



## Institutional Review Board

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### Information for Faculty Who Conduct Classroom Curriculum Projects

The GSU-IRB understands that the majority of classroom/student research projects fall into the following two categories, only one of which requires IRB review:

- [Not Typically Needing IRB Review](#)
- [Typically Needing IRB Review](#)

It is the policy of the GSU-IRB that all student research requires supervision by a faculty member, but it is the second type of student research that may require IRB review above and beyond faculty supervision. See below for specific descriptions of each type of research.

#### **Student research activities that DO NOT require direct review by the IRB**

Student research for which the overriding and primary purpose is learning the method and procedures of research is typically not subject to IRB review. A good example of this is research that is carried out by students as part of a research methods class. Such research is further characterized by [minimal risk](#) (or null risk) to human subjects and clearly falls within ethical guidelines.

Key factors to consider are the potential risks to subjects posed by the research activity itself, in terms of:

1. Potential harm from subject participation in the study;
2. Possibility of dissemination of confidential information; and
3. The possibility that subjects are either unable to give consent or are subject to significant coercion or pressure to participate.

Classroom curriculum projects need not be reviewed by the IRB if all three of the following conditions are satisfied:

- **The project(s) involve [minimal risk](#) to subjects; and**
- **The project does not involve vulnerable populations (e.g. prisoners, people under 18 years of age, pregnant women, persons with mental impairments, and other vulnerable groups); and**
- **Results will NEVER be distributed outside the classroom and/or institutional setting.**

**If there is even a remote chance that the data or the report/manuscript will be used in the future for a conference presentation, or a related research project, the research **MUST** go through IRB review;** this includes dissemination on the internet in any form. If the project is not subjected to a pre-data-collection IRB review, the data will most likely not be permissible for inclusion in a future presentation or research.

Example:

Consider a student who undertakes an individual or class project that does not involve a vulnerable population and involves no risk to the subjects of the study. The student delivers a presentation on campus (e.g., Founder's Day presentation). This project would typically be deemed EXEMPT from IRB review. However, if the results of this otherwise “no or low-risk” project may be disseminated at a professional conference, submitted for publication, or published on the World Wide Web, federal regulations require prior review by IRB. **If the results of the student project will be published or otherwise distributed off campus, in any form of media, the project must be reviewed by the IRB.** If in doubt, contact [irb@gram.edu](mailto:irb@gram.edu) for advice before the project begins. **The Board is unable to give post facto approval.**

Even though some classroom-initiated research does not require review by the IRB, it is nevertheless important that instructors discuss the guidelines and ethics for the protection of research subjects with their students and incorporate these into their methodology. Particular emphasis should be placed on:

- Developing an awareness of the types of risk subjects may be exposed to in various types of research projects, i.e., psychological, social, physical, economic, and legal.
- Obtaining voluntary **informed consent** to participate in a way that honestly informs subjects of the purpose and potential risks and benefits of the research.
- Management of potential risks to subjects.
- A risk/benefit analysis for all populations, with special consideration of vulnerable populations (children, pregnant women, fetuses, mentally disabled, institutionalized persons, prisoners, etc.).
- Protection of privacy and confidentiality of the subjects.
- Identification of benefit to be derived from participation in the research.

### **Student research projects that DO require IRB approval**

Another type of student research involves an academic project in which the primary and overriding purpose is to develop new knowledge and disseminate it **OR** has more than minimal risk to research subjects **OR** involves a vulnerable population. The IRB must review these kinds of projects. For instance, supervised research to complete a **thesis, dissertation or independent study project** will typically fall into this category. If human subjects or participants are involved in any way, the project is subject to IRB review.

Although many faculty may wish to have their students prepare the GSU Human Subjects Review Application and supplemental materials as a learning experience, a faculty advisor must sign and date the signature page of the application and forward to the IRB Chair. By signing the form, the advisor indicates that he or she approves of the project as outlined and has reviewed and approved any documents that will be distributed.

The GSU - IRB makes every attempt to respond to requests within a timely manner. However, during particularly busy periods (semester registration, final exams), additional time may be necessary. The IRB does not meet during the summer, so any proposal needing review should be submitted two weeks prior to the last scheduled IRB meeting of the spring semester.

If a project raises particular issues that the IRB feels are not adequately addressed in the submitted materials, the researcher may be asked to submit additional information, clarify a point, or make revisions. To reduce delay, these changes are usually solicited electronically. However, on rare occasions, the researcher (and faculty supervisor, if appropriate) may be asked to appear before the IRB to resolve matters of procedure, etc.