

## GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EXTERNAL RESEARCH IN THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (“TDSB”)

The following guidelines provide information to external researchers interested in conducting studies or research projects involving TDSB schools, staff, students, or parents/guardians. These guidelines apply to any non-TDSB initiated research that is intended to take place with these groups and/or on school/ TDSB premises.

TDSB values educational research, however, TDSB and its staff are also mindful that students have been entrusted to TDSB and its schools for their personal education, and therefore, any external research must not be conducted at the expense of students’ academic programs. To request access to TDSB schools, applications for conducting research will be assessed by the TDSB External Research Review Committee (“ERRC”) that carefully considers all applications for conducting external research according to the criteria outlined in the guidelines and in compliance with all applicable TDSB policies, procedures, guidelines, protocols, and practices. It should be noted that even if ERRC approves a research project, this does not automatically guarantee access to a particular school, students, staff, or parents/guardians. The school principal must be willing to accommodate the study/research project in their school. The researcher acknowledges that any research project or study may be denied or terminated at any time to the sole and unfettered discretion of the principal or TDSB.

### WHO MAY APPLY?

Applications are accepted from:

- x Master’s thesis candidates.
- x Doctoral thesis candidates.
- x Institutionally funded projects.
- x Externally funded projects.
- x TDSB staff doing research for external agencies or to meet academic course requirements.

### PLEASE NOTE:

- (1) Due to a high volume of applications, ERRC gives lower priority consideration to undergraduate projects.
- (2) While the formal ERRC review process is not required for “internal action research” initiated by the school or classroom teacher(s), some guidelines can be provided for this type of research upon request.





## WHAT CRITERIA DOES THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER?

### Relevance to education:

- x Is the study relevant to education in general?
- x Is the study relevant to education at the TDSB?
- x Is the study consistent with Board policies and priorities?
- x What is the value and/or benefit to the system? Is the study aligned with the [TDSB's Multi Year Strategic Plan](#)?
- x Is there an acceptable process for providing feedback of results to participating schools?

### Research methodology:

- x Is the study well designed?
- x Is the methodology appropriate given the purpose of the study?
- x Are the theory and research questions clear and presented in plain language?
- x Are there clear procedures for sample selection?
- x Are the research instruments adequate and appropriate?
- x Are the study/research project instruments, procedures and methodology consistent with TDSB's Equity Policy ([Policy P037 – Equity](#)) and the principles set out in the Policy?

### Protection of staff and students:

- x Are the demands made on the system and on the time of students and staff realistic?
- x Is the study free from sensitive or intrusive items?
- x Is the study consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans ("TCPS2")?
- x Are the confidentiality of data and the rights of the participants protected?
- x Is personal information about participants collected and protected in accordance with all applicable privacy laws, including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter M.56 ("MFIPPA") and applicable TDSB policies and procedures?
- x Are privacy interests safeguarded for the full research life cycle: its collection, use, dissemination, retention and/or disposal?
- x Is the well-being and safety of participants ensured at all times?
- x Are there clear procedures for obtaining informed consent? (See sample parent consent form attached.)
- x Is there an appropriate protocol to deal with sensitive issues arising during the research (e.g., students' who wish to withdraw from the study, disclosure of sensitive information by participants, debriefing participants)?

## RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE POLICY GUIDELINES

1. While ERRC considers all proposals/applications from external researchers from recognized institutions and agencies, because of the large number of requests to do research in TDSB schools, proposals from undergraduates are given low priority and research for commercial or market purposes is generally not considered.
2. Studies that have direct relevance to education and demonstrable benefits for participants, education and TDSB will be given priority.
3. All materials must be submitted in FINAL form (e.g., data collection instruments, letters). Drafts will not be considered.
4. The research proposal must have the support of the researcher's affiliated agency or institution and where applicable, their Research Ethics Board's approval prior to its submission to TDSB.
5. Any person conducting research with students or having access to student information

all applicable TDSB policies and procedures. No TDSB school, staff, student and/or parent/guardian may be identified in any report without written permission of the person to whom such information is related.

8. Researchers must assess privacy risks and threats to the security of information for all stages of the research life cycle (collection, use, dissemination, retention and/or disposal), and implement appropriate measures to protect such information.
9. Personal information or identifiable individual records shall not be disclosed to independent researchers or any third party. TDSB does not identify particular individuals for the researcher's study sample or the study/research project.
10. The researcher/applicant acknowledges that confidentiality of personal information shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of MFIPPA, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2006 (n)D, C( )Tj7 r opmS9 ( m)7 (u(ho)10 (m)-3 ( )]

Please ensure that application consent forms include all the information noted in: Schedules "A", "B" and "C" of this document .

