PROPOSAL TO ADJUST THE RDC APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS FOR SUPERVISED MASTERS AND PHD STUDENTS
(Revised April 2006)

All applications to the SSHRC-Statistics Canada RDC process require some vetting by the academic community to ensure that frivolous projects do not consume valuable resources and overload the RDC network, which is under strain in some regions. This vetting process is also necessary to ensure quality work under the Statistics Act, and ensure Canadian survey respondents that access to their confidential data is provided for legitimate research purposes.

This proposal recommends that supervised masters and PhD student submissions to the RDCs no longer be sent by SSHRC to academic reviewers, but rather that the vetting and direction provided by the thesis supervisor be considered sufficient academic vetting for the purposes of the review process. Such vetting and approval will meet the goals outlined above.

Under this proposal, students would continue to write a research proposal as currently described on the SSHRC web site, and apply for access to the RDCs through the SSHRC web-based application process. The submission would be reviewed by Statistics Canada to ensure two points: (1) that access to the confidential data is necessary to conduct the project and (2) that the proposed dataset is adequate to complete the research.

In addition, the student applicant would have to submit a document (a draft is attached) signed by the student's supervisor indicating that he or she deems the project to be of academic merit, and that it is being conducted to meet the requirements of a masters or doctorate thesis or major project. This signed document would also stipulate that the supervisor is responsible for supervising the applicant while in the RDC. A copy of the supervisor's C.V. (currently required) would also be included in the application process.

The advantages of this proposal include the following:

1.   The time required to approve student submission would be reduced, thereby increasing the incentive for students to apply. This would increase the training component of the activity in the RDCs, an important goal for the RDCs. It would also expose future researchers and users to detailed Statistics Canada data, increasing future use.
2.   Removing students from the SSHRC review process would allow more resources to be allocated to handling applications from other researchers, reducing the approval time and again increasing the incentive for application.
3.   There would be some reasonable differentiation between student and more senior researchers regarding their goals in the RDCs. Researchers are expected to develop research projects that contribute significant new knowledge and/or contribute to public policy development. They are judged accordingly. Student submissions, particularly at the masters' level, are designed primarily for training purposes, and may or may not advance knowledge. The objectives are somewhat different, and the review process should account for that.

RESEARCH DATA CENTRE APPLICATION

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR OF MASTERS
OR DOCTORAL STUDENT

Title of Research Project: _____

Student Name: _____

Student Program: _____

Supervisor Name: _____

Supervisor Title and Department: _____

Supervisor E-Mail Address: _____

Dataset Name: _____

Name of Research Data Centre: _____

I assert that the proposed research project identified above is intended to meet part of the requirements for a masters or doctoral degree program, and that it has the potential to satisfy those requirements. I agree to supervise this student's work and to ensure that the student has access to appropriate statistical and methodological support in the use of survey data in the Research Data Centre.

_____

Supervisors Name:

_____   _____

Supervisors Signature: Date: