



ATTENTION: Board of Governors and Senate
FROM: Kristie Westerlaken, PhD – Director, Research Ethics
RE: Research Ethics and Research Ethics board Annual Report (Sept 1, 2022 to Aug 31, 2023)
DATE: February 15, 2024

As per Policy R20.01 – Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Participants, Section 7.1 which states “the Director, will submit an annual report of the REB’s activities, which report has been approved by the REB Chair”, please find attached the REB Annual Report for the period September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023.

Sincerely,

Kristie Westerlaken, PhD
Director, Research Ethics
Enclosure

SFU Research Ethics Board Annual Report – 2022-2023

This report covers the period from September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023, and includes a summary of activities undertaken during that period of time. Appendix A to the report includes key definitions taken from the TCPS2 (2022) Glossary to assist with context.

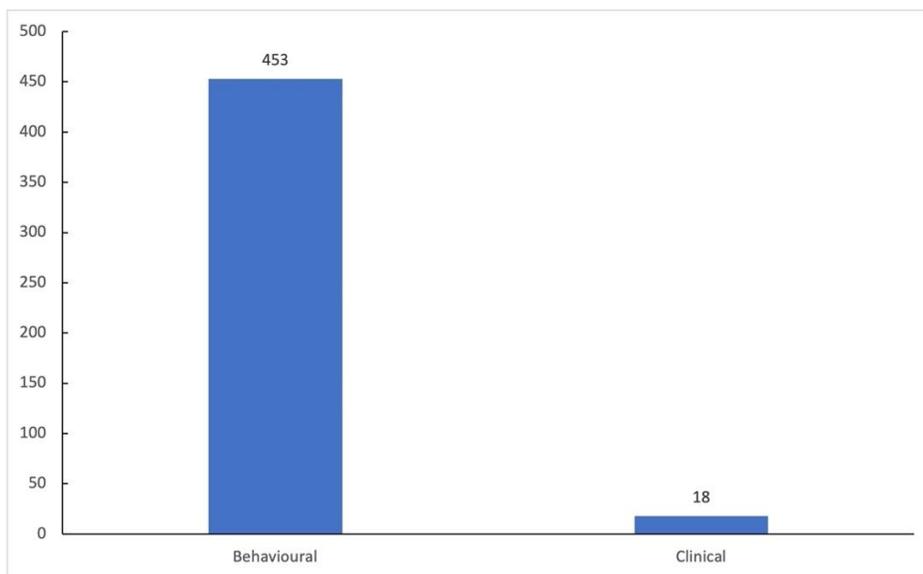
Volume - Human Participant Research Activities

Table 1 sets out the total number of research activities submitted for review¹. Activities include: new studies, Post-approval activities (PAAs) which encompass amendments, annual renewals, annual renewal/amendments, and close requests, as well as those projects exempt from REB review as per Articles 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.

Submission Type	
New Study	471
Exemption	73
Post-Approval Activities	1387

Table 1. Total Submissions Submitted for Review

Most new studies submitted were classified as behavioural (Fig.1). In addition, there were 23 Indigenous studies submitted during the reporting period. For studies where SFU was board of record, 3% were reviewed by the full board, while the rest were reviewed via the delegated review pathway.



¹ Volume appears comparable to previous years (21/22 – 621; 20/21-563; 19/20-434; 18/19-532). However, it is important to note that data has been retrieved from 2 systems over all reporting periods and data collection parameters have varied considerably due to system and process changes.

Figure 1. New Study Submissions by type.

During the reporting period, 7 meetings were held, including 3 meetings where no studies were reviewed. Meetings were not scheduled for August and December.

A large percentage of new studies (64%) were student projects. Specifically, 91% were graduate projects and 9% were undergraduate projects.

New study submissions originated predominantly from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), with Education, Communication, Art and Technology (FCAT), as well as Health Sciences contributing significantly to the numbers (Fig.2).

