Embedding Social Justice and Ethical Awareness in Course-Based Research Assignments

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Abstract

This article discusses guidelines for embedding research ethics and social justice into undergraduate and graduate coursework through the University of Victoria's course-based ethics review framework. Drawing on experiential learning strategies and the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2, 2022), this paper illustrates how instructors can design assignments that cultivate ethical reasoning, research integrity, and social responsibility. Practical examples from several academic disciplines demonstrate how students learn to navigate ethical complexities in real-world contexts. The framework affirms that ethical research education is not just procedural but foundational to inclusive inquiry, offering a scalable approach to teaching responsible and justice-oriented research practices.

Introduction

> I hadn't thought about how asking my roommate personal questions for a class might be ethically complicated. After reading TCPS 2 and writing my reflection, I realized I needed to be more transparent and respectful.
> (Student comment)

Social justice and research ethics intersect critically in university education, particularly when students are asked to consider the broader implications of their research practice. The preceding reflection from an undergraduate student about a course-based research experience indicates that even modest assignments can yield substantial ethical awareness when thoughtfully structured. Embedding research ethics instruction within both undergraduate and graduate coursework offers a practical introductory strategy to foster both ethical consciousness and social responsibility. It is important to note that the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2, 2022, p. 14) is clear that course-based research activities, irrespective of their pedagogical purpose, fall under research ethics board (REB) review.

The core principles in TCPS 2—Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice—are all solidly grounded in the general principle of social justice. The Respect for Persons principle recognizes the intrinsic value of human beings and requires treating them with respect and consideration, including protecting those with developing, impaired, or diminished autonomy. This emphasizes the importance of informed consent and the right of individuals to make their own decisions regarding participation in research. Concern for Welfare focuses on protecting the well-being of participants by considering the impact of research on their physical, mental, spiritual, economic, and social circumstances. Researchers and research ethics boards (REBs) aim to promote participants' welfare and minimize foreseeable risks. The principle of

Justice mandates fair and equitable treatment for all individuals, ensuring that the benefits and burdens of research are distributed equitably. This means that no group should be unduly burdened by the harms of research or denied its benefits. Implementing the three core principles of TCPS 2 in research involves a multifaceted approach that shapes the entire research process, from design to review and implementation. This requires an understanding of how these principles guide ethical decision-making and lead to practical applications like informed consent, risk-benefit analysis, and fair treatment of participants.

Course-based research experiences are often viewed as stepping stones to ensure novice researchers (undergraduate and graduate students) are introduced to these principles of social justice in research early in their research journey. With the implementation of these core principles in mind, university instructors across many academic disciplines have found that engaging with the course-based ethics review framework provides them with the necessary tools to include a range of ethical hands-on research experiences with human participants, allowing their students to connect in-class lessons with real-world situations (theory to practice). Generally, course-based ethics approvals allow students to engage in authentic research within a structured classroom setting. The course-based ethics review framework blends and builds upon the necessary disciplinary knowledge, sound research design, and core principles of conducting ethical research with human participants.

The University of Victoria's (UVic) course-based ethics review framework provides clear guidance for integrating the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2, 2022) into course assignments. It equips instructors with tools to design ethical learning experiences within their courses that are experiential and aligned with the principles of Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice. For example, a political science instructor might require students to conduct an interview-based research project with participants about their political views, prompting reflection on issues such as informed consent, data security, and power dynamics. Another example: An instructor in a linguistics course might have students record interviews, using informed consent protocols. Students then reflect on how the language of choice for the interview influenced participant comfort and power dynamics. These reflections deepen students' awareness of how seemingly neutral research tools can reflect systemic inequities. These types of structured activities demystify the ethics process and reinforce its relevance to diverse research contexts. Thus, when ethics is embedded into both design and debrief stages, it encourages the kind of ethical consciousness students need to navigate future research landscapes. This course-based approach also ensures students not only learn the subject matter but also develop a strong ethical awareness and decision-making capacity.

