

# Guidelines for Classroom Research Projects

## Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

### Weber State University

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research recognizes that many survey projects are assigned as part of the requirements needed to fulfill certain courses in different disciplines. These projects are considered to be research as they will be presented in a formal paper and be included as part of a student's final grade. Some projects will, by nature, be "low" risk, whereas others may entail certain unseen risks to the subjects involved in the survey. As students and faculty vary in expertise regarding research procedures designed to protect the rights of human subjects, the IRB of Weber State University has developed the following guidelines regarding classroom survey-based research projects. These guidelines are intended to provide clarification and simplify the process for obtaining IRB approval.

**Conditions under which IRB approval is required for the survey research project:**

#### CLASS "A" PROJECTS

**1. Any interview that proposes to investigate opinions, behaviors, and/or experiences regarding any of the following sensitive topics requires IRB approval.**

- Sexual orientation
- Incest
- Rape or Date Rape
- Sexual Molestation
- Any deviant sexual behaviors or attitudes (pedophilia, bestiality etc.)
- Substance use and/or abuse including but not limited to: alcohol, marijuana, steroids, amphetamines, narcotics (cocaine, heroine etc.) and any prescription medication legally or illegally obtained.
- Eating disorders and behaviors
- Attitudes or practices of contraception, abortion and/or pregnancy
- Questions regarding mental health, i.e., suicide, depression, obsessive compulsive behaviors including but not limited to: gambling, smoking, eating etc.
- Religious orientation and/or views
- War or combat experiences of veterans
- Questions which may place a student in jeopardy with respect to his or her grade in a given class, i.e., personal opinions about professors and/or teaching methods.

**2. Any project that systematically selects subjects from specific groups and asks them questions regarding their opinion, behavior, or experiences of any topic requires IRB approval.**

Examples:

Gifted children

African American or any other Ethnic group, Women or Men

Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender individuals

Alcoholics

Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, etc.

**3. Any survey designed specifically for or including protected individuals requires IRB approval.**

Pregnant Women

Subjects under the age of 18 years old

Prisoners (imprisoned or on parole)

**4. Any survey which by design can identify individuals participating in the survey requires IRB approval.**

**Conditions under which IRB approval is not required for survey research.**

### **CLASS "B" PROJECTS**

**5. Students wanting to collect data from human subjects as part of the requirements for a specific class may do so as long as the informants are not identifiable by name or description and the survey does not include any of the items above (1-4)**

IRB approval is not required for random student surveys of adults regarding any of the following topics. The key factor shared by the examples below is that they do not require subjects to reveal anything about their personal experiences, behaviors and/or identity. These subjects do not place a student "at risk" by their participation.

Examples:

Opinions of political candidates or political issues (excluding items above #1)

Opinions regarding movies, television shows, vacation sites, musical preference as long as they do not directly conflict with items listed under #1 above.

Opinions regarding environmental issues or policies

Opinions regarding campus issues or policies

**6. Professors are not required to obtain IRB approval for random surveys submitted in class with the direct intent of curricular improvement where the students will not be identifiable.**

Examples

To improve the design of a course

To improve delivery of accepted or existing course

Acceptable topics may include:

Variety of majors taking the course

What the students currently know about course topics

Opinion of demonstrations or visual aids

**NOTE:** All survey material that is not required for IRB approval should indicate in writing that the survey falls under regulations of Class B Projects which do not require IRB approval. Any material not containing this statement, whether or not it has been approved, may be rejected for distribution to interviewees.

**NOTE:** Any University research project, survey or otherwise, which is intended for publication in the form of a thesis, dissertation, journal article, newspaper article, magazine article, book etc., should always be submitted in detail to the IRB, regardless of "low" or "high" risk. If an IRB at another University has already approved the research project, a copy of the release should be submitted to the Weber State IRB in order to protect WSU's interests and expedite the review process.