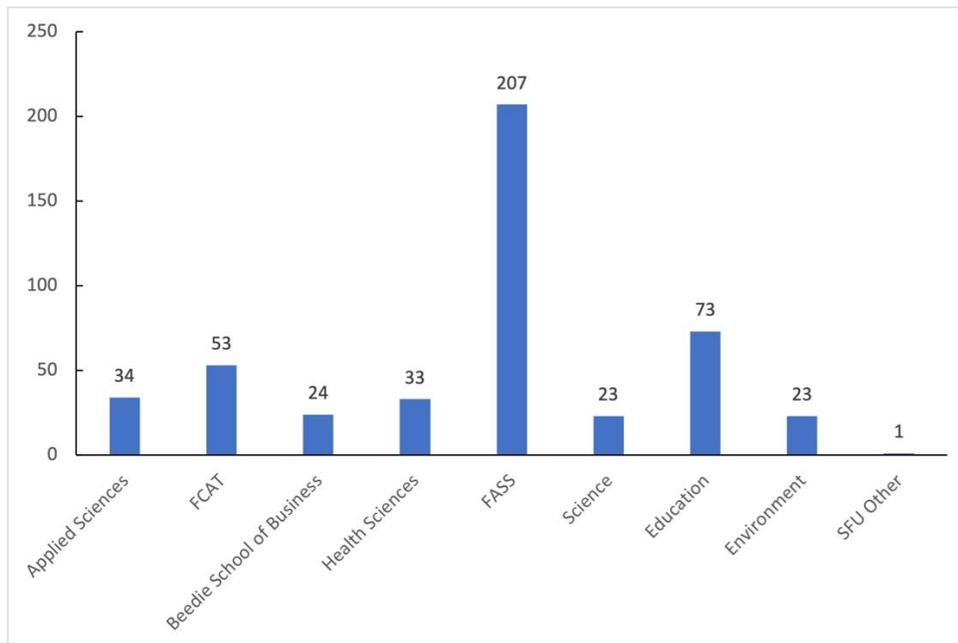


Figure 2. New Study submissions by Faculty.

At the department level, Psychology, Interactive Arts and Technology, Criminology and Computing Science submitted the most applications (Fig.3).

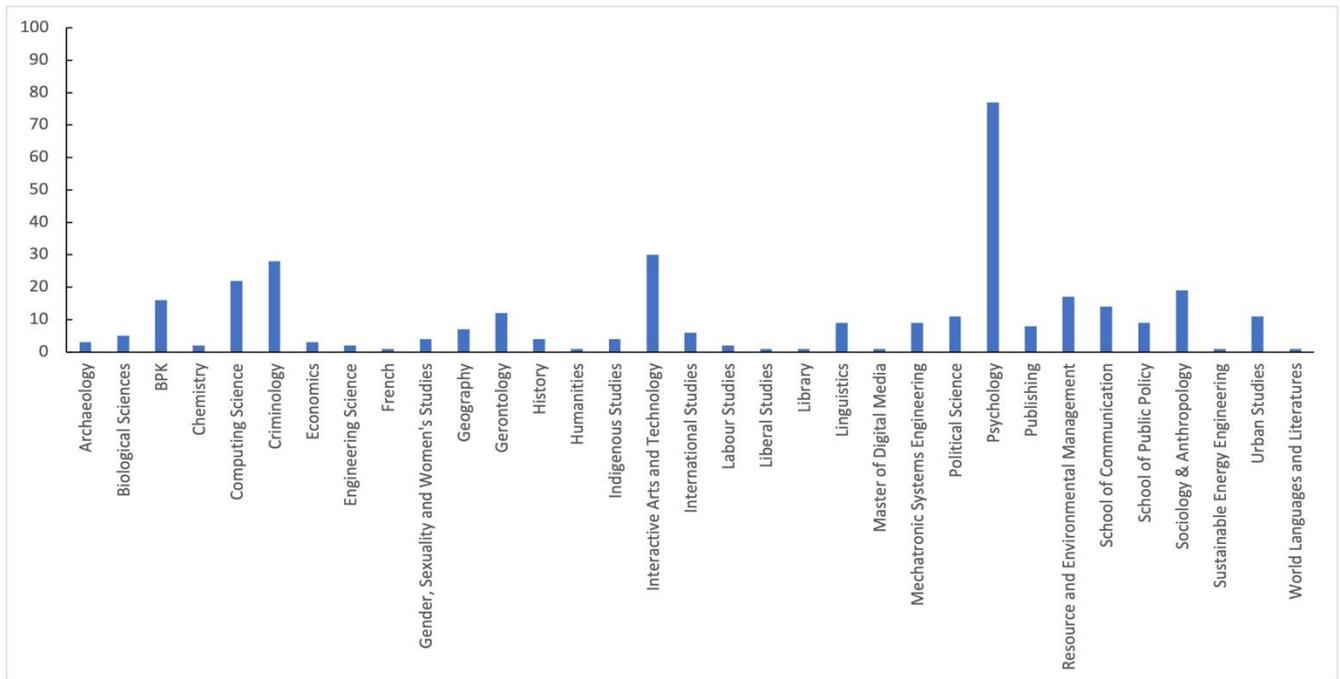


Figure 3. New Study Submissions by Department.

