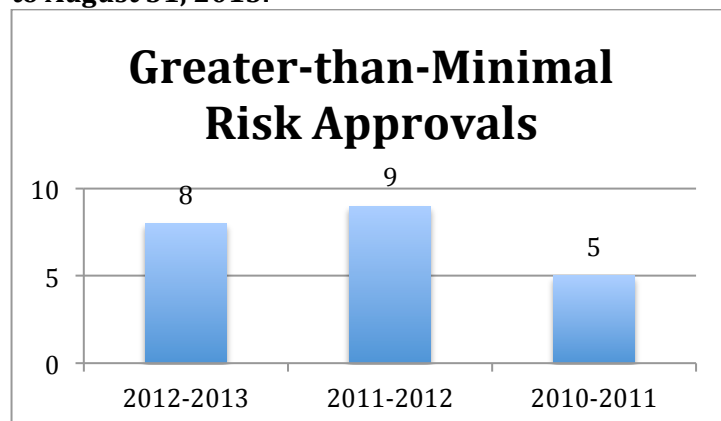
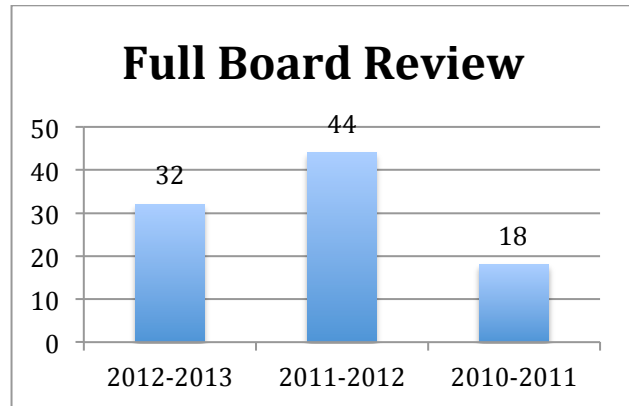


Figure 2: Greater-Than-Minimal Risk Study Approvals by Academic Year September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2013.



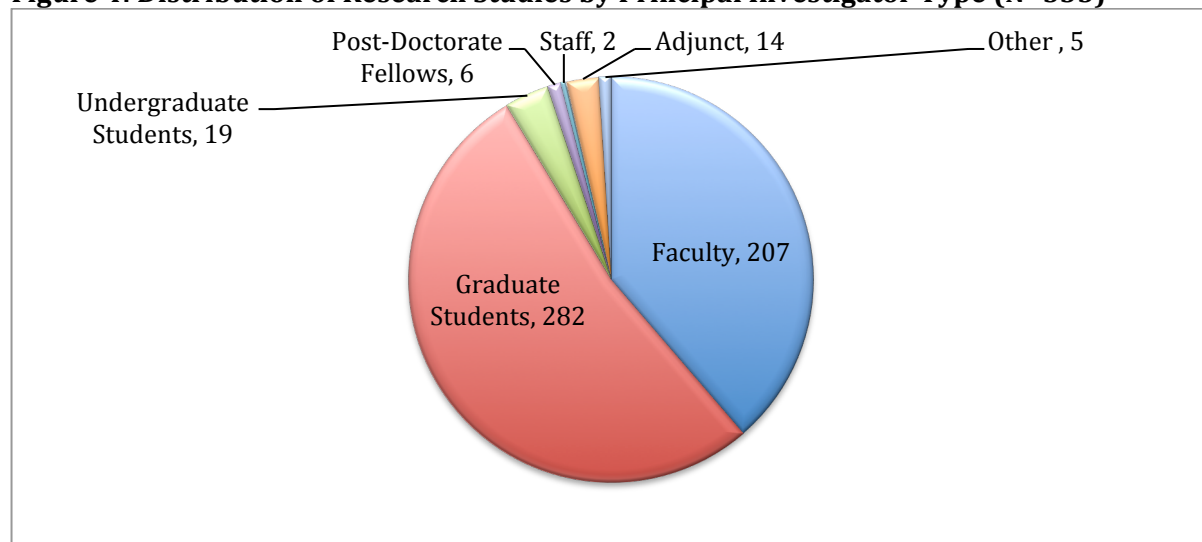
Proportionate review requires that research studies that may be designated as greater-than-minimal risk or are more complex in nature must be reviewed by the Full Board. Delegated review for new applications can occur when the study is considered to be of minimal risk to the prospective participants. Figure 3 highlights the number of applications that were reviewed by the Full Board.

Figure 3: Full Board Reviews Conducted by Academic Year September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2013



There was a decrease in Full Board Reviews conducted in 2012-2013 compared to 2011-2012. This decrease is likely attributed to the reciprocity agreements signed with the BC universities and Health Authorities. These reciprocity agreements permits the SFU REB/ORE to conduct delegated reviews of Full Board research studies when there is a SFU co-investigator and the research study has received Full Board review at one of the other BC institutions who have signed onto the reciprocity agreement. However, there are still a number of complex research studies being conducted by SFU faculty that require time and effort by the REB members to conduct these reviews to ensure participants' safety and that risks to participants and researchers are properly managed and mitigated.

