

## **External Research Application and Guidelines Toronto Catholic District School Board 2020-2021: Revised January 2021**

### **Application Process**

Any external institution, organization or individual who wants to conduct research activities in the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) must submit an application to the Board for approval. This includes people or agencies that plan to recruit research participants from schools and conduct the research off TCDSB premises. Send one copy of all documentation, as described below, to the attention of: Dr. Brendan Browne (Director of Education), at the Catholic Education Centre, 80 Sheppard Ave. E., North York, ON, M2N 6E8. **For legal reasons, please submit a paper copy of all documentation with your original signature** (see Appendix A). **Due to COVID-19 closures, please also submit an electronic copy directly to: [research.review@tcdsb.org](mailto:research.review@tcdsb.org)**

The Director will inform applicants of the decision of the TCDSB Research Review Committee by mail. Applicants who receive approval at the Board level must then contact the Principal(s) of the school(s) in which they want to conduct research. *Principals have the prerogative to decide whether or not a research project will be conducted in their school. Approval of research projects by the Board, while mandatory, does not oblige the principal to accept the project in his or her school. Participation is voluntary; staff, students and parents will decide if they wish to participate.* Applicants must present the Director's approval letter and a one-page summary describing the project to the principal prior to obtaining school approval.

### **Police Reference Check**

Consistent with the Education Act, many researchers will be required to complete a Police Reference Check (*Vulnerable Sector Screening*) prior to commencing their research. This includes all those who will be in direct contact with students.

### **University/Agency Ethics Approval**

All those seeking to conduct research at the Toronto Catholic District School Board are required to submit a copy of the approval letter from their institutional Research Ethics Board (REB).

### **Applications from University/College Students**

Usually, student applications are accepted only for Master's and Doctoral theses that have been approved by their supervising faculty in addition to the approval from the university ethics board. Students conducting other research, including undergraduates engaged in theses or independent research projects, may ask their supervising professor to submit the application on their behalf if the proposed project is part of the professor's ongoing research program. All such projects are to involve current, original research and must be signed by their academic advisor or supervising faculty; this signature constitutes acceptance of responsibility for the conduct of the research.

### **Modification of Approved Research/Extension of Time to Complete Research Projects**

Multi-year projects require completion of a renewal form, as any permission to conduct research applies only for one school year. Any modification to the approved research requires permission from the Board, and may require a separate application. Inquiries regarding the above should be submitted to the Research Review Committee: [research.review@tcdsb.org](mailto:research.review@tcdsb.org).

### **Study Completion**

Upon completion of your research project within TCDSB, it is an expectation that you submit a summary of your findings including any Interim Reports, Final Reports and published results to the Research Review Committee at the TCDSB, attached to the signed *Study Completion Form* (see Appendix B).

### **Assistance from TCDSB Staff**

Board staff does not provide assistance in packaging and distributing materials, technical, administrative, translation or financial assistance for external research projects. No financial costs shall be incurred by the Board for external research projects.

## Translation

Many of our students come from homes where English is not spoken. As such, information sheets, letters to parents/guardians and consent forms should be made available in the language spoken in the child's home (where applicable). This is the responsibility of the researcher.

## Timelines

Deadlines for applications are:

- **May 10 (of the year preceding the year of anticipated research)**
- **September 8 (of the year of intended research)**
- **November 9 (of the year of intended research)**
- **January 11 (of the year of intended research)**

The applications go through a rigorous review process and may take up to four months. A status update regarding your file will be communicated to you through the Research Review Committee.

External research activities should not be conducted in the schools **before October 15<sup>th</sup>** or **after May 15<sup>th</sup>** (May 1 in elementary schools, because of internal demands in schools).

## Acceptance Criteria

Proposals are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Scholarship (literature review, rationale, references)
- Educational merit (relevance to education): priority is given to projects that address current Board priorities, aligning with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and Board Learning and Improvement Plan (BLIP). Research undertaken for political or commercial purposes will not be accepted; certain exceptions may apply (e.g., to develop norms for standardized instruments).
- Research design (e.g., methodology, procedures related to sampling, confidentiality, anonymity, data collection, instruments, data analysis)
- Demands from schools (minimal disruption to classroom activities; minimal demands on student/staff time and school facilities)
- Dissemination plan

*Note:* In some cases, external research requests will not be accepted because of ongoing research activities or Board and/or Ministry initiatives.

For inquiries please contact: [research.review@tcdsb.org](mailto:research.review@tcdsb.org)

## External Research Application Checklist

The Research Review Committee requires the following documents to support the review process. Please ensure that your application contains all of the following materials (**one paper copy** and an **electronic** copy are required):

- A completed **Research Application** (attached)
- One-page summary**  
A one-page summary of the proposed research including the following components: title, rationale and relevance to education, logistical details (e.g., sample size, grades, number of schools, teacher participation, parent participation, time requirements, location, etc.), description of procedures, instruments to be used, and proposed method of data analysis.
- Research Proposal**  
This should normally not exceed 5 pages (*applicants may substitute a proposal submitted to an external funding agency, or a summary of a thesis proposal*). The proposal should include the following sections:
  - (a) statement of objectives and theoretical framework
  - (b) design and methodology (including hypotheses, participants, data collection procedures)
  - (c) proposed data analysis procedures
  - (d) educational relevance of the project
  - (e) literature review/reference list
- Research Instruments**  
Copies of all **final** versions of instruments, non-standard tests, protocols, surveys, consent forms, recruitment/information letters, focus group script, interview questions, etc.
- Information letters and consent forms**  
Please ensure that information letters and consent forms:
  - are included for all participants (students, teachers, parents, etc.)
  - include a brief description of the proposed research project
  - address the following: anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation and withdrawal without penalty, sensitive items and duty to report
  - are printed on institutional letterhead*Note:* For students under 18 years of age, the information letter and consent form should be directed to the parents/guardians. Child assent will be required (please include script).
- Ethics Approval**  
A copy of the approval of the approval letter from your institutional Research Ethics Board (REB)
- Police Reference Check**  
A copy of the police reference check (*Vulnerable Sector Screening*) must be submitted for those who will have direct contact with students
- Signed Agreements** (Appendix A)  
All appropriate signatures as indicated in the application form

