
Institutional Permission to Access Resources for Research Policy

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| Policy Sponsor: | Provost and Vice-President, Academic |
| Policy Contact: | Research Ethics Officer, Research Centre |
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| Procedure: | Institutional Permission to Access Resources for Research Procedures |

Purpose

This policy outlines the conditions under which researchers shall be granted access to Athabasca University (the University) staff or students (or their data, which is under the care and control of the University) or resources to conduct their research.

The Institutional Permission process exists to:

1. Provide a single point of contact to manage institutional permissions for research purposes;
2. Meet the University's obligations to its students and staff under the personal privacy protection laws of the provincial government;
3. Maintain awareness within the University regarding how much research is taking place utilizing select groups of employees or students and to safeguard these groups from being over-surveyed, and
4. Support the effective stewardship of University resources.



Definitions

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| FOIP | <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act</i> , Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, Chapter F-25. |
| Personal Information | Recorded information about an identifiable individual. It may include, but is not limited to, unique identification numbers, date of birth, names (first, middle, surname, former, etc.), address, phone numbers, email addresses, age, educational history, disability status and citizenship. |
| Proprietary Information | Information that is not public knowledge and that is viewed by an organization as the property of the organization. |
| Student Record System (SRS) | The official system used for the collection and maintenance of student Personal Information, education history and some aspects of individual students' financial history. This system is also known as the Student Information System (SIS). |
| REB | Research Ethics Board at Athabasca University |
| REO | Research Ethics Officer at Athabasca University |
| Research | An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation. The term <i>disciplined inquiry</i> refers to an inquiry that is conducted with the expectation that the method, results and conclusions will be able to withstand the scrutiny of the relevant research community. (TCPS2 (2014), pg. 13) |
| Researcher | Anyone who conducts Research activities. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and other personnel involved directly or indirectly in Research, including, but not limited to research assistants/associates, technical and support staff, adjunct professors, visiting professors, and institutional administrators. |
| Resources | All University resources, including, but not limited to: premises, equipment, human resources, information systems, and non-public Proprietary Information. |
| TCPS | Tri-Council Policy Statement "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" (2014 and as amended from time to time) |



Policy Statements

Institutional access permission must be obtained when a Researcher proposes to:

- recruit Research participants among University staff or students;
- utilize staff or student data under the care and control of the University;
- use University premises or equipment; or
- access University resources.

For Research involving humans, a Certificate of Ethical Approval or a Memorandum of Exemption from Ethics Review from the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) must be granted prior to making a request for institutional access permission.

Where a Researcher proposes to access information about or recruit participants from a specific group of students or staff, written support for the Research must be obtained from the Dean (or designate) or Department Head responsible for that group of students or staff. For Researchers wishing to access information or recruit participants across the University, written support from the Associate Vice-President, Student and Academic Services (AVPSAS) must be obtained.

Internal activities that involve humans or their data, but do not fall under the definition of Research in the TCPS, are not subject to this policy (i.e., quality assurance or quality improvement studies; program evaluation; performance reviews; or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes of the University).

Researchers conducting studies that do not involve humans or their data (as defined in the TCPS), must submit a Request for Institutional Access Permission for Research application, but do not require ethical approval from the University REB.

Authority to grant institutional access permission for Research purposes rests with the Associate Vice-President, Research (AVPR).

Granting Institutional Permission

In considering a request for institutional permission to access resources for Research, the AVPR shall be satisfied that:

- a) the proposed Research does not unduly disrupt the primary pedagogical purpose and outcomes for which the University has contracted with the student;
- b) specific groups of students or staff are not over-surveyed;
- c) the confidentiality and privacy obligations of the University to students and staff are met through the proposed recruitment of participants and dissemination of findings, including the protection of the identity of the University, as appropriate. Institutional non-identification shall normally be the default to protect the identity of the University and its students and staff;



- d) a Certificate of Ethical Approval or a Memorandum of Exemption from Ethics Approval from the REB has been granted (if applicable);
- e) departmental support or support from the AVPSAS for the Research project has been obtained (if applicable);
- f) University operations are not unduly compromised due to the demands of the Research (e.g., excessive use of staff time to afford access to data, administer recruitment procedures or arrange survey sites); and
- g) other relevant considerations have been addressed.

Personal Information of staff and students under the care and control of the University shall not be released to a Researcher directly. Researchers shall consult with the Dean (or designate) or Department Head to obtain both support and departmental assistance to recruit participants, extract required data from University information systems or access other required resources.

Appeals of a Decision Regarding Institutional Access Permission

A Researcher may appeal a negative decision (denial of approval) of the AVPR (or designate), in writing to the Research Ethics Officer, within 30 days of receiving notice of such decision.

Such appeal shall be reviewed by the Vice-President Academic (or designate) within 30 days.

The Research Ethics Officer shall provide the VPA (or designate) the written notice of appeal and all other materials available to the AVPR when a decision to deny institutional access permission is made.

Decisions of the VPA (or designate) are final and shall be communicated in writing to the Researcher(s), the AVPR, and the Dean (or designate) and/or Department Head (as applicable).

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

[Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. F-25](#)

[Alberta Health Information Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. H-5](#)

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

Institutional Permission to Access Resources for Research Procedures

Canadian Tri Council Policy Statement: *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2nd Edition 2014, and as amended from time to time)

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/policystatement.cfm>

Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions, signed with the Tri-Agency (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC) (January 1, 2013, and as amended from time to time) <http://science.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=56B87BE5-1>



History

Executive Group, May 2, 2016 (approved)