13. Researchers will not be allowed to conduct research in TDSB schools during September, after mid-May or in January in semester schools, except in very rare exceptional circumstances.
14. All study/research project should be minimally intrusive in terms of time and number of participants being involved. The demands on schools and study participants should not be excessive or conflict with students' academic program(s) and activities.
15. TDSB principals will make the final decision about their school involvement in study/research projects.
16. As a condition of the ERRC approval, the researcher/applicant shall provide a report of the study to TDSB upon completion of the study/research project. The researcher/applicant shall arrange feedback of results to participating school(s) as well.
17. ERRC approval is for one (1) year only. Ongoing and longitudinal studies/research projects require annual renewal and approval. To request an extension 7 (e Tw 2.06 p)6 (on 7 (e

researcher/applicant on an approved TDSB video, audio,



## GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPAL INFORMATION & INVITATION LETTERS

1. An introduction with specific, detailed information about the researcher and the purpose of study.
2. Information about the nature and extent of participant involvement (i.e., students,

4. Timelines about when data collection will take place (to be completed by the researcher).
5. Specific samples of the types of questions, survey or test items, or demographic data being asked of the participants to ensure full disclosure for informed consent. There must also be a strong rationale for asking any detailed demographic information or personal questions about sensitive issues (to be completed by the researcher).
6. Privacy and confidentiality safeguards in place for the full research life cycle (to be completed by the researcher).
7. Assurances that the study has been pre-approved by TDSB and the school's principal (to be completed by the researcher).
8. A guarantee that individual identities and results will remain confidential, a description of data security protocols and when the data will be destroyed (to be completed by the researcher).
9. Information about who will have access to the final report relating to the study/research project (to be completed by the researcher).
10. The researcher's contact information for staff and parents/ guardians who may have questions or require further information relating to the study/research project (to be completed by the researcher).
11. A clear statement about what is being agreed to with space(s) for a signature. Consent may be requested for the study in its entirety if necessary and/or options can be provided for separate consent for multiple components (to be completed by the researcher).
12. Video/digital recording or photographing of subjects may require multiple levels of informed consent. E.g., (1) for the use of images solely for research purposes and to be viewed exclusively by designated research staff, and/or (2) for the use of images for public display or the presentation of results at a later date. In this case, participants may request a preview and/or modification of the images or recordings prior to their release.
13. Translation of letters where appropriate.

SCHEDULE "A"

INFORMATION LETTER FOR [INSERT: STUDY/RESEARCH PROJECT NAME]

DATE:

STUDY/RESEARCH PROJECT NAME:

RESEARCHERS: [Include your name, office address, contact information]

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: [Provide as much detail as possible]

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: Provide a brief description of what you will be asking participants to do [Include a statement regarding the estimated time commitment for the participant].

Risks and Discomforts: Provide a description of any real or perceived risks (physical, emotional, economic, social) or potential discomfort that may result from participation in the research. If there is a possibility of harm or discomfort it must be described and the mitigation methods must be indicated. Please do not state that the risk is "minimal" or "below minimal".  
It is important to explain the risks (both physical and psychological) that participants may not know what 4 (n)10 (ow)6 ( w)6 (hat (r

disclosure to a third party may be required by law (e.g., the requirement to notify authorities of child abuse or the requirement to notify public health authorities of participants who have contracted a reportable communicable disease).

If you intend to use de-identified data for future research purposes , the following text should be included in the parental/guardian consent form:

The data collected in this research project will be used – in an anonymized form - by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by researchers' respective institutions. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality

If you intend to use online technology for

SCHEDULE "B"  
PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

[Title of Study/Research Project

I/We understand that I/we can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

I/We understand that I/we can contact the [name and contact information for the institution's Research Ethics Board] if I/we have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study/research project.

Legal Rights and Signatures :

I/We (student/staff/parent/guardian name), consent to participate in (insert study/research project name here) conducted by (insert investigator/researcher name here). I/We have understood the nature of this study/research project and wish to participate. I/We am/are not waiving any of my/our legal rights by signing this form. My/our signature below indicates my consent to participate in this study/research project.

Name of Student /Participant : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT I hereby acknowledge receipt of this Parental/Guardian Consent Form

Name of Principal Investigator/Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHEDULE "C"  
Additional consent forms (where applicable)

You must seek additional consent by including check boxes or requesting additional

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT I hereby acknowledge receipt of this Consent Form

Name of Principal Investigator/Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

x If you are offering the participants the option to waive anonymity, include the following:

4. Consent to waive anonymity

I, <<insert participants name>>, consent to the use of my name in the publications arising from this research.

Name of Student /Participant : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/ Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT I hereby acknowledge receipt of this Consent Form

Name of Principal Investigator/Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_