

## FAQ: Conducting Research at King's During COVID-19 (v2021.07.05)

### Q: Will the COVID-19 pandemic affect how I conduct my research?

Public health measures related to COVID-19 may restrict *how* you can do your research if your research activities may (or could) involve any of the following:

- a) Non-virtual (i.e., in-person) interactions with research participants;
- b) Non-virtual (i.e., in-person) interactions with other members of your research team (ex. other faculty members, staff, or students involved in the research activities);
- c) Use of shared or public spaces (at King's or off-campus);
- d) Travel by means of shared or public modes of transport (including air travel); or,
- e) Travel outside of the Province of Ontario.

### Q: How can I come up with a plan to safely conduct my research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure I am complying with all public health directives?

- King's strongly recommends that any activities that can be done virtually without compromising the academic integrity of the study and/or the obligations of research ethics should be done virtually.
- King's is providing a guidance document for conducting research at King's during COVID-19. This document complements and supplements similar guidance provided by Western University to its research community.
- In accordance with the directives of the Province of Ontario, King's is also providing research teams a *Research Safety Plan* template that they can use to record and communicate the actions the research team is taking to minimize the spread of COVID-19 to participants and/or research team members.
- **Researchers should prepare a Research Safety Plan if the research project has any potential in-person contact with 1) human participants and/or 2) research team members (RAs, etc.)**
- The King's Guidance document and Research Safety Plan template can be found on the "COVID-19 Resources" section of the King's Research [webpage](#).

### Q: Does King's Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) need to approve measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during research?

As is always the case, if your research involves human participants it will require RERC review and approval as outlined in [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2018\)](#). The risk of infection with COVID-19 will be considered alongside all other risks to participants.

Researchers are asked to pay special attention to the ways in which COVID-19, or the measures taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19, may impact core ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, vulnerability and well-being. For example, researchers may want to consider how the use of Zoom instead of in-person meetings may create new accessibility or privacy issues for potential participants or members of the research team. As another example, researchers who require in-person interactions with participants will want to come up with a plan on how they will *both* meet the public-health requirement to collect identifiable contact-tracing information from participants *and* preserve obligations to protect participant confidentiality.

The Tri-Council Panel on Research Ethics has provided [COVID-19 Interpretations](#) of TCPS2-2018 under COVID-19 situations. **Researchers are strongly encouraged to review these Interpretations when planning their research activities and preparing their research ethics applications.**

### Q: My research study was approved by King's RERC, but now I need to make *changes* to the proposed study activities in order to better protect against COVID-19: Does the RERC need to approve these changes?

According to the [COVID-19 Interpretations](#) prepared by the Canadian Tri-Council Panel on Research Ethics: "Changes or unanticipated issues that may increase the level of risk for participants or that have other ethical implications affecting participants' welfare must be submitted for research ethics board (REB) review (see Articles [6.15](#) and [6.16](#))."

**Please reach out to King's RERC if you are unsure about whether or not formal RERC approval is required for the proposed changes.**