

SOP 1.4.5

College Students as Research Participants

General Description:

This policy outlines requirements and safeguards for using students at George Mason University as research participants. Students may be subject to undue influence because of the possible expectation that their decision to participate in the research or not might affect their grades or class standing. Confidentiality may also be a concern for potential student participants. The following policy applies to researchers using their own students, a Mason student participant pool, or the students of another faculty member at George Mason University.

General Information:

1. The IRB requires that risks of potential coercion or undue influence to student research participants be sufficiently mitigated by researchers (see Procedures section below for suggested ways of mitigating these risks).
2. Mason students who are under 18 years old meet the regulatory definition of children and will be subject to additional protections and procedures, including parental consent procedures.
3. If the research population includes Mason Athletes, written authorization from the Mason Athletic Department must be obtained. Please contact Debi Corbatta at dcorbatt@gmu.edu or 703-993-9536 for assistance with this issue.
4. If the researcher is recruiting from a campus student participant pool (i.e. Sona, Experimetrix), the Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for following the posted policy of the specific student pool.
5. The PI/researcher may not implement penalties if a student fails to show up for participation in a study.
6. If the research involves accessing individually identifiable student information such as grades, test scores, course work or other student records, signed consent from the student is required based on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. In this case, the researcher should contact the Registrar's Office at ferpa@gmu.edu to make sure appropriate procedures are followed.
7. When seeking sensitive information as part of the research, the researcher should take precautions to ensure prevention of a breach of confidentiality. When possible, the researchers should consider collecting this information anonymously.
8. If a researcher plans to recruit students to participate in their research (particularly survey research) by obtaining student contact information through the Registrar's Office or the Office of Institutional Assessment, he/she should be aware that he/she will need to contact the appropriate office with a request to obtain confidential student contact information and that the request may not be approved even if the researcher has IRB approval. More information about this process can be found here: <https://assessment.gmu.edu/surveys/request/>.
9. For other methods of recruitment of student participants (i.e. in-class verbal recruitment, PeopleFinder, campus listservs), researchers may need to obtain additional permission(s). This should be described in the appropriate section of the IRB application, but the IRB does not require researchers to submit documentation of such permissions as part of the IRB submission.

Procedures:

1. The PI/study team should include information in the appropriate section of the IRB application that students will be the target population for the study.

2. If course credit is offered as an incentive, the IRB application and consent form must describe a non-research alternative method to earn the same amount of course credit that involves an equivalent amount of time and effort as participating in the research activity since participation in research must be voluntary.
3. If the study team is recruiting students from a class instructed by one of the researchers listed on the IRB application, then any dual relationship with the participants must be addressed in the appropriate section of the IRB application. The researcher must also describe the methods that will be used to mitigate or reduce undue influence, such as the following:
 - a. Including the following statement, or something similar, in the recruitment and consent process/documents: "Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will have no bearing on your grades or class standing."
 - b. If the use of the researcher's own students is integral to the research study being proposed, the PI should consider the possibility of asking a colleague or co-investigator who has no influence over grades to conduct the recruitment and consent process.
 - c. If possible, the research data, including signed consent forms, should be held by a third party not affiliated with the research and should not be reviewed/analyzed by the PI until after the class has ended and grades have been posted.
 - d. If the research consists of a group activity, it may pose difficulty for the potential participants to opt out (for example, from audio/video recording of the class). The PI should consider only using data if the non-consenting students' data can be effectively excluded. For example, set up the room so that non-participants are not viewed on the video recording.
4. The IRB will review the proposed procedures to ensure that proper measures have been taken to mitigate or reduce undue influence over student participants and minimize risks.
5. The IRB will follow regular procedures for an exempt, expedited or full board review as necessary.

Related Forms, Guidance, and SOPs:

- 45 CFR 46.111
- 1.4.1 Research Involving Children
- 2.3.2 Providing incentives to participants
- OHRP Guidance on Student Subject Pools and Use of Penalties for Students Who Fail to Show Up for Scheduled Research Appointments: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/guidance/january-08-2010-student-subject-pools-and-use-of-penalties/>
- FERPA regulations: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>
- FERPA at Mason: http://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/?_ga=1.48301024.794477215.1461599160

Responsibility:

Principal Investigators
Research Team Members
IRB Staff/Research Development, Integrity and Assurance
Institutional Review Board

References:

Based on the University of Georgia's IRB policy for Students as Research Participants:
<http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb-guidelines/>

Approval and Version History:

Please contact irb@gmu.edu if you have any questions about this policy or the version and approval history.

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Approved By	Title and Division	Date Approved
Aurali Dade	Associate Vice President, Research Development, Integrity and Assurance	December 14, 2016
Laurie Meamber	IRB Chairperson	December 14, 2016