



OCREAC

*Ottawa-Carleton Research and Evaluation Advisory
Committee*



GUIDELINES

**For Conducting Non-Board-Initiated Research and/or
Evaluation Projects**

IN THE

**Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
133 Greenbank Road Nepean Ontario K2H 6L3**

**Ottawa Catholic School Board
570 Hunt Club West Nepean Ontario K2G 3R4**

2025-2026

Dear Researcher:

Thank you for your interest in including our students, staff, and/or families in your data collection. These Guidelines apply to **all** individuals or agencies requesting permission to conduct **non-board-initiated** research/evaluation projects, on or off school property. To facilitate the process, our two school boards have established the Ottawa-Carleton Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee (OCREAC). The role of the committee is to carefully review proposals on the basis of educational merit using the review criteria outlined below.

To conduct research in our school boards, an online application (in English) must first be submitted **and** approved by OCREAC. Approved projects will receive an approval letter from this committee which will grant permission to approach our schools following the process outlined in these guidelines. **Please do not approach any staff member prior to receiving an approval from OCREAC or include any letters of recommendation with your application.**

REVIEW CRITERIA

The criteria used for reviewing proposals include:

- Judging the relevance of each request to the educational objectives and priorities of the school board concerned;
- Meets the Tri-Council Policy 2 (2010) criteria for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (Bill 49, 1989);
- Determining if the methodology is adequate, meets school board policy and OCREAC guidelines, and is rigorous enough to warrant the time allocation; AND
- Determining the impact of each request on the school systems (i.e., the amount of time required by students and staff and the number of students required to complete a project).

Submissions will not be reviewed if:

- The application is incomplete or misses the deadline for submission

Submissions will not be accepted if:

- The research is for commercial or marketing purposes
- The application seeks to collect data for multiple purposes
- The application requests the use of teacher and/or staff time to conduct duties that are the responsibility of the researcher
- Plans for staff presence during the collection of data with students is missing from the application
- An exceptionally large number of participants is requested

Please note: Both school boards reserve the right to reject applications solely on the grounds of each board's priorities at the time.

QUESTIONS?

Please e-mail:	<p style="text-align: center;">ocreac@ocdsb.ca OR Josh Remedios, Research Officer Ottawa-Carleton District School Board 133 Greenbank Road, Ottawa, Ontario K2H 6L3 joshua.remédios@ocdsb.ca</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ocreac@ocsb.ca OR Kelly McKibbin, Research Assistant Ottawa Catholic School Board 570 Hunt Club West, Nepean, Ontario, K2G 3R4 kelly.mckibbin@ocsb.ca</p>
Complete your online submission at:	<p>https://survey.alchemer-ca.com/s3/50370779/OCREAC-Application-Form</p>	

GUIDELINES

*These **Guidelines** apply to **all** individuals or agencies requesting permission to conduct non-board-initiated research or evaluation projects, surveys, or feedback involving students, parents/guardians or staff in the two boards.*

