

SOP: Classroom Projects

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to clarify the Governors State University (“GSU” or the “University”) IRB’s approach to making a determination about classroom projects that are designed to teach research methods or to help students understand concepts covered by the course through collection and/or analyses of human subjects data.

2. GUIDANCE

- 2.1. **If an instructor assigns a class project that involves human subjects or human subjects data WITH THE INTENT to teach students about the concepts of research design, researcher conduct, data collection and data analysis, the instructor must request an IRB determination prior to implementing the project.** When a determination is made that the project requires IRB oversight, IRB approval must be requested and granted before the project begins.
- 2.2. Class projects are designed to teach research methods or to help students understand concepts covered by the course through collection and/or analyses of human subjects data. Class projects may involve a collection of original primary data through intervention or interaction with human subjects. Class projects may also involve analyses of secondary data obtained from human subjects.
- 2.3. Class projects may involve activities that resemble human subjects research; however, class projects are not considered “research” as defined in the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46.102) because they are conducted for training purposes only and do not yield generalizable knowledge.
- 2.4. Therefore, as a rule, class assignments do not fall under the jurisdiction of the IRB and do not require IRB oversight.
- 2.5. **IRB oversight is not required for classroom projects that meet all of the following criteria:**
 - 2.5.1. The project’s purpose is a learning experience in the methods and procedures of research;
 - 2.5.2. The project is minimal risk;
 - 2.5.3. The project does not involve federally defined vulnerable populations;
 - 2.5.4. The project does not involve deception;
 - 2.5.5. The data is recorded and stored with no direct identifiers (i.e., names, dates of birth, social security numbers, etc.); and
 - 2.5.6. Student and faculty may present data from classroom projects in their respective classrooms or the Governors State University Conferences, but will **not** publish,

present, or disseminate findings publicly in any way beyond the confines of GSU

2.6. IRB oversight is required for:

- 2.6.1. Projects that do not meet all of the criteria specified above.
- 2.6.2. Projects that are intended to collect information systematically with the intent to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.
- 2.6.3. Independent student projects such as honors theses, master's theses, and similar independent research projects. All of these must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before students may begin their research.
- 2.6.4. In these cases, each student must submit an individual IRB application for their project with course instructor acting as project director/principal investigator for all protocols.
- 2.6.5. Instructors are required to take full responsibility to ensure appropriate design and ethical conduct of class projects involving human subjects or human subjects data. Instructors are responsible for:
- 2.6.6. Advising students that data from human subjects must not contain identifiable private information.
- 2.6.7. Explaining to students what minimal risk means.
- 2.6.8. Closely monitoring class projects to ensure that students are following correct procedures and conducting the project as was proposed.
- 2.6.9. Intervening should the project change from what was originally proposed.

3. PROCEDURES

- 3.1. The GSU IRB has developed a short questionnaire in Cayuse that assists with determining if the classroom project can be implemented without IRB oversight or if it requires IRB oversight. After completing the questionnaire, the instructor will receive a letter of determination that states:
 - 3.2. The project does not require IRB oversight, or
 - 3.3. The project is determined to require IRB oversight and instructions for submitting the project to the IRB are included, or
 - 3.4. Additional information is required in order to make a determination.
- 3.5. If students or instructors have the intent to present findings from their assignment publicly or publish findings, students or instructors (with course instructor serving as project director/principle investigator), must submit an IRB application for their individual project even though a project may qualify for classroom exemption status.

REGULATIONS

45 CFR 46.102

AUTHOR REFERENCE

The University of Michigan, IRB SOP "Class Assignment and IRB Approval"
Northeastern Illinois University, IRB SOP "Class Projects"

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.