



Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards

L'Association canadienne des comités d'éthique de la recherche

Virtual Research Ethics Board Standard Operating Procedure

Glossary of Terms

VREB: Virtual Research Ethics Board (VREB) is a CAREB-ACCER initiative that facilitates collaborative national research ethics training and professional development support opportunities for REB members and administrators through research ethics case study review. The case study review is conducted by the VREB Members (comprised of the CAREB-ACCER membership) and supported by the VREB Advisory.

VREB WG Chair: VREB Working Group Chair, as member of the CAREB-ACCER PDC, is appointed by the CAREB-ACCER Vice President Professional Development. The VREB WG Chair sees to the organization of and prompt delivery of materials by the members of the VREB WG.

VREB WG: VREB Working Group; The VREB WG is a special topic working group of the CAREB-ACCER Professional Development Committee. It is to conduct two streams of work: 1) Work relating to the creation and delivery of VREB activities and subsequent professional development resources; and 2) Work relating to the administration of the VREB.

VREB Advisory: A group comprised of an appointed VREB Chair, VREB Analysts and a VREB Coordinator with clerical and administrative support provided by CAREB-ACCER.

VREB Advisory Chair: The Chair of the VREB Advisory. The Chair is appointed by the VREB WG and serves as the lead and moderator for the VREB Advisory.

VREB Analysts: Members of the Advisory selected by the VREB WG to assist the VREB Advisory Chair with the review of VREB Cases; synthesize case review comments while adhering to TCPS2 and relevant regulatory and legal guidelines; and develop case debriefs. From time to time, Analysts may be requested to serve on an ad hoc basis to ensure subject matter expertise on specific cases.

VREB Advisory Coordinator: An individual that is appointed by the VREB WG that acts as the liaison between the VREB WG, the VREB Advisory, and the CAREB-ACCER membership reviewers. The Coordinator supports the administrative duties tied to the VREB Advisory's deliverables.

CAREB-ACCER Administrator: Assists VREB Advisory Coordinator with data management and various administrative duties as they arise from the VREB Advisory

CAREB-ACCER Executive: The CAREB-ACCER President and Vice-President of Professional Development oversee the VREB initiative, representing and reporting back to the CAREB-ACCER Board of Directors.

Adjunct VREB Analysts: VREB WG members that serve as VREB Advisory Analysts for the purpose of understanding and ensuring the appropriate resourcing and functioning of the VREB Advisory.

VREB Cases: Research ethics case studies reviewed under the VREB initiative. Case studies may be adopted or adapted from other external sources with permission. The sourcing and development of VREB Cases is the responsibility of the VREB WG. All VREB Cases are subject to final approval from the VP PDC.

Virtual REB Membership: All members of CAREB-ACCER are eligible to participate as members of the VREB by reviewing case studies and providing review comments. VREB comments will be reviewed by the VREB Advisory who will prepare a case debrief so as to promote an opportunity for national discussion. The VREB membership will be given 4 weeks to review each case study. They will be encouraged to participate via an online survey response tool; follow online threads/discussions of case studies; and engage in dialogue arising from the case study debrief via the CAREB-ACCER Forum.

CAREB-ACCER BoD: Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards Board of Directors.

Purpose

The purpose of the VREB Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to outline the responsibilities of the CAREB-ACCER VREB and the VREB Advisory and its dedicated personnel; and, to outline the procedural requirements for running and maintaining the CAREB-ACCER VREB initiative.

Scope

This SOP applies to the VREB WG—a special-topic working group of the CAREB-ACCER PDC—and encompasses the function of the VREB and VREB Advisory.

Governance

The VREB Advisory reports to the VREB WG; The VREB WG reports to the CAREB – ACCER PDC, a sub-committee of the CAREB BoD.

Approvals

When new strategies, ideas, initiatives and/or revisions to those already existing are required, the following process will be followed:

- VREB WG will draft and provide recommendations to the CAREB-ACCER PDC
- PDC will review and vote on recommendations received by the VREB WG, and either:
 - Approve or decline recommendations with comments; or
 - If the issue has financial implications or concerns CAREB-ACCER as a whole (to be determined by the VP PDC), recommendations will be forwarded to the CAREB-ACCER BoD for advice and/or approval.

Responsibilities and Duties

VREB WG is responsible for:

- Executing tasks as assigned by the CAREB-ACCER PDC.
- Developing and maintaining the SOPs of the VREB WG and VREB initiative including a formal review of SOPs at the end of the first year and every 5 years thereafter.
- Developing a work plan with timelines for VREB WG launch and management.