A growing body of research demonstrates that when students engage with ethical reflection in the context of course-based research activities, they not only internalize abstract ethical principles but also develop professional competencies and greater sensitivity to social justice. This paper outlines research on the effectiveness of experiential course-based ethics assignments, discusses the benefits and caveats for student learning, and shares how UVic's course-based ethics review framework can support instructors in designing such assignments using evidence-based strategies to cultivate students' ethical reasoning and social responsibility.

Research Evidence on Experiential Ethics Learning in Course-Based Settings

Research consistently shows that experiential learning methods enhance students' ethical understanding and application, particularly when aligned with social justice principles central to TCPS 2. The following studies exemplify how embedding ethics into course assignments promotes not only knowledge but also ethical aptitude and reflective practice.

For instance, Farghally et al. (2025) documented how computer science students across levels benefited from ethics case studies and assignments tailored to their disciplinary context. Students reported increased awareness of ethical dilemmas specific to computing, such as privacy concerns and algorithmic bias, reflecting the TCPS 2 principles of Respect for Persons and Justice. This work highlights the value of repeated exposure and scaffolded complexity in building ethical reasoning skills.

Weyrich and Harvill (2013) supported this pedagogical orientation by demonstrating how structured coursework and mentorship can effectively foster ethical awareness in graduate education. They suggested that graduate students who engage in ethics instruction that emphasizes reflection, discussion, and case-based analysis can develop deeper ethical reasoning and a richer appreciation for the societal implications of their research. The authors further advocated for the incorporation of classical ethical theories as part of course work to improve students' understanding and decision-making in complex research situations.

Moreover, Lee et al. (2024) explored how embedding social justice frameworks within ethics pedagogy enhances students' commitment to equitable research practices. Their comprehensive scoping review highlighted case-based learning, simulation-based learning, intergroup dialogue, and community engagement as key methods linked to deeper ethical awareness, aligned with TCPS 2's Justice principle. Similarly, Teixeira-Poit et al. (2011) presented a framework for engaging students in ethics through hands-on research tasks such as protocol development, institutional review board (IRB) simulations, and reflective debriefings. Students reported increased comfort with ethical reasoning, a stronger grasp of procedural ethics, and greater adeptness at identifying ethical issues in their projects. The authors linked these outcomes to active engagement with TCPS 2 principles, especially Concern for Welfare, by having students reflect on potential harms and benefits.

In a similar context to the two preceding studies, Tammeleht et al. (2019) explored how students working together on real-world ethical dilemmas build deeper understanding and competence in the field. They discussed the use of collaborative case-based learning, focusing on how students develop ethical competencies through group work and the effectiveness of various pedagogical competencies. The authors found that collaborative analysis of complex cases enabled students to recognize diverse perspectives and appreciate the contextual nature of ethical decision making. This method proved especially effective in developing Respect for Persons and Justice, aligning well with the aim of course-based research assignments to nurture ethically responsible and socially conscious researchers.

From a science lab-based perspective, Buedo et al. (2024) argued for integrating ethical reflection directly into the laboratory workflows. This includes regular use of group meetings and structured assessments of ethical procedures. They detailed how lab-based assignments can include moments for students to assess the ethical implications of their methods, such as the environmental impact of materials used or the welfare of participants. From a humanities perspective, Boyd et al. (2013) explored how narrative writing within a course-based assignment supported novice researchers in developing ethical reflexivity. Rather than providing prescriptive ethical guidance, it underscores the value of reflective practice in developing ethical sensitivity. Students were encouraged to consider their responsibilities to research participants, especially in sensitive or emotionally charged contexts. The authors contend that writing also helps students recognize ethical tensions that may affect participant welfare, including unintended consequences for participants and researchers alike. The authors suggested that narrative inquiry gave voice to diverse student experiences and ethical perspectives. To summarize, Boyd et al. noted that, as evidenced through their writing, students appeared to start moving beyond compliance to principled practice.

