

CFREB Student Projects (Undergraduate and Graduate projects)

One of the questions the CFREB receives often is, **“My student’s project is similar to mine; can I add them to my ethics application and submit a modification to add their research question?”**

The answer depends on a few factors (not an exhaustive list):

1. What type of research project the student is conducting.
2. What role the student has in the research.
3. What was included in your original ethics application.
4. Whether the student’s project is for a thesis or dissertation.

Why can’t I just add my student’s project as a modification to my own already approved application?

There are several reasons why an amendment is not appropriate for a student project.

1. The ethics certificate will not differentiate between your project and your student’s. This means that your student(s) may be unable to show they have the appropriate ethics approvals in place for their research project.
2. The ongoing review process and application itself becomes confusing.
 - a. Your approved application changes so much that your original project is no longer valid, leading to non-compliance.
 - b. Adding multiple student projects to your application causes confusion. The REB approvals no longer track who is conducting which portion of the project.
 - c. No tracking of when a student project begins or ends.
 - d. Becomes unclear which research participants or how many are participating in which study.

It is important to understand that when a student submits a modification, which changes the research question, data variables, inclusion/exclusion criteria, consent form, etc., it changes what your own original study is approved for. This matters because once a portion of the application is modified, all previous versions are overwritten and no longer be applicable. If your application has been altered enough, you may no longer be approved to collect and conduct your original research project. For example, if your research application indicates you are recruiting 1st and 2nd year psychology students, and your student submits a modification to study 1st year students only, depending on how it is written, you may no longer have approval to recruit 2nd year students.

How should my student submit their project for REB review?

Student projects usually fall within one of the four areas listed below. If after reviewing them, you still have questions, or you are not certain which of the four areas your project falls under, please contact cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

1. Is this a thesis-based research project?

According to the UCalgary Faculty of Graduate Studies:

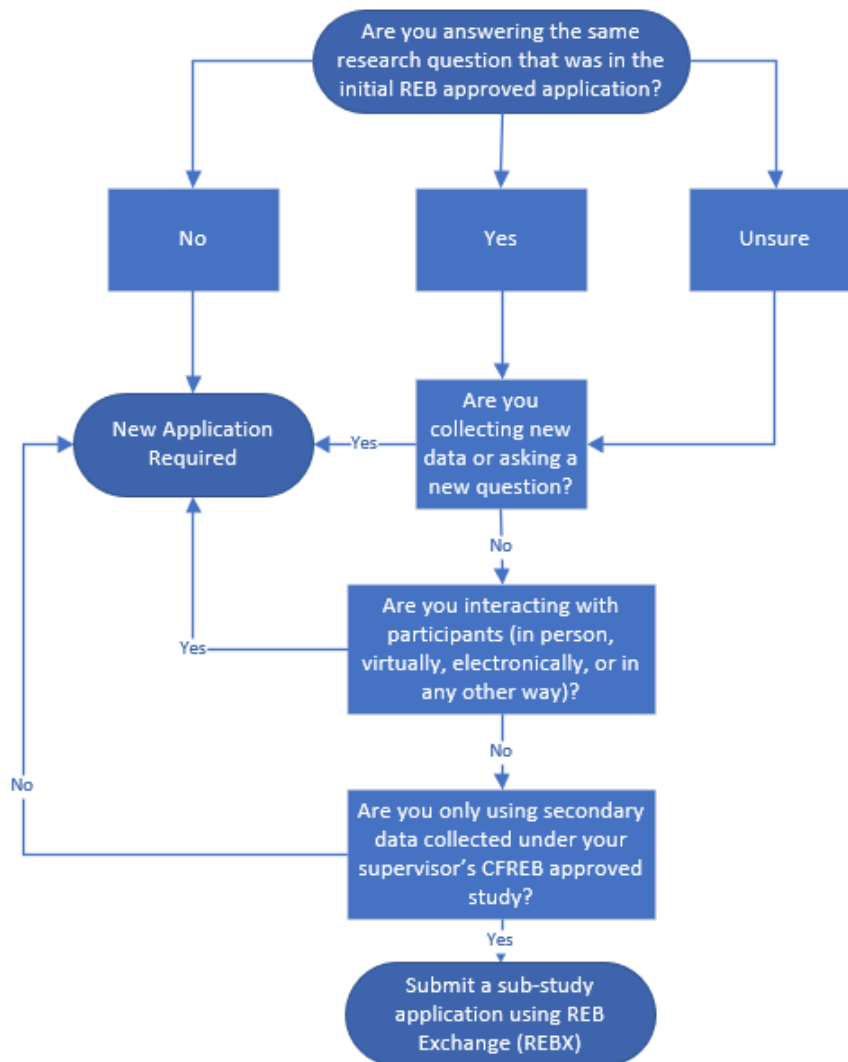
“Thesis-based programs require that you pursue independent and original research culminating in a thesis.”

“Students must prepare a substantial research document that makes an original scholarly contribution to their field.”

As a result, any thesis-based research projects **will require** a standalone ethics application. The only exception to this rule would be secondary data analysis of data collected under the supervisor’s currently approved ethics application. Please refer to the “Does your student’s research involve secondary use of data” section below.

Note: We have reached out to several universities, and they also require thesis-based projects to be submitted as a new application.

2. Does your student’s research involve secondary use of data?



If the student's project meets these criteria, they may submit their research project as a sub-study under your already approved ethics application using the REB Exchange (REBX).

Process:

1. Supervisor would invite themselves to be a participating site (pSite).
2. Once approved, a shorter ethics application will open up for the student to complete.
3. They MUST upload a full description of their sub-project (describe the background, rationale, research question, objectives, methods, and procedures, etc.) in the "Other Documents" section.
4. Once the application is received, the Chair/Vice-Chair will determine if the student's project meets the criteria to use the REBX. If determined it does not, the student will be required to complete a full ethics application.
5. Once reviewed and approved, a renewal is required for both the main study and the student's project (pSite) application.
6. For more information, please visit [REBX](#).

3. Is this a bigger project where the student is helping with a specific piece of the already approved project?

If the student is not conducting their own separate research project but is instead assisting you with your REB approved project, then they may be added in the "Study staff, Study Coordinator(s), Research Assistant(s) or Research Nurse" section of your application.

The student is listed as a research assistant. The student will not be named as a student co-investigator on the certificate and no changes may be made to the application.

4. Is the student's project very similar to your already approved research?

The student's project fits within the original objectives of your currently approved research project. There are no significant changes to your methods, objectives, research question and/or participant population. For example, your project involves focus groups with the experiences of refugees, and your student wishes to study the same population, but looking at whether there are differences in experience between genders.

TCPS2 Article 6.16 states, "Changes that substantially alter the nature of the approved research may be assessed as a new research project and require a new REB review."

If the student's project meets this criterion, they may submit their research project as a sub-study under your already approved ethics application using the REB Exchange (REBX). (see secondary use of data question for how to submit using REBX). All participant materials (consents, posters, recruitment emails, etc.) different from your already approved documents, will need to be uploaded into the appropriate section of the application.

Please note that changes to the participant population could significantly alter the risk level for your already approved research project and would therefore require a new application. For example, if your current study is looking at dealing with processes for dealing with past trauma and the participants are mental health professionals where this topic is dealt with regularly, and your student wishes to conduct the exact same study, but with adults who have experienced past sexual trauma, the study may no longer fit into the minimal risk category. A new application would be necessary.