

Guidance – Student Research and Class Projects

General Description

Federal regulations and university policies require the UNLV Institutional Review Board (IRB) to review and approve research with human subjects prior to initiation. This guidance will help students who conduct research learn when they need to submit a proposal to the UNLV IRB.

When it applies/context

This applies to UNLV students, residents, and fellows conducting research with human subjects. Where applicable, researchers should review this guidance so that appropriate IRB submissions are completed and approved prior to engaging with human subjects.

Considerations & Best Practices

Considerations

Many class projects are conducted for educational purposes rather than research. In these cases, they will not need IRB review. Projects that use human subjects and are conducted for senior projects, master's theses, or doctoral dissertations are typically student research activities where the intent is to develop or generate generalizable knowledge. In this way, they meet the Federal definition of research involving human subjects and are under the purview of the Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects (ORI-HS) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Review and approval must occur prior to initiation of the study (including recruitment). Retroactive approval WILL NOT be given and may jeopardize your ability to use the information for your project.

Best Practices

These are common scenarios that may occur along with the requirements needed for each situation:

STUDENT RESEARCH	
Student, resident, and fellows conducting research with human subjects must submit with an eligible faculty member who serves in the Principal Investigator (PI) role. To see if your faculty member is eligible for PI status, please see the policy at: https://www.unlv.edu/research/policies-forms/pi-eligibility	
Research that involves direct interaction with individuals (e.g., in person, via email, web survey, or by phone) or data from human subjects that are individually identifiable	*** IRB approval is required Submit either the Protocol Proposal Form or the Exempt Research Application Form with yourself listed as the student investigator
Research with secondary data, records, or specimens – they must either be publically available, de-identified or otherwise unable to be linked to an individual	*** Submit “Excluded form” If it is determined that this is excluded, then no CITI training is needed and students may submit the excluded form without a PI

CLASS PROJECTS Class projects are typically conducted for educational purposes and not for the purpose of research.	
Class projects with secondary data as long as this is assigned and conducted as an educational exercise and uses data that are either publically available, de-identified or otherwise unable to be linked to an individual.	*** No separate IRB review needed No submission required
Class projects with secondary data as long as this is assigned and conducted as an educational exercise and uses datasets that include private information and codes that link to identifiers, but the students do not have access to the identifiers.	*** No separate IRB review needed No submission required
Class projects with direct interaction with humans (e.g., in person, via email, web survey, or by phone), but where the purpose is an educational exercise, professional development, or training, and NOT RESEARCH. The project is not research even if students ask people questions so they can learn how to conduct surveys and interviews, administer assessments, or perform evaluations for the site during a practicum. EXCEPTION: If a student decides AFTER the completion of the activities that they want to pursue additional research for the completion of a senior project, masters thesis, or doctoral dissertation, then an IRB application must then be submitted describing the research use of the data for use in secondary review.	*** No separate IRB review needed No submission required
Class projects that involve direct interactions with or secondary analysis of private identifiable data and are done as both an educational experience and as research (e.g., results of this project is intended to be made generalizable by presentation publically either through poster, conference presentation, etc. or will be stored to be used as research data)	*** IRB approval required When several students in a class are doing similar projects, 1 proposal by the instructor as the PI with all the students listed as student investigators is sufficient. The Student Research Form must be submitted. If the projects are different, then separate proposals for each student may be preferred. The PI and all students must have CITI training that is active.

Resources

Office of Human Research Protections “Human Subject Regulations Decision Chart”