Post-Approval Activities (PAAs)

Table 2 shows the total number of PAAs submitted by type.

PAA Type	
Amendment	397
Renewal	677
Renew/Amend	149
Close Request	164

Table 2. PAA Submissions

Similar to new study submissions, the majority of PAAs are classified as behavioural (Fig. 4).

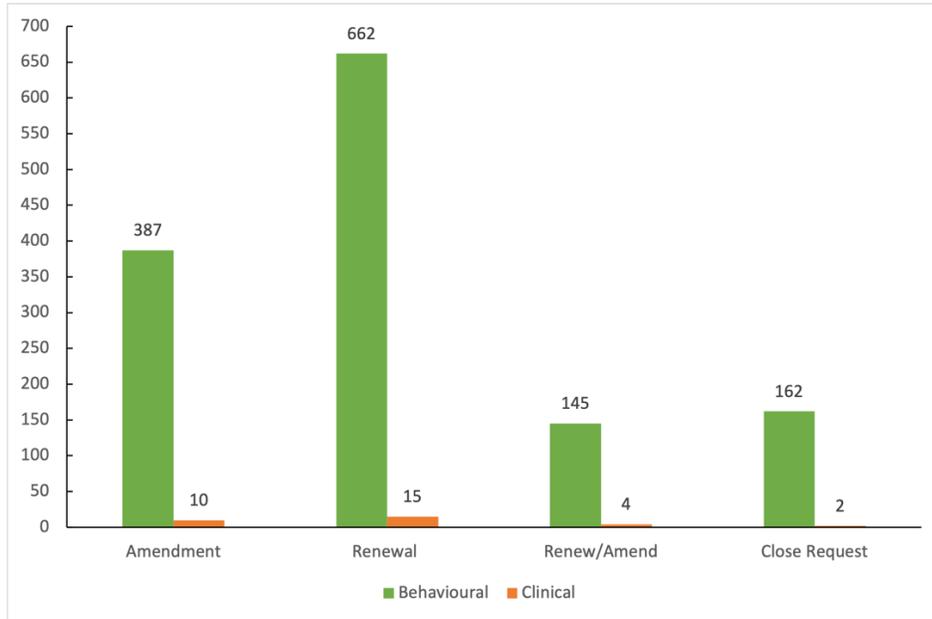


Figure 4. PAA Submissions by type.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences submitted most of the PAAs, followed by Education (Fig.5).

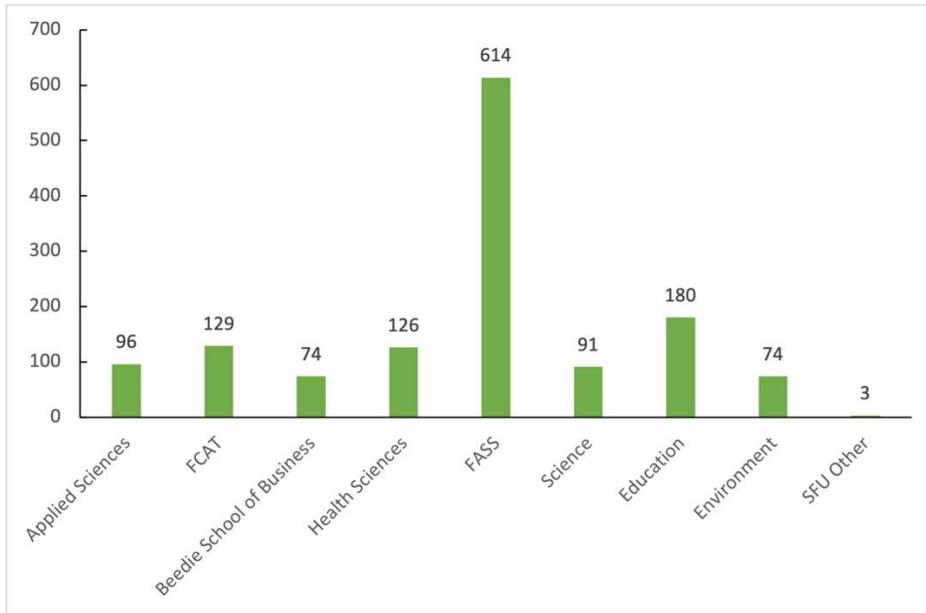


Figure 5. PAA Total Submissions by Faculty.