PART 1: CONSIDERATIONS FOR INITIAL OCREAC REVIEW

- 1.1 **APPLICATIONS TO COMMITTEE:** All applications for non-board initiated research or evaluation must be reviewed by the OCREAC.
- 1.2 **LANGUAGE OF SUBMISSION:** All applications and supporting documents must be submitted in ENGLISH regardless of the language of the study.
- 1.3 **STAFF AS RESEARCHERS:** If you are a staff member of either board and are submitting an application to conduct research that falls **outside of your regular duties**, please ensure that your methodology distinguishes your role as “staff member” vs. “researcher” (e.g., other than reflective inquiry/action research, teachers would not typically conduct research with their own students). OCDSB employees should refer to Policy P.024.HR regarding Employee Conflict of Interest.
- 1.4 **CONTACTING SCHOOLS:** Individuals seeking to access our schools for the purposes of any data collection are not permitted to contact the schools **directly** without first having submitted an application and obtained written approval from the committee (this includes applications undergoing revisions). The committee reserves the right to restrict access to schools for researchers who fail to follow the protocol.
- 1.5 **ACCESS TO SCHOOLS:** In general, researchers will not have access to students or school staff in **June or September** due to the large number of activities in schools. Exceptions will be made for those proposals that demonstrate the necessity of access to schools during these months and are approved sufficiently in advance to allow the schools to plan for the research activity.
- 1.6 **TIMELINES:** Data collection timelines must be **reasonable** and must not place unrealistic demands on the two school boards.
- 1.7 **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH TEAM:** It is the responsibility of the research team to carry out **all duties** pertaining to their research, including the distribution and collection of consent forms, the administration of the tasks, and the debriefing. Moreover, the research team is responsible for all costs associated with their project (e.g., photocopying, or release time, etc...).
- 1.8 **POLICE RECORDS CHECK:** All research personnel entering a school are required to submit a copy of their **police records check**, specifically a **Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)** issued within the last **6-months**. Research personnel must carry this with them at all times while in the school. The cost of obtaining a VSC is the sole responsibility of the applicant. Should research staff change, the Chair of OCREAC must be advised.
- 1.9 **STAFF PRESENCE:** A school board staff member must be **present at all times** when the research/evaluation is being conducted in a school.
- 1.10 **APPROVAL PERIOD:** The approval period is for **one school year** and expires as of June 30th of that academic year. Your letter of approval must be carried with you at all times and shown to all staff you are working with in the schools.
- 1.11 **STUDY DESIGN:** The design of the study should neither disrupt the school schedule **unduly** nor be detrimental to the participants involved.
- 1.12 **RECRUITMENT:** An acceptable justification regarding the need to access participants within a school, rather than at a location in the community is required. Our schools will not be used as a venue for research/evaluation conducted **off school property or after school hours**. An exception may occur for families who have consented to research that originates at an outside organization (e.g., CHEO) and for which specific information on their child is being requested from their teacher.
- 1.13 **INCENTIVES:** Offering of **incentives** (e.g., cash cards, stickers, pencils, books, etc...) to individual students, staff, or families for participating in research is **not** permitted. If a **financial honorarium** is available, the committee will direct the contribution to the participating school to use for relevant school-based activities (e.g., physical activity research donation may be used for the purchase of Physical Education equipment). **Reimbursement** for participant related expenses (i.e., parking, teacher release time) will be considered.

1.14 **QUESTIONNAIRES:** Approval will not be granted for questionnaires that require participants to report *any* of the following, unless there is a relevant link to education and parents/guardians have been adequately informed in advance of the specific questions that will be asked:

- *Illegal activities;*
- *Life-threatening behavior or state of mental health;*
- Rating *behaviors of others* (e.g., teachers rating teachers/principals/staff and vice versa or students rating students); or
- Information about *ethnic or racial background* without a strong and relevant link to the research question.

1.15 **STANDARDIZED TESTS:** In the case of certain tests, applicants will have to demonstrate that *qualified personnel* will be administering the test.

1.16 **ACCESSIBILITY OF TESTING MATERIALS:** At the request of the school's Principal, the researcher agrees to *adapt* all materials to meet the special needs of the participant. This may include, but is not limited to, the *translation* of material designated to parents/guardians into the appropriate heritage language.

PART 2: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONTINUING OCREAC REVIEW

2.1 **RENEWALS and EXTENSIONS:** The approval period is for *one academic year*. Researchers who are unable to complete their project within the time frame specified (one academic year) must submit the *Status Report Form* which will include a project update, a list of participating schools, and a rationale for the extension. Furthermore, longitudinal studies that request data collection extending beyond a school year will be required to submit a request for extension. Researchers requesting *renewals* or *extensions* must complete the *Renewal, Extension or Modification Form* [[link to form](#)]. Renewals and extensions are conditional upon availability and interest of the schools in addition to the Board priorities at that time and are not guaranteed to receive approval.

2.2 **MODIFICATIONS:** Researchers requesting to make modifications or amendments to their approved proposal must complete the *Renewal, Extension or Modification Form*. [[link to form](#)]

2.3 **UNANTICIPATED ISSUES/ADVERSE EVENTS:** All unanticipated issues or adverse events must be reported to OCREAC immediately [[link to form](#)]. Researchers must complete the *Unanticipated Issues/Adverse Events Form* and submit to the Chair of OCREAC within **14 days** of the event.

2.4 **STATUS REPORT(S):** Researchers must complete and submit an electronic *Status Report Form* by **June 30** of each academic year to update OCREAC on the progress or completion of approved research projects. This form must be electronically submitted to the Chair of the committee [[link to form](#)]. Failure to submit this form will result in the *refusal of future* applications to this committee, including new applications and renewals/extensions. Further, the researcher agrees to allow the report to be circulated within the two boards.

2.5 **ONE PAGE SUMMARY:** Researchers must send a *one-page summary* of the results to any participating schools. The researcher may use the executive summary included in the *Status Report Form*. The report should contain aggregate data (where appropriate) only. In no circumstances shall a researcher reveal individual data to participants, school staff or parents without express written consent of the participant(s).

