

2nd December 2020

Dear UNBC Researchers and Staff,

RE: COVID-19 UNBC Chair Bulletin #4 –Research involving human participants

The UNBC Office of Research and Research Ethics Board are continuing to monitor Provincial Health Orders (PHOs) and adjust practices to reflect current province-wide guidelines and restrictions.

On November 19, 2020, Dr. Bonnie Henry released updated provincial health restrictions in light of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic. These restrictions targeted individuals, places of work, and businesses, requiring a significant reduction in social interactions and travel in British Columbia. Current PHOs are in place until December 07, 2020. The current PHOs can be accessed at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions>.

It is possible that these PHOs could have a direct impact upon UNBC researchers, particularly those undertaking in-person research within the community and on campus. As such, we are writing to update our guidelines regarding the conduct of research involving human participants and to directly address any additional requirements or considerations beyond those addressed in UNBC Research Ethics Board Chair's Bulletin #3 (October 21, 2020) and in the current UNBC Office of Research Safe Research Plan and In-Person Research (October 20, 2020).

1. Remote modes of research remain the safest and preferred option and researchers are asked to avoid in-person interactions where possible.
2. It is the responsibility of each researcher, including supervisors of student researchers, to ensure that current research complies with the PHOs. As a result, it may be necessary for researchers to amend or temporarily suspend current research activities to ensure compliance with the most current orders.
3. Researchers who are currently approved for in-person research are asked to revisit and review aspects of their research studies that might be impacted (e.g. recruitment and data collection). Researchers must determine compliance with all active PHOs.
4. Any changes to planned research activities may require review by the UNBC Research Ethics Board, as well as a new or amended Safe Research Plan. Researchers that are unsure of these requirements are asked to contact the UNBC Research Ethics Board for further guidance.

Please continue to be aware that the COVID-19 situation is dynamic and researchers are expected to revisit and review their research protocols, and those of their student researchers, to ensure that they comply with the most current orders and restrictions. Updates from the Research Ethics Board will be made, as necessary, in future bulletins, but will not be made in response to every PHO.

Please also note that the UNBC Research Ethics Board and other partnering boards are experiencing higher volumes of applications and amendments to research protocols with increased complexity at this time. We are working to address these demands in a timely manner, please recognize that some delays may occur. If you require further clarification please contact the Research Ethics Board at reb@unbc.ca or contact Isobel Hartley, Research Ethics Officer at Isobel.Hartley@unbc.ca.

Finally, we wish to express our thanks to the UNBC research community. We thank you for your diligence and flexibility during these uncertain times.

Dr. Davina Banner-Lukaris, Chair, Research Ethics Board
Dr. Chelsea Pelletier Vice-Chair, Research Ethics Board
Dr. Kathy Lewis, Acting Vice-President, Research