In terms of departments, Psychology submitted the most PAAS, followed by Criminology, Interactive Arts and Technology, and Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology (BPK) (Fig.6).

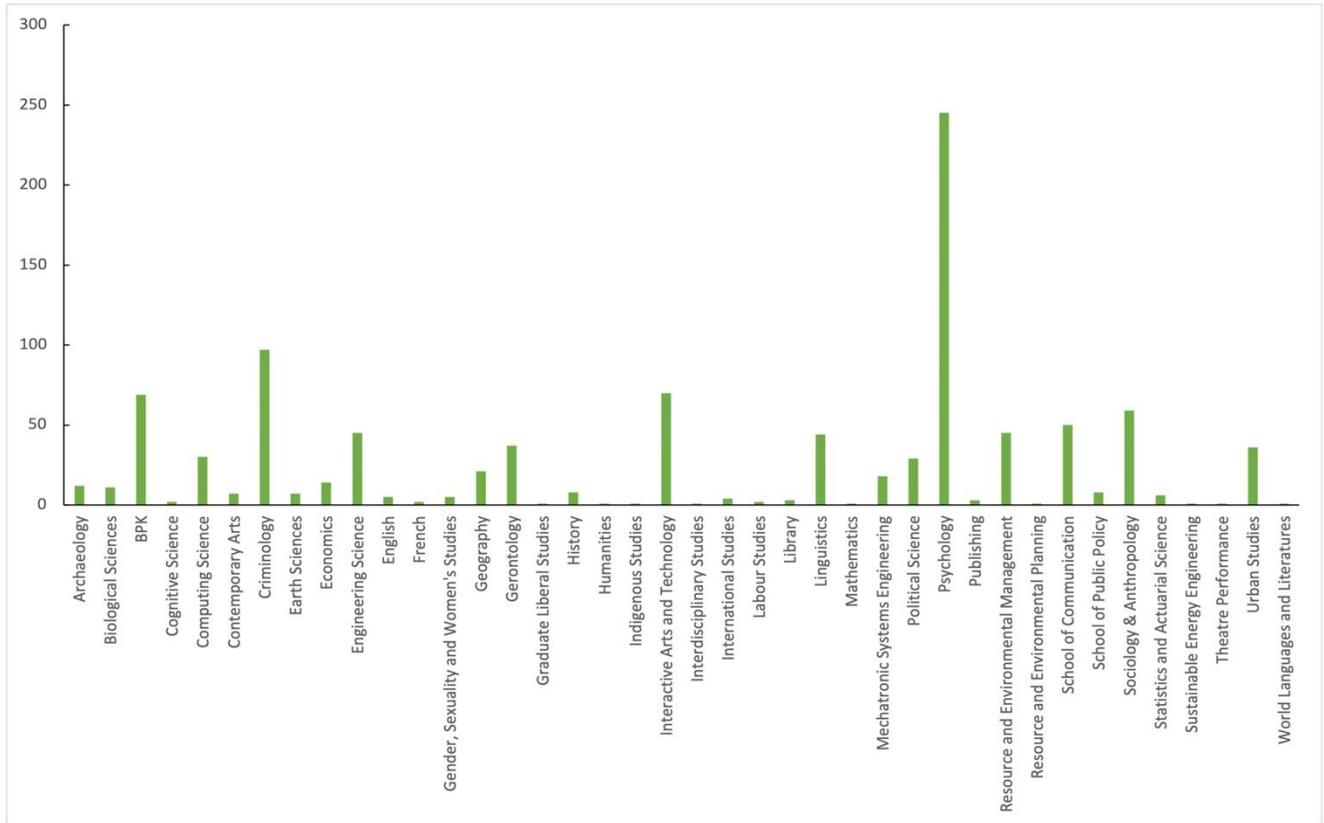


Figure 6. PAA Total Submissions by Department.

