

Guidance Document	Technology Risk Assessments for Human Participant Research
Effective Review	HSREB & NMREB; Delegated & Full Board
Version Date	November 24, 2025

Over the last year, Western's Research Ethics Boards (REBs) have been conducting a pilot program with Western's Technology Risk Assessment Committee (TRAC). The intention has been to use a risk-based approach to better streamline institutional processes for researchers. This has been a great success with fewer platforms being referred to the Technology Risk Assessment Committee (TRAC) for pre-assessment and fewer still requiring a full TRAC review.

Previously, *all* technology was referred to TRAC. Now, only research use-cases meeting certain criteria will trigger a referral.

The REB will refer only those use-cases that meet the following criteria:

- *Personal identifiers (e.g. name, email) are going into an unknown/new platform or there is a reasonable chance that the data going into the unknown/new platform could be re-identified*
- *Participants are installing apps on their own devices*
- *There are obvious risks to the location of the data storage/platform*
- *The REB's judgement deems that there is something unusual or high risk about the platform/data and wants TRAC's input or selective input from a TRAC member such as Privacy or WTS.*
- *Researchers have developed their own platforms*
- *There is a platform where there is already a risk assessment that is medium/high risk that needs acceptance of risk to be signed*

During the referral, the REB will work with TRAC to mutually inform the reviews and ensure that participant-facing materials and data management plans mitigate risk.

If it is likely that your project will be referred to TRAC based on the above criteria, please ***contact the REB prior to submission to either entity.***

ethics@uwo.ca

TRAC applies only to Western-based studies. Research that is under London hospital oversight is outside the scope of Western's TRAC.

***Note:** Please anticipate WREM application form updates in early 2026 to better reflect this process. Currently, when the forms ask whether a platform has gone to TRAC, it is acceptable to simply select 'unknown' and the REB will make its assessment on review. No separate documentation is ever required for Qualtrics, MS365, SPSS, local REDCap, Zoom, or NVivo purchased through Mustang Market.