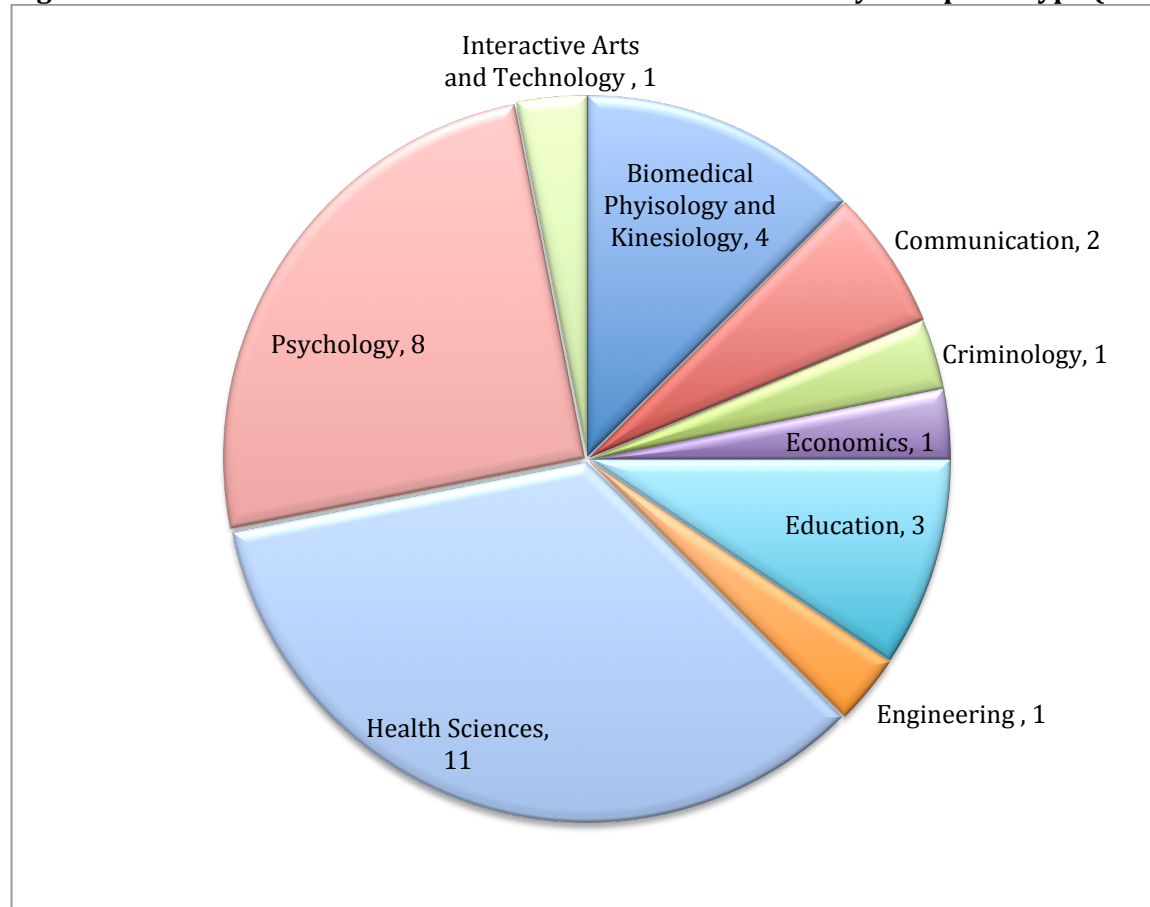
Figure 4: Distribution of Research Studies by Principal Investigator Type (N=535)



More than half of the research studies conducted at SFU are conducted by graduate students as the principal investigators (Figure 4). There are many challenges in permitting graduate students to apply for research ethics review as principal investigators because of the minimal research experience that they have obtained to date. However, in permitting students to apply for research ethics review as principal investigators, SFU and the SFU REB have given these students an opportunity to understand how their research can have an impact on individuals, communities and themselves.

Many different types of research studies are reviewed by the Full Board. Figure 5 shows the distribution of research studies reviewed by the Full Board for various SFU Faculties and Departments.

Figure 5: Full Board Review Distribution of Research Studies by Discipline Type (N=32)



Challenges Ahead

The SFU REB continues to evolve and keep current with best practices in the ethical review of research. As research ethics is always in “evolution”, the SFU REB is striving towards the application of consistent standards. The SFU REB has undergone a process to keep abreast of the revisions to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and its obligations to revise REB policies accordingly. The revisions to R20.01 will require that the Office of Research Ethics Tutorial for Graduate Students be revised to reflect those policy changes.

The revisions to R20.01 have shifted the REB review process from a single Full Board to review all potentially greater-than-minimal risk studies to three subcommittees (Biomedical and Health Research, Clinical Trials, Behavioural and Social Sciences) to ensure that the proper expertise is available to review these complex studies. The REB will have the subcommittees in place by October 2013 to ensure that the REB is compliant with R20.01.

In addition, the SFU REB will continue to participate in a provincial exercise, carried out under the auspices of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, to develop and implement harmonized ethical review processes in British Columbia for multi-jurisdictional research. The SFU REB will continue to evaluate how the review process can be streamlined to eliminate any unnecessary redundancy.