Review Timelines ²

The timelines set out below in Table 3 reflect the average number of days (including weekends) from initial submission to the issuance of the certificate of approval. Notably, timelines are affected by the volume of submissions in the system at any given time, the quality of submissions, staff resources, and reviewer availability.

For Full Board studies, timelines are impacted by submission deadlines (2.5 weeks prior to the REB meeting) as well as the frequency of REB meetings which can be impacted due to the availability of members which, in turn, impact quorum requirements.

Finally, review timelines also include the researcher response time reflects the amount of time (average days) between the entry of the first revisions and the response to the first revisions by the researcher. There are often more than one set of revisions issued. The numbers reflect the amount of time that the study is with the research team.

	Time to Approval	Researcher Response time
Delegated	23.29	8.95
Full Board	125	20.6

Table 3. Review timelines (avg days).

² Direct comparisons amongst Canadian REBs is inexact due to lack of reporting (reporting is not mandatory), as well as significant variations in operational processes and procedures, scope of work, and staff and member resources.

Multi-Jurisdictional Research

The SFU REB also reviews projects that involve collaborators from other BC academic institutions and/or Health Authorities (ie multi-jurisdictional projects). These proceed via the BC harmonized ethics review model and are managed through the UBC RISE system. During the reporting period, SFU was board of record (BoR) for 39 new study submissions and involved as a partner institution on 91 more submissions (Fig.7). The new studies for which SFU was BoR were mostly behavioural (Fig.8). Furthermore, SFU was BoR on 237 PAAs (Fig.9). Five multi-jurisdictional studies were reviewed at full board during the reporting period.

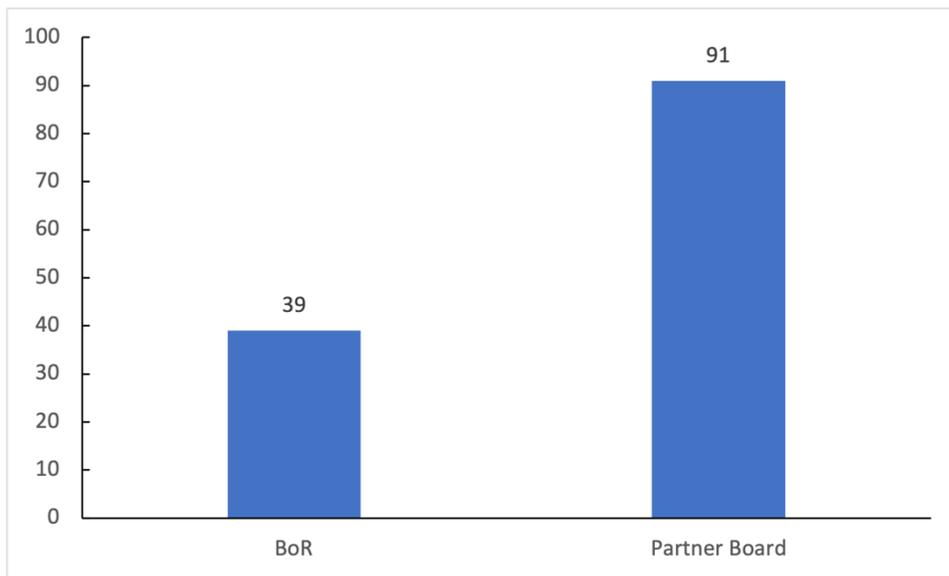


Figure 7. New Study submissions for SFU as Board of Record versus Partner Board.

