



## OFFICE *of* RESEARCH & GRADUATE STUDIES

### **IRB Guidance for Student Class Projects**

Projects conducted by students enrolled in an official course (for credit or not for credit), as well as activities in fulfillment of class assignments involving data collection from individuals other than the members of the class, may be considered student class projects. These assignments are typically initiated and completed within the timeframe for a course. Faculty members may design assignments that require students to interact with individuals, or use data about individuals, to teach research methods or to help students understand concepts covered by the course.

Most student class projects do not require IRB review or oversight beyond faculty supervision, because their goal is educational and not the development of generalizable knowledge. Student class projects or assignments involving human subjects that are conducted for education, to teach research methods, and solely to fulfill a course requirement usually do not require IRB approval as long as they are not also designed and intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Class projects involving human subjects that meet ALL of the conditions stated below may be conducted under the supervision of the faculty member without submitting a protocol to the IRB. Projects that do not meet all of these conditions must be submitted to the IRB for review.

The class project must:

- be a normal part of the student's coursework
- be supervised by a faculty member
- have as its primary purpose the development of the student's research skills
- NOT have as a primary purpose the intent to contribute to generalizable knowledge

The above refers to student class projects only. Independent research projects such as honors projects, theses, dissertations, and independent study projects that collect data through interactions with individuals or access to private information DO require IRB approval, IF they are designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge. For further guidance, see section on [What Needs IRB Review – Determination of Human Subjects Research](#).

#### **Faculty Instructor Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the Faculty instructor to determine whether a class project involving human participants requires the approval of the IRB, and to contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects Operations if assistance in making this determination is needed.

As with any instructional activity, the Faculty instructor is responsible for the conduct and oversight of class projects or activities involving human participants. It is expected that adequate, discipline-specific guidelines are followed to assure that projects are being conducted in a responsible, professional, and ethical manner. This includes:

- Discussing the principles of ethical research with human participants with the class prior to the beginning of the project. This can be supplemented by the completion of online [CITI human subjects training](#).



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- Reviewing student projects and monitoring project activities to ensure that human participants are protected.
- Making sure students conducting projects inform participants of the voluntary nature of participation and employ measures to protect privacy and confidentiality, if applicable.
- If projects will be conducted outside of UIW, ensuring that there are appropriate permissions or authorizations from the external sites for the conduct of the project.

### **Disclosure to Participants**

Students conducting class projects with human participants that do not require IRB approval should nonetheless disclose important information to the participants. The disclosure should not state that the project has been approved by the UIW IRB. If an informed consent document or cover letter is used, the following should be included:

- The student identifies him/herself as a UIW student who is performing the activity to fulfill a course requirement, and the course is identified.
- The name and contact information for the course instructor is provided, to contact for questions.
- The persons who will have access to the data are specified.
- Participants are informed that their participation is completely voluntary and that they can stop participating at any time.

### **Future Use of Data**

The results of student class projects are typically not distributed through professional scholarly venues or presented as new knowledge that contributes to a scholarly or scientific discipline. However, students may present findings on or off campus if the purpose is to educate the student about the academic process and not to contribute to generalizable knowledge. If the possibility exists that either the faculty instructor or the student plans to disseminate the data as new, generalizable knowledge, then an application must be submitted to the IRB for review. It is very important that careful consideration be given to the possibility of any use of collected data for future research studies, since the IRB cannot retroactively approve data that was collected prior to IRB approval if the original project meets the federal definition of human subjects research.