**Send your paper submission c/o:**  
Dr. Brendan Browne, Director of Education  
Toronto Catholic District School Board  
80 Sheppard Ave. E.,  
Toronto, ON M2N 6E8

**Your electronic submission must ONLY be sent to: [research.review@tcdsb.org](mailto:research.review@tcdsb.org)**

**External Research Application  
Toronto Catholic District School Board  
2020-2021**

**Applicant Information**

Name of Primary Investigator(s):	
Institution/Agency:	
Mailing Address:	
E-Mail address:	Fax:
Home Telephone:	Business Telephone:

Name(s) of Collaborative Investigators: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Description and Timeline**

1. Title of the proposed research

2. Timelines

	Month / Year
When do you expect to start collecting data in the schools?	
When do you expect to finish your data collection?	
When will you submit a report to the TCDSB Research Review Committee?	
If you propose to collect data on multiple occasions, please describe and indicate dates.	

3. Are you applying to other school boards?     Yes     No

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature of Research**

4. Check all that apply:

Doctoral thesis	Master's thesis	Institutionally funded project
Contractual project	Externally funded project	Ministry transfer grant project
TCDSB staff	Other	

5. Do you have permission to conduct research from your university/institution, including an ethical review?

- Yes (please attach)
- In progress (please provide details, including expected date of approval/amendment)
- Not applicable/available for my organization (explain)

6. Do you have sufficient funds to conduct the study (if required)? If yes, indicate the funding agency.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Research Objectives**

- 7. Purpose: provide a brief (2-3 sentence) description, including your research questions and hypotheses.
  
- 8. Describe the direct benefit to students and/or staff or school board (e.g., through presentation, materials, professional development, feedback etc.)

**Data Collection**

9. Participants

- a. How many students will directly participate? List by grade. Indicate the amount of time required, and whether the students participate individually or as a group.

Number of Students	Grade	Time required	Individual / group

- b. If your research involves direct contact with students on TCDSB premises, will a TCDSB staff member be present in the room when you collect your research data? Please describe.

- c. How many teachers will directly participate? List by grade. Indicate the amount of time required.

Number of teachers	Grade	Time required	Individual / group

- d. How many other school personnel will directly participate? Indicate the amount of time required.

Number of staff	Grade	Time required	Individual / group

- e. How many schools will you need to conduct your study?

**Elementary** \_\_\_\_\_ **Secondary** \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate names of preferred schools or criteria for school selection.

8. Requirements from the school system

School facilities required:
School personnel assistance required:
Information required from school or board records:

**Method of Investigation**

- 9. Data collection instruments. Please list the questionnaires and other instruments to be used and attach **final** copies of **all** non-standard measures to this application. This includes any focus group questions and other scripts used in your data collection. If your proposal includes multiple assessments, please complete a summary chart with administration details: e.g., name of measure, subtests (if relevant), participants, purpose, time required, links to tests if on-line survey, etc.
- 10. Consent letters/assent. Please attach final copies of **all** consent letters and assent script/forms to this application.
- 11. List the security procedures in place for the protection of participant privacy and data storage.
- 12. Briefly describe the data analysis procedures you will use for your research.
- 13. Describe the procedures for informing schools and parents and for providing feedback.
  - a. Informing the principal.
  - b. Method of obtaining informed parental consent. (see above regarding copies of letters).
  - c. Provisions for preparing and debriefing participants.
  - d. Plans for dissemination of results.

## Appendix A – Signed Agreements

### Researcher

I have read the Toronto Catholic District School Board Policy S.19, *Research Conducted in the TCDSB* <https://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Documents/S.19.pdf> and the accompanying *External Research Application* about conducting research in the Board and agree to follow its requirements if my application is accepted.

*Note: the final decision to participate in any external research project always rests with the individual (e.g., principal, teachers, other staff, students, parents, etc.)*

Name (please print or type): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

### Professor/Sponsor/Affiliated Organization

This is to certify that the above described research proposal has been reviewed by myself/my organization and has been vetted for its academic soundness. Consideration has also been given to **ethical, legal and moral** questions arising from the proposal.

Name of Sponsoring Professor (please print or type) \_\_\_\_\_

Position (e.g., sponsoring professor/chair, director of organization) \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Appendix B - Study Completion Form**  
TCDSB External Research

**Identifying Information**

Name of Primary Investigator: _____	
Institution/Agency: _____	
Mailing Address: _____	
E-Mail Address: _____	Fax: _____
Telephone(s): _____	

Title of the research project

How many research participants were involved in the study?

- a. Students \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Teachers/staff \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Parents \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Study start date: \_\_\_\_\_

Study completion date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approval date: \_\_\_\_\_

**My signature certifies that my research at TCDSB is complete. Proper safeguards to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants, schools and school board will be maintained.**

**Attached is a copy of my research findings.**

Name of principal investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

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