PART 3: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 **CONSENT:** All researchers are required to use *active consent* (written permission) when seeking participation of students, teachers, and staff and must also seek consent for all mechanisms or formats used for capturing data (e.g., audio/video recording, picture taking). Parental consent is required for all students under the *age of 18*.

3.2 **FAIRNESS AND EQUITY:** The equity of all groups must be ensured. The researcher should ensure that materials and methodology do not reinforce racist, sexist, religious, or other stereotypes. Inclusion and exclusion criteria must be clearly outlined and justified. All study materials should be adapted to meet the needs of participants, as needed.

3.3 **PRIVACY and the COLLECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION:** Conditions as outlined in Bill 49, *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989*, must be adhered to. Personal information may only be obtained as authorized in the Act. Collection of this information must: (1) be used only for the specific purposes for which it is gathered, (2) be linked to the express study question(s) and purpose(s), and (3) deemed necessary for the adequate interpretation of the research findings. This will include informing study participants when personal information is being collected and how it is being used. Personal information is defined in Bill 49 as: information related to race, religion, age, sex, marital or family status, psychiatric, criminal or employment history, and any

identifying number assigned to an individual such as: address, telephone number, email address and personal views of the individual relating to another individual.

- 3.4 **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Participating students, families, staff, schools and Boards must be *assured confidentiality*. Under *no* circumstance will researchers *identify the boards or individual schools* in any presentation of results. Researchers must inform the participants who will have access to the information, how the information will be used and stored, and who to contact for more information about the data collected. It is the researcher's responsibility to retain on file, for a minimum of one year, evidence of written consent of all participants in a study.
- 3.5 **DEBRIEFING:** All research/evaluation (including online surveys) must conclude with an *ethically approved* debriefing protocol. If any of your questions contain sensitive questions (e.g., mental health), you must provide adequate follow up resources. Please note that school resources cannot be used for the purpose of your debriefing protocol (e.g., staff psychologist/social worker/resource teacher cannot be implicated in your debriefing).
- 3.6 **DATA STORAGE AND SAFEGUARDING OF INFORMATION:** Researchers must clearly articulate how the data will be used and stored, particularly for researchers working outside of institutions. Storing data for future use will not be accepted. Describe procedures and timeframes for the secure use, retention/storage, disclosure, and disposal of data.
- 3.7 **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** A conflict of interest may arise when the researcher is found to be in a real, potential, or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, and personal, institutional or other interests. These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial or financial interests pertaining to the institution and/or the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current, or prospective professional associates. This may be particularly relevant for teachers or staff working as researchers (see Guideline 1.3 above). The Chair of OCREAC must be notified prior to any approval about any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest related to the research project.


THE APPLICATION PROCESS

2024-2025 Submissions to the Ottawa-Carleton Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee (OCREAC) must be completed online: <https://survey.alchemer-ca.com/s3/50370779/OCREAC-Application-Form>

Within this application you will be required to upload electronic copies of various documents. **ALL documents should be combined into a single PDF document. Only ONE uploaded file is permitted. Once uploaded, the file cannot be deleted but can be replaced by another file. Your single PDF document should include a paginated Table of Contents at the beginning of the document. The committee reserves the right to delay the review of an application if the application is deemed incomplete, or if the guidelines have not been followed.**

The **Research Application** must be completed online at
<https://survey.alchemer-ca.com/s3/50370779/OCREAC-Application-Form>

For a copy of the application please visit: https://www.ocdsb.ca/about_us/research or contact ocreac@ocdsb.ca.