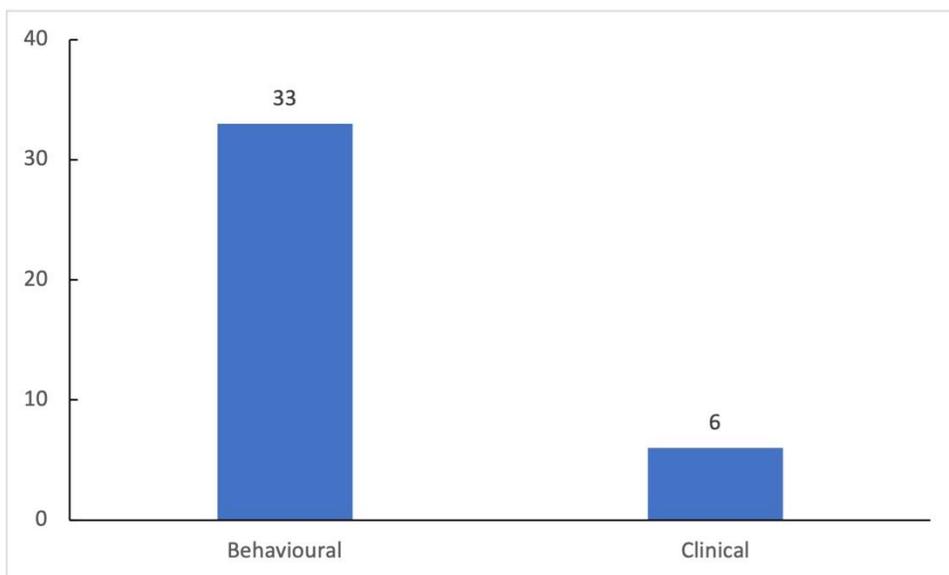


Figure 8. New Study submissions for SFU as Board of Record.

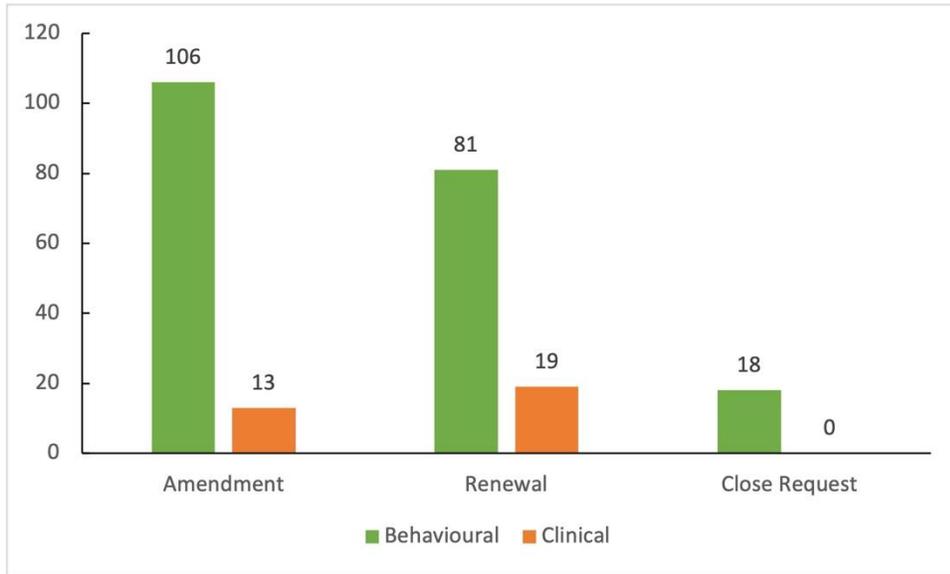


Figure 9. New Study submissions for SFU as Board of Record.

The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) was SFU’s most frequent collaborator on new study submissions, followed by the University of Victoria (UVic) and Providence Health Care (PHC) (Fig. 10). In addition, SFU collaborated on reviews with many Health Authorities in the province, including Fraser Health Authority (FHA), First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), Interior Health Authority (IHA), Northern Health Authority, and Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA). SFU was involved most often as a partner board for studies reviewed by the BREB, followed by BC Cancer (BCCA), and the University of Victoria (Fig. 11).