- Appointing the VREB Chair, Coordinator and Analysts, and periodically serving as Adjunct members on the Advisory.
- Developing a VREB Case release schedule
- Developing and implementing an online survey response tool to be used by the CAREB-ACCER membership to submit reviews of VREB Cases.
- Sourcing and developing VREB Cases using agreed upon templates and, where applicable, ensuring that external credit and permissions are acknowledged.
- Ensuring that cases are launched and reviews carried out according to schedule.
- Reporting VREB initiative progress and updates to the CAREB-ACCER PDC.
- Ensuring the VREB Cases represent relevant examples of scenarios that could likely be encountered in the field; reflect the diversity of disciplines reviewed by Canadian REBs, including biomedical, behavioural, social sciences and humanities research topics and issues.
- Identifying and putting forward recommendations for new VREB strategies, ideas, initiatives and/or revisions to existing strategies to the CAREB-ACCER PDC.

VREB Advisory is responsible for:

- Completing an independent review of the VREB Case.
- Reviewing the CAREB-ACCER membership review responses for the VREB Case, editing and incorporating additional comments where they deem appropriate.
- Connecting comments to TCPS2 Articles and references to other relevant legal and regulatory research ethics documents.
- Ensuring that final comments reflect the diversity in Canadian research ethics regulatory requirements, adhering to both National and Provincial guidelines.
- Holding/attending VREB Advisory teleconference meetings to discuss the case and resulting comments.
- Generating a comprehensive case debrief for distribution to the CAREB-ACCER membership. The debrief is to be based on the comments garnered from the case review using the established CAREB-ACCER VREB Case discussion template. This should be done in a timely manner so as to ensure there is no overlap between case postings.

VREB Coordinator is responsible for:

- Attending VREB Advisory teleconference meetings.
- Providing administrative support to the VREB Advisory regarding the delivery of the case study; compilation and collation of CAREB-ACCER member review

comments; and preparation of the final case debrief. This includes but is not limited to:

- De-identifying VREB Member responses
 - Compiling and collating responses by theme and sending results to the VREB Analysts and VREB Chair.
 - Preparing case debriefs.
 - Compiling debriefs into a format that can be used as CAREB-ACCER resource/learning tools; annual proceedings; and examples for future cases.
- Identifying, with the assistance of the VREB WG, when ad hoc Analysts are required to ensure subject matter expertise for VREB Cases and securing these members.
 - Acting as a resource to the VREB Advisory and source of information regarding the TCPS2 and other policies and laws relevant to the case at hand.

VREB Advisory Composition: The composition of this advisory will be:

- The VREB Chair.
- The VREB Analysts, ideally 5 members per case, who may be asked to participate on a rotational basis depending on their expertise. Analysts may also rotate through the Chair position.
- At least two VREB Analysts should have broad scientific expertise relevant to the research case to be examined.
- All VREB Analysts should be members of CAREB-ACCER and be active in the field of research ethics, have knowledge of the TCPS2, and be experienced in research ethics review.
- The VREB Coordinator should possess the same qualifications as VREB Analysts.

Appointments

VREB WG will appoint the VREB Advisory composed of a Chair, Analysts and a Coordinator. The VREB WG may appoint a Vice Chair to assume the responsibilities of the Chair in his or her temporary absence, or may appoint another VREB member to assume these responsibilities on a per-meeting basis.

VREB WG may also appoint scientific, legal or ethics experts, and/or community members as Advisors on an ad hoc basis to provide expertise as needed.

Terms of Office

Members are usually appointed for a one-year term, though this term may be varied to allow for such factors as turnover and continuity. Appointments may be renewed.

Resignation

A member of the VREB Advisory may resign from the Advisory by notifying the VREB WG Chair.

Vacancy

The VREB Advisory Chair will inform the VREB WG if the Advisory membership is expected to be inadequate to meet requirements for the case at hand and/or anticipated workloads.

Confidentiality

The VREB Advisory members are prohibited from disclosing any confidential information received in the content of their service on the Advisory. This applies to information received in writing or orally, including email correspondence, telephone calls, and presentations and print material provided for Advisory meetings.

List of Advisory Members

With the permission of those involved, CAREB-ACCER may publish the names and affiliations of the members of the VREB Advisory on the CAREB-ACCER website.

Providing agenda materials to VREB Advisory

The VREB WG Coordinator will provide as much of the agenda materials as possible including the CAREB-ACCER VREB membership data acquired from the case study review at least fourteen (14) working days before the meeting.

Issue Resolution

All issues identified by VREB Chair and/or VREB Analysts requiring action are to be communicated through the VREB Coordinator to the VREB WG Chair. The VREB WG Chair will consult with the VP PDC and together attempt to find a suitable resolution. In the absence of a resolution or in a case that may involve the removal or sanction of a CAREB-ACCER Member (according to organizational policy or bylaw), the VP PDC will consult the CAREB-ACCER President for advice before acting.