

SOP 1.3.5 Classroom Projects

General description:

Classroom projects that are for the primary purpose of teaching a student how to conduct research, and not for dissemination beyond the instructor and other students in the class, do not constitute human subjects research because they are not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

With the following exceptions, classroom projects do not require review by the IRB office or the IRB.

Projects requiring review

Students should submit an application to the IRB if a project uses methods designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, involves human subjects, and any of the following apply:

1. The student intends to disseminate the results beyond the classroom (e.g., presentations at local, regional, and national conferences; publications; blogs and websites).
2. The project involves greater than minimal risk, meaning the probability and magnitude of physical or psychological harm is greater than what is normally encountered in the daily lives of the subjects.
3. The project collects sensitive information that is recorded in such a way that the respondent can be linked with their responses (either through collected identifiers or demographic data). Sensitive information may include information about drug use, sexual preferences, family violence, and similar topics.
4. The project collects data from people unable to provide informed consent due to their age, incarceration, or limited mental capacity.
5. The research involves deception.

Students may conduct classroom projects meeting one or more of the above criteria, but such projects must be reviewed by the IRB staff/IRB before the project begins. The student should consult the class instructor about this option.

If a student reformulates a research plan, he or she should review this SOP again to see if the revised plan requires review.

If, after completing a classroom project that uses methods designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge and involves human subjects, a student decides to distribute results more broadly, the student should submit an existing-data IRB application form and explain why the project was not originally submitted for review.

Honors theses, graduate theses and dissertations are not classroom projects. If they involve human subjects research, they must be submitted for IRB review.

Projects not requiring review

Classroom projects that do not fit into one of the above categories may proceed without review by the IRB office or the IRB.

Regardless of plans for dissemination, IRB review is not required for projects using only methods—such as folklore, journalism, and oral history—that are not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Roles

Faculty instructors must:

- Evaluate the need for IRB review of classroom project assignments (see items 1-5 above and flow chart at end of SOP). In cases where IRB applications are needed, they must ensure the project is submitted to the IRB office and approved prior to project initiation.
- Assist the student in handling participants' research related questions or concerns. Please note the IRB office should not be listed as a point of contact on the consent form of projects not reviewed by the office; instead the faculty instructor should be listed as a point of contact for concerns.
- When appropriate, ensure that students understand how to record information in such a way that no direct identifiers are included in the dataset and that passive identification is minimized.

A student conducting a project for a research methodology class must:

- Rely on instructor guidance.
- Respond to any questions that research participants may have about the activity.
- Submit an application if necessary to the IRB.
- Adhere to any conditions set by the IRB Office, including training requirements.

Related Forms, Guidance, and SOPs:

- SOP 2.1.2 - Determination of activities that require IRB review
- SOP 2.4.1 – Submitting a research project for review

Responsibility:

Execution of SOP: IRB office/IRB, instructors teaching research methodology classes, students taking a research methodology class

Approval and Version History

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