

Queen's REB Guidelines on Peer Review Process

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Inquiries and permission requests for commercial use may be directed to:

Queen's University
Vice-Principal Research
Research, Compliance, Training, and Ethics
355 King Street West
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 2X3
chair.greb@queensu.ca, hsreb@queensu.ca
[Research Compliance, Training and Ethics](#)

Queen's University is situated on [traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory](#).

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Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to:

- Provide clear guidance on when a Peer Review is required along with a submission to the REB.
- Provide criteria for the Peer Reviewer selection.

Background

To be ethically acceptable, research involving humans must be methodologically sound and meet the scholarly standards of the relevant research discipline. The Queen's University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospital REB (HSREB) relies on **independent** scientific peer review to support its assessment of the methodological rigour and validity of the proposed research.

Do you require a peer review?

The peer review requirement is determined by the funding source and/or support obtained. See below for details.

Funding Source:	Peer Review Required:
Public or Non-Public Competitive Research Funding Agency/Organization that uses rigorous Peer Review for Funding Decisions (Does not include internal Queen's University research grant competitions)	NO.
Internal Queen's University Research Grant Competitions	NO.
Industry funded/supported and initiated research projects	NO. Does not require an external peer review but is expected to provide documentation on the scientific appropriateness of the methodology and protocols.

Industry funded/supported investigator-initiated research projects.	YES. Does require a peer review by at least one individual is required*
Industry sponsored, single centered study	YES. Peer review by at least one individual is required*
All other sources of funding/support	YES. Does require a peer review by at least one individual is required*

**See peer reviewer criteria below*

Please note that the HSREB may modify or waive the requirements for peer review of a particular application, considering areas such as research risk and participant vulnerability.

Peer Reviewer Criteria

- Reviewers should also be highly knowledgeable and experienced in a relevant field and sufficiently qualified to provide an expert assessment of the scientific merit and quality of the proposed research.
- Peer reviews must be independent and free of potential bias. Thus, reviewers should not be directly associated with the research project/team and should have no actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest concerning the research. Any possible conflict of interest must be documented and addressed.
- A peer reviewer (not associated or acting on behalf of a company/sponsor) may have a conflict of interest which is deemed to exist or be perceived as such when the peer reviewer:
 - Is a relative or close friend or has a personal relationship with the applicants.
 - Can gain or lose financially/materially from the application's funding.
 - Has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicants.
 - They are currently affiliated with the applicants' companies.
 - Has been a supervisor or a trainee of the applicants.
 - Has collaborated, published, or shared funding with the applicants within the last year, or has plans to do so in the immediate future, or is, or has been employed by the funding agency or business.
- A paid peer review for investigator initiated applications is not accepted by the Queen's REB.

HSREB Peer Review Requirements

REQUIRED CONTENT

1. Significance and impact

Consider the following points:

- Is the scientific rationale ethically sound (i.e., does the study put participants at undisclosed risk through a procedure or methodology that is not standard of care)?
- Are the overall goals and objectives of the project well-defined?
- Are the anticipated project contributions likely to advance health-related knowledge or health outcomes?

2. Feasibility

Consider the following points:

- Are the approaches and methods appropriate to deliver the proposed output(s) and achieve the proposed contribution(s) to advancing health-related knowledge or health outcomes?
- Are the timelines and related deliverables of the project realistic?
- Does the proposal identify potential challenges and appropriate mitigation strategies? Are there any limitations that might prevent the researchers from achieving their objectives?

3. Expertise, experience, and resources

Consider the following points:

- Does the applicant(s) bring the appropriate expertise and experience to lead and deliver the proposed output(s) and to achieve the proposed contribution(s)?
- Is the environment (federal laboratory, academic institution and/or other organization) appropriate to enable the conduct and success of the project?

4. Human participants

Consider the following points:

- Are participant inclusion and exclusion criteria carefully delineated?
- Is the sample size discussed and justified? If yes, is the sample size sufficient to provide likelihood of an interpretable result?
- Do the potential benefits to the population outweigh the potential harms?