



GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF STUDENTS AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS POLICY

PURPOSE

An underlying principle of the federal regulations governing the use of human subjects in research is that the subject's participation is voluntary and based upon full and accurate information.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Universities provide investigators with a ready pool of research participants, namely students. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) pays special attention to the potential for coercion, undue influence, power disparities, and whether or not the process for selecting student participants is fair.

The following should be considered guidance when planning research involving students as participants.

- Non-exempt research involving minors, in most instances, requires parental permission as well as assent of the student.
- Solicitation of volunteer student subjects for research must be done in a non-coercive manner. To avoid undue influence, subjects should be recruited by a general announcement or central posting. In addition to being provided with the standard information and consent forms, the student should also be provided with the name and contact information of a neutral third party to contact should they feel coerced at any time during the process.
- The informational letter or informed consent form should make clear the consequences of withdrawing from a project prior to completion. In general, credit for participation should be given even if the subject withdraws, unless the student withdraws immediately or there is evidence of bad faith on the part of the student.
- If course credit or extra credit is given to students who participate in research as part of course requirements, then alternative means of obtaining credit should be made available to the students. Students should be given options for fulfilling the research component that are comparable in terms of time, effort, and educational benefit if they decide not to participate in research.
- Students electing to withdraw from a study should receive at least a portion of any extra credit being awarded, prorated approximately in terms of the proportion of the study activities in which they have participated.
- It is recognized that in some research situations, the use of one's own students is integral to the research. This is particularly true of research involving teaching methods, curricula or other areas related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. In these situations, where activities are not part of a required class activity, and thus students may choose not to participate, it is preferable that the faculty member arrange to have the data collected by an independent third party. The instructor can then avoid seeing who participated and who did not and can avoid having access to identifiable data.
- Even when the research is integral to the class, students should be given an alternative to participation in any particular research project whenever possible. They must have the right to exclude the use of their own data from any publications which result.
- Studies should not involve more than minimal risk.

- For faculty using pre- and post-tests to determine the efficacy of a particular curriculum, it is preferable that an independent third party distribute the informational letters or consent forms. A graduate teaching assistant in the class would not qualify as an independent third party.
- When instruments call for the disclosure of information which participants may view as personal or sensitive, data should be collected in a manner that minimizes the chance of one participant learning the response of another.
- If the research involves the collection of data from a group project or a videotape of group interaction, each student's consent for the use of data in the faculty member's research should be obtained. If one student does not consent, the data should be used only if the non-consenting student's data can be effectively excluded.
- There are special relationships (for example, the relationship between a faculty member and his or her own research advisees) in which the potential for coercion, however unintentional, becomes a particular concern. Researchers should be sensitive to such situations, as they call for special considerations.

This is by no means a complete list of issues that should be considered before submitting a protocol. Each research protocol has unique implications, settings, and human subject protection issues that must be addressed including, but not limited to, the interaction of the different elements.

POLICY TYPE: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS