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Rotman Designworks Research Ethics Review Exemption Statement

Assertion: The Designworks practice satisfies the criteria of the *Quality Assurance, Performance Review* exemption category.

Designworks Overview: Designworks is the centre for innovation and design thinking within the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto. Since 2006, Designworks has worked with a variety of sponsors and clients to explore areas of their operations and/or businesses in order to identify new opportunities for expansion, improvement, and innovation. Engagements with these organizations span from executive education workshops to 3-6 month design consultation projects.

Good design is widely acknowledged to be based on human-centric inspirations and insights. Accordingly, Designworks enlists end-users of products and services to provide the inspiration and insight to design innovative market solutions and business models. This research-like activity is entirely non-invasive, employs no deception, and poses minimal risk to the participants, to the university, and to our industry partners and collaborators.

Exemption Rationale: It is the mandate of the Research Ethics Board (REB) to provide Research Ethics Review (RER) for all research involving human subjects; however, there are “research-like activities that fall into the area of quality assurance or performance reviews” and which are exempt from RER. This exemption category includes the following two criteria:

- The primary intent of conducting these types of activities is to assess how the organization/department/program is doing, to better serve its clients/students.
- Typically, final reports remain internal to the organization.

Given the nature of the Designworks practice, these two criteria are fulfilled. Activities that are not geared towards the improvement of a sponsor/client’s products and/or services, or which produce final reports that are publishable in a more public, academic domain should be considered for RER.

Research Ethics Guidelines: Despite the fact that the Designworks practice is exempt from RER, it is absolutely critical that the spirit of research ethics is observed and incorporated into project design. To this end, Designworks’ best practices (based on transparency, integrity, and fairness) include the following:

- On-site secured storage of all market research materials and sensitive information (notes, pictures, interview recordings etc...), electronically and physically;
- Privacy maintenance of the names and participant related materials;
- Non-Disclosure Agreements for all researchers;
- Informed Consent forms signed by all participants;
- Conformity with general confidentiality codes of conduct;
- Always allowing participants to opt out, should they decided to do so, and communicating this option in standard consent forms;
- Full transparency with regards to the use and purpose of programs;
- Overall consideration, mindfulness, and respect for the participants and the information they share with us.

Moreover, Designworks typically recruit participants through a third party research management company, which serves as an additional check on the ethical compliance of market research protocol.

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