Caldwell-O'Keefe and Recia (2020) emphasize the transformative potential of integrating ethics and diversity-focused reflection into course-based experiential learning. They highlighted the role of community engagement in enhancing students' ethical reasoning and cultural competence. The authors argued that such approaches deepen students' critical engagement with systemic inequality and expand their ethical imagination. Their work supports a pedagogical shift toward justice-oriented research instruction, aligning with TCPS 2 core principles.

Finally, Moore and Griffin (2022) offered a design-based approach to embedding ethics throughout professional education curricula. Rather than treating ethics as a standalone topic, they argued for its integration across learning activities within and across courses. Their approach closely mirrors the three TCPS 2 principles by encouraging students to prioritize autonomy and voice in problem-solving, equipping them with tools to anticipate and mitigate unintended consequences in real-world settings, and encouraging systemic thinking and the consideration of marginalized populations when addressing complex social and professional challenges. Their approach reinforces the spirit of TCPS 2 as a living framework for ethical action, not just a compliance document.

Collectively, these findings affirm the benefit of the UVic course-based ethics review framework as a tool to support instructors in designing research assignments for their courses. By combining experiential learning with justice-oriented reflection and structured ethical processes, instructors can promote students' ethical reasoning capacities and a sense of social responsibility.

The UVic Course-Based Ethics Review Framework

UVic's course-based ethics review framework focuses on ensuring that research activities conducted within a course setting, primarily for pedagogical purposes, are conducted ethically. The framework serves as a comprehensive guide for instructors who want their students to conduct research involving human participants as part of a course assignment.

The UVic course-based research ethics review framework includes two parts: (a) the required online course-based ethics application (https://www.uvic.ca/research-services/how-do-i/get-ethics-approval/how-to-apply-human-ethics-approval/index.php#ipn-course-based-application) to be submitted by the instructor, and (b) guidelines for course-based research (https://www.uvic.ca/research-services/how-do-i/get-ethics-approval/how-to-apply-human-ethics-approval/course-based-research-guidelines/index.php). Together, these documents are intended to facilitate efficient navigation of the review process and provide guidance to instructors to ensure that the types of assignments they design comply with TCPS 2 requirements.

First, completion of the online course-based research ethics application form is required for instructors seeking approval for student research assignments that involve human participants but are conducted within the context of a course (not thesis or independent research). The information provided by the instructor in the application is intended to ensure that the instructor complies with TCPS 2 requirements. Briefly, the course-based research ethics application prepares students to recruit participants ethically; obtain informed consent; ensure anonymity and confidentiality, as applicable to the assignment; address risks and benefits; and destroy data after course completion. The following discussion expands each of these areas.

The first few sections of the course-based research ethics application capture key administrative details including basic information about the course instructor and any co-instructors, and the course itself (course number, name, start date, frequency etc.). In addition, if students will be engaging with any external organizations (e.g., schools or not-for-profits), instructors must confirm that prior arrangements and permissions are in place. The next section asks the instructor to summarize the content and scope of the research assignment(s), explain the pedagogical purpose (e.g., skill development, experiential learning), and describe how they will review and supervise student research activities for ethical integrity. This includes submission of a copy of the course syllabus and a copy of the research assignment the students will receive. At a minimum, instructors are expected to provide ethics instruction, review student instruments such as interview guides, and monitor recruitment and consent processes. Of note, an important condition of a course-based ethics approval stipulates that the instructor must ensure that all data collected by students are destroyed immediately following completion of course requirements. We will highlight an exception to this condition when data management is discussed below.

Next, instructors are asked to provide a description of the participant groups students may engage with, including inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g., age, health conditions). Of note in this section, it is expected that course-based research undertaken by students qualifies as "minimal risk." Minimal risk, as defined

by the TCPS 2, refers to the "probability and magnitude of possible harms being no greater than those encountered in the participant's daily life" (p. 25). For example, peer interviews and anonymous surveys typically qualify as minimal risk. Research involving deception, sensitive topics, or vulnerable populations usually exceeds minimal risk and falls outside course-based ethics approvals.

In terms of recruitment procedures, instructors must describe the recruitment methods students will use (e.g., email, in-person), and how students will be trained. An appended sample recruitment script or template with talking points is typically required. In addition, the application requires the instructor to specify types of data collection allowed (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups) and to describe geographic details (e.g., on-campus, off-campus sites).

Next, documentation of the consent process includes a description of how consent will be obtained (e.g., signed, verbal, implied). An appended consent form template is required for this. Instructors must also describe how consent forms will be stored and destroyed at the end of the course and who will be responsible for their destruction. The application form also asks the instructor to clarify whether participants' identities will remain confidential in students' research output. As well, if the intent is to have participants acknowledged or credited by name in students' work, this must be explained in the application.

The final section focuses on the data management requirements. Instructors are asked to detail how students will store and protect their data during the course and dispose of it afterward (upon course completion), and how they will share their findings (e.g., reports, papers). As mentioned earlier, a condition of a course-based ethics approval requires that the instructor ensure that all data collected by students will be destroyed immediately following completion of course requirements. However, there are instances in which data may be shared outside the context of the course. This is most often the case when instructors partner with Indigenous communities that have the right to ownership of, use of, and access to their research data. If this is a possibility, the instructor is required to provide a rationale and clear plan in the data management section of the application for how this sharing or transferring of the research data will be carried out. Finally, two explicitly worded statements in the application emphasize that data collected from a course-based approval cannot be used by the course instructor for their own research purposes, and students cannot use data from course-based research for thesis/dissertation/project work. In such cases, submission of a standard research ethics application rather than a course-based research ethics application would be more appropriate.

The second part of the UVic framework, the guidelines for course-based research, is intended to offer assistance and clarification for instructors as they formulate their assignments and complete the application. It is not unusual for instructors to feel uncertain about how to operationalize their course-based assignments to ensure compliance with TCPS 2 requirements. These guidelines help to address this uncertainty. Specifically, the guidelines expand on instructions included in the application, often providing more in-depth explanations for requirements. In short, the guidelines aim to help instructors determine whether their course activities qualify for a course-based research ethics application, clarify when a standard research ethics application is required, guide instructors in

developing assignments and activities that comply with minimal risk criteria, explain the instructor's responsibilities and how to complete the application form effectively, and clarify ethical engagement in community-based and experiential learning settings. Much of the information included in these guidelines was originally formulated (and is regularly updated) in response to frequently asked questions from instructors.

The following discussion highlights the major content of the guidelines and examples of how they may be applied by instructors. First, instructors can consult a matrix of research activities that fall within course-based guidelines, exempt activities, and those activities that fall outside a course-based approval. This matrix not only defines which types of student projects require a standard research ethics application but also provides a decision tree and exemplars to help instructors assess whether a project meets the criteria for an approved course-based ethics assignment in three key areas: participants involved, characteristics of research activities, and topics and risk to participants and potential risks to students conducting research activities. For instance, a decision tree might prompt instructors to ask: Will students interact directly with competent adults? Will the data be used beyond the classroom? Do interview topics and/or questions present minimal risk? As the instructor, do I have the necessary expertise to guide student researchers on a particular topic? This helps instructors structure learning activities in ways that develop research skills and engage ethical reasoning while complying with course-based review requirements.

The following three areas are identified in the guidelines for further explanation. First, the situation of "impromptu research" is addressed. This occurs when an instructor has not planned for a course assignment that involves human participants, but their student proposes this research idea after the start of the course. In this instance, the guidelines ask the instructor to consider whether they have the time and expertise to provide the necessary training and supervision for the student. In most instances, where a student proposes such an idea midway through a term, logistically, there is just no time or capacity for an instructor to provide the extra support to the student who wishes to conduct impromptu research. There must also be sufficient time to submit a course-based application and receive approval to allow a student to conduct research. If an instructor decides to proceed, they must explain the situation in their course-based application and outline the proposed research activities, completing all sections in the application.