<u>YOUR APPLICATION MUST INCLUDE:</u>	
1. RESEARCH APPLICATION. A completed and signed OCREAC Application form, which in the case of a student, must be countersigned by a professor, preferably the student's thesis advisor.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. ETHICS. Approval of the Ethics Committee of the researcher's institution , if applicable, must be included. Only those proposals reviewed, approved, and are included in the application package will be considered.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. INSTRUMENTS. Copies of all tests, questionnaires, and other data collection instruments which students, staff, and/or parents/guardians will be asked to complete must be submitted in final form as <u>drafts will not be considered</u> . Please note that careful attention must be given to ensure that questionnaires and surveys adhere to our guidelines.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. INFORMATION LETTER. An information letter for all participants (e.g., parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators) explaining the purpose of the research and the nature of their participation must be included in the application (See <i>Information Letter and/or Informed Consent Guidelines and Template</i> for reference).	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. RECRUITMENT POSTER. If applicable, a copy of the recruitment poster to be used should be submitted with the application (See <i>Recruitment Poster Template</i> for reference).	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. ACTIVE CONSENT. An active consent form for anyone (e.g., students, teachers, administrators) participating in the project must accompany your application and adhere to the OCREAC guidelines. Separate consent forms are required for each participant group and must seek consent for all mechanisms or formats used for capturing data (e.g., audio/video recording, picture taking). <i>Parental consent is required for all students under the age of 18</i> (See <i>Information Letter and/or Informed Consent Guidelines and Template</i> for reference).	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. DEBRIEFING. Researchers must provide a copy of their debriefing document for all participants. In cases where the debriefing will be verbal (e.g., with child participants), a copy of the transcript must be included. (See <i>Debriefing Guidelines</i> for reference).	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. POLICE CLEARANCE. A copy of a police records check, specifically a Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC) issued within the last 6-months for all research personnel entering schools must be included.	<input type="checkbox"/>

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The stages of the approval process are set out in the *OCREAC Approval Process* flowchart.

1. **Meeting of the Committee**
 - If your research/evaluation application is deemed complete and arrives by the deadline, the application will be added to the OCREAC meeting agenda--applicants will be notified if their application is deemed incomplete.
 - Meetings occur within 3-weeks of each application deadline and applicants can expect to be notified with the OCREAC decision within 3-weeks of the meeting by email (i.e., turnaround of 6-weeks). **Please note that all decisions by the committee are final and we do not accept appeals.**
2. **Communication to Researcher and School Board Staff**
 - The OCREAC decision (i.e., *Approved, Approved with Minor Revisions, Revise and Resubmit, Rejected, or Deferred*) will be communicated to the Principal Investigator via email. E-copy of decision letter will be attached.
 - Each board will circulate a memo of all approved projects (including a brief description) to principals.
3. **Recruitment**
 - Researchers of *Approved* projects are then permitted to contact principals of schools to invite them to participate in their project.
 - **Please indicate in your communication to principals that the project has been approved by OCREAC.**
 - Approval does not obligate any board, department, or school to participate in a study. The decision to participate in a research project is always the prerogative of the school board and participating school principal and/or teacher.
 - School boards will not assist with recruitment of participants, nor will they provide email addresses of students, parents, or staff.
 - Boards reserve the right to identify schools that successful applicants cannot contact for recruitment purposes.
4. **Responding to Revise and Resubmit Request**
 - If revisions are requested, they will be provided to you in your response letter. To respond, please:
 - Send a response letter to the Chair of OCREAC addressing the comments or revisions requested
 - Attach any revised documents and/or a revised application
 - Ensure that you respond to *each* comment or revision requested
 - Identify where revisions were made throughout the application document
 - Highlight application or revised forms to make all changes visible
5. **Reports**
 - At the end of the academic year of approval (by **June 30**), you must submit the **Status Report Form** indicating: (a) study progress, or (b) study completion. This form must be completed online [[link to form](#)]
 - You must share a **one-page summary** of your research findings with all participating schools. Please share a copy of this summary with the Chair prior to circulating to participating schools.
 - Researchers agree to a summary of their study findings being circulated within the two boards.
6. **Extensions, Renewals or Modifications**
 - Researchers requesting any of the following must complete the **Renewal, Extension or Modification Forms** online [[link to form](#)]
 - **Renewals:** For researchers who have completed the targets for an approved project in an academic year, but are seeking approval for another year (e.g., for multi-year or longitudinal studies for which the study design or methodology has not changed).
 - **Extensions:** For researchers who have been unable to complete the study targets during the year of approval and are seeking an extension for another academic year to complete data collection.
 - **Modifications:** For researchers requesting to make modifications or amendments to their OCREAC approved research proposal.
 - Note that renewals and extensions are conditional upon availability and interest of the schools in addition to the Board priorities at that time and are not guaranteed to receive approval.

Co-Chairs of the Ottawa-Carleton Research & Evaluation Advisory Committee

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	Ottawa Catholic School Board
<p>Josh Remedios, M.A. (CHAIR)</p> <p>Research Officer Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ) email: joshua.remedios@ocdsb.ca</p>	<p>Lauren Figueredo, Ph.D.</p> <p>Research Officer Student Success Department telephone: 613-224-4455, ext. 2341 email: lauren.figueredo@ocsb.ca</p>