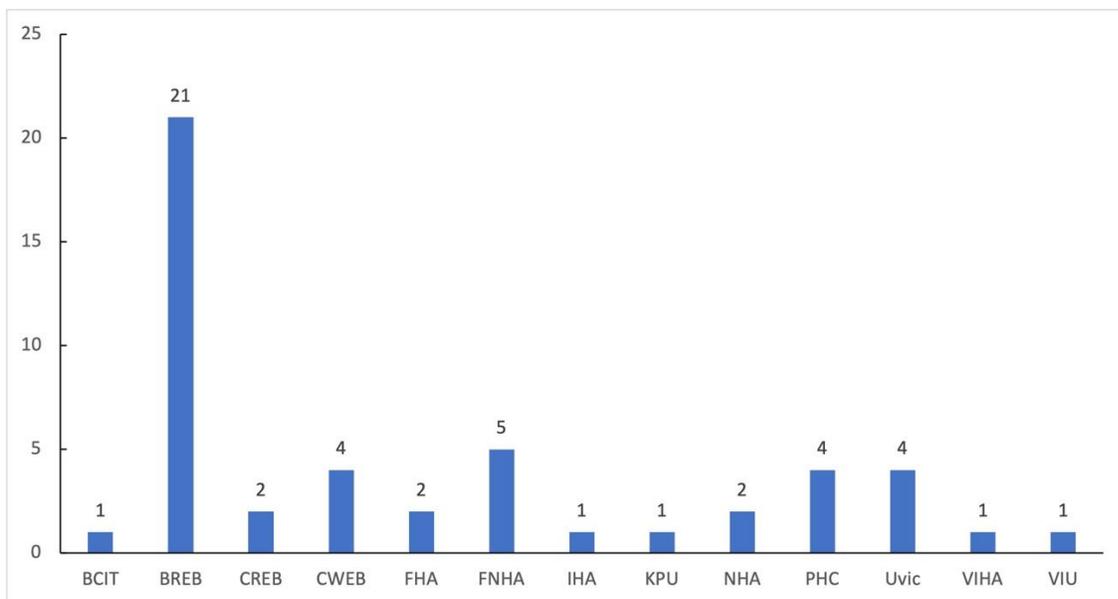


Figure 10. Partner Boards on new studies with SFU as Board of Record. (Note: more than one partner can be included for the same study).

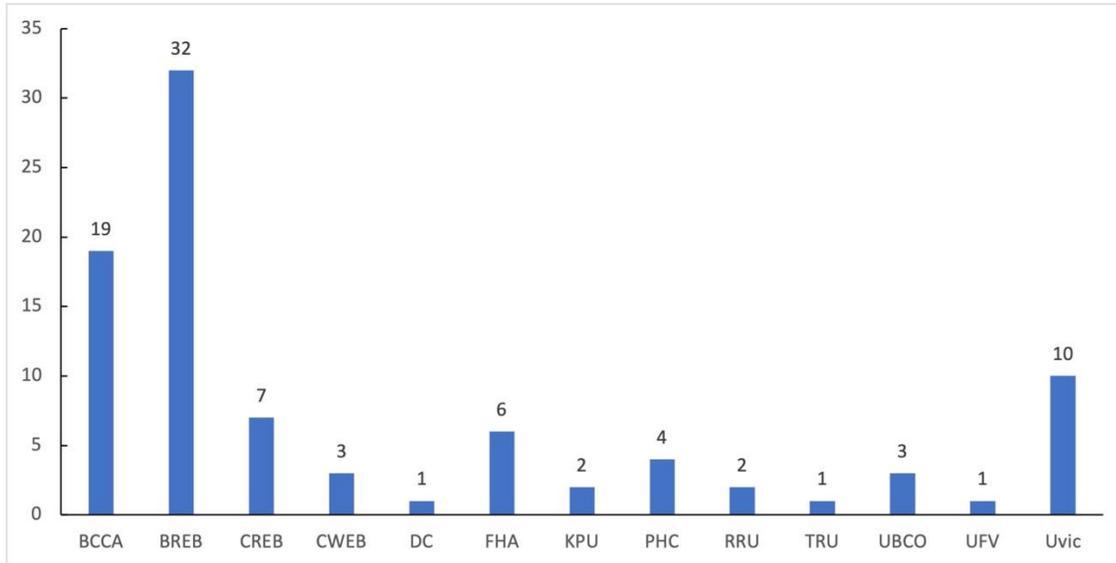


Figure 11. SFU as a Partner Board on new studies. The x axis represents the BoR.

Review timelines for multi-jurisdictional studies

As stated above, review timelines are impacted by a number of factors, but multi-jurisdictional studies face additional factors including the number of partners involved, institutional differences in REB management, as well as differences in interpretation/application of principles and policies.

Time to Approval (avg days)

Review Pathway	Behavioural	Clinical
Delegated	40.6	76.75
Full Board	NA	138*

Table 4. New submissions for SFU as BoR. * This number is based on only one study at the time of reporting.

