

SOP: Students as Research Participants

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This guidance outlines the requirements of the Governors State University (GovState) Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the review of studies involving GovState's students as research participants.

2. GUIDANCE

- 2.1. Students are an integral part of certain research studies, such as research on teaching methods and comparisons of curricula. Any student's participation in research must be voluntary and based on full and accurate information. The relationship between instructor and student is inherently of unequal power. No matter how well-intentioned the instructor is, students may feel compelled to participate and believe that failure to do so will negatively affect their grades and the attitude of the instructor (and perhaps other students) toward them.
- 2.2. In pursuing research activities wherein students are research participants, the protocol must be thoughtfully developed to 1) protect students from any undue influence or coercion, and 2) to protect students' privacy and confidentiality.
- 2.3. In the IRB application, investigators wishing to use GovState students as research participants, should discuss:
 - 2.3.1. The nature of the professional relationship between the investigator and the prospective student participants.
 - 2.3.2. When research is performed in a classroom, where the investigator is the instructor, the investigator should justify using their own students as research participants.
 - 2.3.3. The method of recruiting participants and how the potential for coercion/undue influence will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
 - 2.3.4. The method of rewarding participants, if any, using course credit and other rewards relative to the goal of minimizing coercion/undue influence to the greatest extent possible.
 - 2.3.5. Describe the method of protecting participants' privacy and maintaining confidentiality of their data.
- 2.4. GovState 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. PROCEDURES

3.1. The IRB will consider the following methods of reducing the potential for coercion and undue influence, protecting privacy, and maintaining confidentiality in research studies involving GovState students as research participants:

3.1.1. Methods to reduce coercion and undue influence:

- 3.1.1.1. When rewarding student participants with course credit, the investigator should provide non-participating students with alternative assignments of equal credit that are comparable in time, effort, educational benefit, and fulfillment of course requirements such as research papers, research seminars, book reports, attendance at research talks by faculty, or special projects.
- 3.1.1.2. When rewarding student participants with gift cards or other compensation, the amount of compensation should be appropriate to the task, not excessive, and dispersed in a timely fashion.
- 3.1.1.3. When research is performed in a classroom, where the investigator is the instructor in the classroom, the investigators should make an effort to arrange a third party to handle recruitment announcements, consent procedures, and data collection. It is also recommended that recruitment take place only after grades have been finalized and entered.
- 3.1.1.4. Whenever possible, researchers should avoid data collection during regular class meetings.
- 3.1.1.5. When conducting research procedures using class time the investigator should include an explanation of the benefit of the research to the students. For example, the investigator should explain how participation in the research would be a learning experience for the students and how the research is relevant to the course of study being taught in that class. Alternative assignments worth equal credit should be offered to non-participating students.
- 3.1.1.6. When entering a classroom to recruit students and conduct research (e.g. administer a survey), the investigator must do so at the end of the class period to allow non-participating students the option of leaving the classroom, thereby alleviating pressure to participate.
- 3.1.1.7. The investigator must inform student participants that participation in the proposed research is voluntary and that refusal to participate will not affect their grade, standing in the course, or relationship with the instructor.
- 3.1.1.8. Student participants must be able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- 3.1.1.9. Student participants who withdraw from a research study prior to completion should receive research credit or other rewards for participation commensurate with their level of participation, or full research credit.

3.1.2. Methods to protect privacy and confidentiality:

- 3.1.2.1. Since there are special risks to confidentiality in the close environment of the university, special attention should be given to full disclosure of these risks during the consent process. The plan for handling research data should also be designed to minimize the risk that confidentiality will be breached. When possible, data should be collected in a manner that minimizes the chance of one participant learning the response of another. For example, paper consent forms and pen and

pencil surveys should be distributed to all students in class and collected from all students in blank envelopes.

3.1.2.2. If the research involves accessing individually identifiable student information such as grades, test scores, 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 RegOffice@govst.edu to make sure appropriate procedures are followed.

3.1.2.3. 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 investigator 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.

3.1.2.4. The use of de-identified student coursework or records may not require written consent, but deidentification requires more than just removing names or ID numbers. De-identification to FERPA standards requires that all direct and indirect identifiers that could be used in combination to identify an individual be removed; for example, demographic information that creates small cells of individuals must be removed from a data set before disclosure.

3.2. During the consent process, the investigator should remind students that if they have any questions about their rights as research participants or complaints about the research, they should contact the IRB. The investigator should also provide the contact information for the IRB. The same information must be included in the consent form.

3.3. 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.

3.4. The IRB will follow regular procedures for an exempt, expedited, or full board review as necessary.

REFERENCES

45 CFR 46.111

[Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

GovState IRB SOP "Convened IRB Review"

GovState IRB SOP "Expedited IRB Review"

GovState IRB SOP "Exempt Research"

Sources that have been consulted: University of Nevada Las Vegas IRB SOP 7.05 - UNLV "Students as Research Subjects", George Mason University SOP 1.4.5 "College Students as Research Participants", Kent State University SOP "Students as Research Subjects".

CONTACT INFORMATION

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DISCLAIMER

The University reserves the right to modify or amend sections of this IRB SOP at any time at its sole discretion. This IRB SOP remains in effect until such time as the Institutional Official calls for review. Requests for exception to any portion of this SOP must be presented in writing to the Institutional Official.

APPROVED BY:

IRB Chair Full name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

OSPR Director Full name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Provost Full name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Legal Counsel Full name _____ Signature _____ Date _____