A second highlighted area distinguishes between course-based research and professional training activities, such as clinical practicums (e.g., counseling, nursing), and legal clinics or education field placements. In brief, these professional training activities do not require ethics approval if data are only used for training purposes and not analyzed for academic output.

The third area addresses some of the unique intricacies of community-engaged learning. As described in the guidelines, these are learning opportunities where course-based research activities, goals, and outcomes are planned collaboratively between a course instructor and a community organization. Although this context presents tremendous potential for hands-on learning, there is also the need for careful consideration by both the university instructor and representatives of the community

organization, especially where the needs and expectations could differ. The guidelines strongly recommend that the course instructor meet as early as possible with community organization representatives to ensure that both entities have a clear understanding of requirements. To help guide instructors, the guidelines identify characteristics of activities within the community-based learning context that require course-based ethics review, conditions where a standard application is required, and characteristics of those activities not requiring ethics review. In short, community-engaged coursework may require course-based ethics review if there is co-creation of a research project with the instructor, student, and community organization; if students use the project to fulfil a course requirement; and if students retain the gathered information for a period to complete course requirements. If an instructor plans to share identifiable data with an organization, a standard application must be submitted. This application allows for more details and better risk/benefit assessment for the organizations' use of the data. Alternatively, ethics review is generally not required if the data remain entirely with the organization. For example, when students participate in research activities led by the organization, where information collected is used solely by the organization and not by the student. The UVic research ethics office contact information is provided for instructors who need further guidance or have specific questions about whether a course-based research ethics review is required.

In summary, a key intent of a course-based ethics approval is to allow assignments that walk students through key ethical considerations within the limited confines of a course. This allows instructors from a wide range of academic disciplines to tailor learning experiences while complying with institutional and national guidelines. Through completion of the course-based application process, instructors clarify learning goals, identify ethical touchpoints, and adopt assignments that build students' competence. The course-based ethics review framework fosters introductory engagement with TCPS 2 principles and helps prepare students for future research that may require them to be responsible for more ethically complex research. More importantly, the framework provides a structure that helps instructors build ethical principles into assignment design.

Contributions to Student Learning: Benefits and Caveats

The course-based research ethics review framework supports deeper learning by creating opportunities for ethical reflection through structured, hands-on research activities. For instance, in an environmental science course, students might be assigned to conduct classroom observations of nature-based play. Before beginning, they complete a guided worksheet asking them to reflect on ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the impact of their presence on the classroom environment. Following the observation, students participate in a debrief session where they discuss dilemmas they encountered and how TCPS 2 principles informed their decisions. This layered approach encourages students to grapple with real-world ethical complexities, reinforcing abstract principles through experiential learning and collective reflection. These assignments engage students in examining the implications of their methods and decisions, fostering a mindset of responsibility and care. Importantly, they also help students understand ethics as a living, evolving process—central to how knowledge is produced and used. Through such reflective assignments, students experience firsthand

how ethical practices and justice considerations are inseparable in responsible research, particularly as institutions increasingly prioritize responsible, inclusive, and community-engaged research practices.

Whereas the potential benefits of such course-based ethics assignments are numerous, design and implementation of such assignments should not be undertaken without considerable thought and caution. The following researchers provide valuable insights, emphasizing both potential benefits and caveats for consideration.

A notable contribution to understanding undergraduate research ethics comes from the work of Richman and Alexander (2006). The authors examined ethical dimensions of undergraduate research, including power imbalances between faculty and students. They explored some potential ethical dilemmas that arise when students engage in authentic research experiences. The authors argued that ethical issues often emerge not only in data collection but in mentoring relationships, authorship expectations, and institutional responsibilities. They advocate for clearer institutional guidelines, identifying course-based experiences as an example. They emphasized the importance of building ethical awareness early in the research process, particularly through guided reflection and faculty modeling of responsible research conduct. Integrating these insights into course-based assignments supports the emphasis on ethics as embedded, rather than adjunct, to academic inquiry. This approach reinforces Respect for Persons and Concern for Welfare by recognizing the complex power dynamics involved in student research mentorship.