Additional Activities

In addition to the ethical review of human research projects, two key activities undertaken over the reporting period were:

- Revisions to R20.01 – Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Participants which included the adoption of the Network of Networks and Canadian Association of Research Ethics Board (N2/CAREB) Research Ethics Board Standard Operating Procedures. These SOPs are compliant with Canadian and US regulatory and ethics guidance criteria. Implementation is aimed at streamlining human research ethics review by facilitating a single standard for REBs. The REB participated in the policy review process, including representation on the Senate Joint Committee by Professor Jeremy Snyder, FHS Faculty Member and REB Ethicist, and provision of comments on policy and procedures content.
- Indigenous Knowledges & Ethics Dialogues – this initiative was led by Professor Vicki Kelly (Faculty of Education) to educate Research Ethics staff and REB members (as well as other key stakeholders from the VPRI portfolio) about Indigenous ethics principles, history, and culture. As Director of the Indigenous Research Institute, Dr Kelly began the work over 5 years ago with the writing of ‘Ethical Foundations for Reconciliation: Preparing The Ground and a Way Forward’. With President Joy Johnson’s (VPR at the time) support, this led to an ASIAboriginal Strategic Initiative Grant Proposal to host Indigenous Dialogues which were set to begin March 16, 2020 when the University closed due to Covid 19. The work resumed post Covid in 2021 with a series of Conversations with Research Operations in preparation for the Indigenous Dialogues in Fall-Spring of 2022. This led to the hosting of multiple Dialogues, including two Ceremonies.

Outreach and Education

Finally, Research Ethics provided outreach and educational activities to the research community as follows:

Faculty/department presentations - 17

Zoom helpline – 335 callers

Additional meetings/calls – 106.

Appendix A - Definitions - as per TCPS2 (2022) Glossary

Core principles – The three core principles of the Policy that together express the overarching value of respect for human dignity: Respect for Persons; Concern for Welfare; and Justice. See "Respect for Persons," "Concern for Welfare" and "Justice."

Respect for Persons – A core principle of this Policy that recognizes the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due. It incorporates the dual moral obligations to respect autonomy and to protect those with developing, impaired, or diminished autonomy.

Concern for Welfare – A core principle of this Policy that requires researchers and research ethics boards to aim to protect the welfare of participants, and, in some circumstances, to promote that welfare in view of any foreseeable risks associated with the research. See "Risk" and "Welfare."

Justice – A core principle of this Policy that refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably. Fairness entails treating all people with equal respect and concern. Equity requires distributing the benefits and burdens of research participation in such a way that no segment of the population is unduly burdened by the harms of research or denied the benefits of the knowledge generated from it.

Delegated research ethics board (REB) review – The level of REB review assigned to minimal risk research projects. Delegated reviewers are selected from among the REB membership, with the exception of the ethics review of minimal risk student course-based research activities, which can be reviewed by delegates from the student's department, faculty, or an equivalent level. Delegated reviewers who are non-members or non-voting members of the REB must have experience, expertise and knowledge comparable to what is expected of an REB member.

Full research ethics board (REB) review – The level of REB review assigned to above minimal risk research projects. Conducted by the full membership of the research ethics board, it is the default requirement for the ethics review of research involving humans.

Minimal risk research – Research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research are no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.

Multi-Jurisdictional research – Research involving multiple institutions and/or multiple research ethics boards (REBs). It is not intended to apply to ethics review mechanisms for research involving multiple REBs within the jurisdiction or under the auspices of a single institution.

Participant – An individual whose data, biological materials, or responses to interventions, stimuli, or questions by a researcher are relevant to answering the research question(s). Also referred to as a "human participant," and in other policies/guidance as "subject" or "research subject."

Proportionate approach to research ethics review – The assessment of foreseeable risk to determine the level of scrutiny a research proposal will receive (i.e., delegated review for minimal risk research or full research ethics board [REB] review for research above minimal risk), as well as the consideration of the foreseeable risks, the potential benefits, and the ethical implications of the research in the context of initial and continuing review.

Research – An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation.

Research ethics board (REB) – A body of researchers, community members, and others with specific expertise (e.g., in ethics, in relevant research disciplines) established by an institution to review the ethical acceptability of all research involving humans conducted within the institution's jurisdiction or under its auspices.

Risk – The possibility of the occurrence of harm. The level of foreseeable risk posed to participants by their involvement in research is assessed by considering the magnitude or seriousness of the harm and the probability that it will occur, whether to participants or to third parties.

Welfare – The quality of a person's experience of life in all its aspects. Welfare consists of the impact on individuals and/or groups of factors such as their physical, mental, and spiritual health, as well as their physical, economic, and social circumstances.