Expanding the discussion, Winder et al. (2007) explored tensions between academic freedom, pedagogical goals, and institutional oversight. The authors reported on cases where students' enthusiasm for research clashed with ethical expectations or exposed gaps in institutional guidance. They advocated for stringent ethical standards, clearer frameworks, and more robust mentorship, aligning well with UVic's structured course-based ethics review framework. Their findings reinforce the importance of clear ethical guidelines and mentorship structures to help students balance academic enthusiasm with ethical responsibilities. Similarly, Adams (2012) discussed the challenges and issues related to research ethics education, particularly within the social sciences, highlighting the need for effective communication and compliance with the principles of responsible conduct of research. Documents such as the UVic course-based ethics review framework contribute to both communication and compliance.

Continuing the discussion, Foot (2006) contended that ethical instruction in undergraduate research is essential not only for ensuring participant safety but also for helping students understand their dual roles as learners and emerging researchers. Foot highlighted the risks of trivializing ethical concerns when research is treated purely as a classroom exercise and argued for integrated ethics curricula that promote critical reflection and responsibility. The article supports integrating ethics instruction in undergraduate research as essential not only for ensuring participant safety but also for furthering students' ethical maturity and research responsibility. Löfström (2012) further emphasized the need for early educational experiences for students. As a result of an examination of students' understanding of research ethics, the author identified conceptual gaps and varying degrees of ethical awareness. Results showed that many students lacked clarity about the core ethical obligations outlined in policies like TCPS 2, particularly

around informed consent and the protection of human participants. Some students equated ethics with rule-following rather than respecting participant autonomy. Results also indicated that issues like equitable participation, power imbalances, and potential harms and burdens of research were not well understood. The study highlights the need for more explicit ethics instruction in postsecondary settings. Its findings are particularly useful for educators aiming to increase student awareness and understanding of ethical frameworks underpinning research practice, especially in early-stage researchers.

Focusing on graduate student experiences with research ethics, Petillion et al. (2017) explored the ethical challenges faced by graduate students working in applied health contexts. Through qualitative interviews, they found that students often encountered uncertainty around consent procedures, community engagement, and navigating ethics board requirements. The study emphasized the importance of structured mentorship, the need for support during the ethics review process, and early ethical educational experiences.

It is intended that ethics-focused research activities develop critical thinking, enhance self-awareness, and connect students' academic work to real-world contexts. When paired with justice-oriented pedagogy, these experiences affirm students' capacity to contribute ethically to research cultures. These course-based assignments also cultivate students' identities as emerging researchers—highlighting their responsibilities not only to their research participants but also to their academic and social communities.

Value of Course-Based Ethics Review Framework: Collaboration of Multiple Stakeholders

By completing course-based research ethics applications, instructors create a comprehensive learning environment that embeds ethical and justice principles deeply into research practice in a gradual and structured manner. This helps to empower students to internalize ethical responsibility as an integral part of their research identity, preparing them for more advanced research endeavors. However, despite this honorable intent, and the well-documented benefits, integrating research ethics and social justice into undergraduate and graduate coursework presents challenges that instructors and institutions must address to maximize impact.

One major challenge is balancing the administrative requirements of ethics review with pedagogical flexibility. Instructors sometimes report that navigating institutional ethics policies can be time-consuming and needlessly onerous, especially when ethics boards require formal submissions that do not align well with short-term classroom projects. This tension highlights the need for clear communication between instructors and REBs and for frameworks like UVic's that clarify the intent of a course-based ethics approval. The following organizations and individual researchers offer persuasive support, above all emphasizing the need for institutional support.

The report *Recommendations for Effective Integration of Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research (E/RCR) Education into Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences* (National Academies, 2021) underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement—including instructors, ethics boards, and students—in cultivating ethical cultures. It emphasizes integrating justice and equity concerns early in research design, mirroring proactive scaffolding of ethics education within courses. Similarly, Diaz-Martinez et al. (2019) presented recommendations from an international meeting of scholars and educators in life sciences who discussed the integration of ethics into course-based undergraduate experiences. The report directly engages with all three TCPS 2 principles. Respect for Persons is promoted through pedagogical strategies that foreground consent, participant autonomy, and transparency. Concern for Welfare is addressed by embedding instruction on data management, confidentiality, and risk mitigation directly into course content. The report emphasizes the importance of equity in access to ethics education, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, receive robust preparation in ethical research. The recommendations also suggest practical teaching tools, faculty training, and curriculum design strategies that can support institutions implementing TCPS 2-compliant course-based research ethics.

Further to the need for shared responsibility, Bouter (2018) highlights the systemic nature of ethical research training. Bouter advocates for coordinated efforts among institutions, instructors, and policy makers to ensure students learn to navigate ethical challenges responsibly. This model of shared responsibility reinforces the need for institutional frameworks like UVic's that embed ethics instruction across curricula, fostering a culture of research integrity.

Finally, in a tangible contribution to communication and clarity of expectations, Bouchard et al. (2024) offer updated guidelines that include comprehensive benchmarks for ethical review of student research that is conducted within college and/or university courses. These guidelines align closely with TCPS 2 principles. They underscore the importance of Respect for Persons, particularly regarding informed consent, student autonomy, and voluntary participation. The authors also highlight institutional obligations to protect both students and participants. They also address the principle of Justice through their recommendations for consistent, equitable procedures across programs and institutions, ensuring all students are held to the same ethical standards regardless of academic discipline. Bouchard et al. strongly suggest that this resource fills a critical gap by clarifying how TCPS 2 principles can and should be applied in course-based contexts.

Embedding ethics early in the curriculum and revisiting it through scaffolded assignments can be a valuable stepping stone in student learning. In collaboration with academic program design and the course instructor, the UVic course-based ethics review framework endeavors to play a crucial part to ensure that students have sufficient knowledge to engage meaningfully with ethical concepts. Faculty development and training on ethics pedagogy also help build instructor confidence and consistency. To address this aim, we highlight the following strengths of the UVic course-based ethics review framework. The framework:

1) **Strengthens collaboration between research ethics boards (REBs) and instructors** to develop clear, flexible guidance that accommodates course-based research assignments.
2) **Encourages the integration of ethics instruction early and often** within academic programs, using diverse modalities such as interviews, surveys, and reflective writing.
3) **Invests in faculty development** to equip instructors with knowledge, tools, and confidence to design and facilitate ethics-rich assignments aligned with social justice and ethical awareness goals.
4) **Responds to diverse research needs** on ethics pedagogy by drawing from a wide range of academic disciplines across the university to enrich practice.

By adopting similar course-based ethics review frameworks, institutions can create a culture that values ethical inquiry as central to academic learning and social responsibility, thus preparing students to conduct research that respects human dignity and promotes justice.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the University of Victoria's course-based ethics review framework as a practical model for embedding social justice and ethical awareness within undergraduate and graduate course-based research assignments. By scaffolding ethical reflection through course-based experiential assignments and decision tools aligned with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, instructors can encourage students' critical understanding of respect, welfare, and justice in research contexts. Practical examples from a variety of academic disciplines demonstrate how experiential ethics learning develops professional competencies and civic responsibility.

Research evidence underscores the effectiveness of the course-based ethics review framework in providing the opportunity to enhance students' ethical reasoning and social justice sensitivity, while also highlighting challenges that require institutional collaboration, faculty development, and student-centered pedagogies. Ultimately, integrating ethics into course design is not merely compliance but a vital educational strategy that cultivates thoughtful, responsible researchers capable of navigating the complexities of contemporary scholarship and community engagement.

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