Classroom Projects

I. Purpose

This policy clarifies when a student class project requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval.

II. Definition(s)

Student class projects include those conducted during or outside of class with students enrolled in an official course (for credit or not for credit), as well as activities in fulfillment of class projects involving interactions. These assignments are typically initiated and completed within a single term.

a. Student work involving human subjects at GRU generally falls into one of two categories: Research practica - research activities, such as class projects, with the goal of providing research experience to the students; by definition, research practica are not intended to add to generalizable knowledge and thus do not meet the federal regulatory definition of research. The results of such activities may be presented at GRU events (e.g. graduate poster day, Phi Kappa Phi). However, the product from the practicum will not be submitted for public presentation (e.g. regional or national conferences) or publication at the time of the activity or in the future.

Since they do not contribute to generalizable knowledge, research practica do not usually require IRB submission. However, the faculty of record bears the responsibility to ensure that students engaged in these practica behave according to the highest standards of professional ethics and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the setting in which the activity takes place. These procedures may include, but are not limited to, the use of information letters, consents, assents, and releases. Faculty of record for class projects must be especially cognizant of their responsibility and potential liability when these student projects place subjects at greater than minimal risk. Such projects may include when identifiable data is gathered regarding the following:

1. studies asking about illegal activities
2. studies in which a breach of confidentiality would place the subject at risk
3. studies that address emotionally charged subject matter
4. studies that involve any aspect of deception
5. studies involving vulnerable subjects

Faculty of record may consult with the IRB for information and guidance when evaluating risks. Faculty and students involved in these activities are encouraged to complete CITI training.
b. Research projects - faculty-directed or independent research activities (for example, honors or graduate theses) with the goal of adding to generalizable knowledge. These projects must be submitted to the IRB for review and subsequent approval.

III. Submitting to the IRB

Submitting to the IRB is not required if the class project is for training purposes if the intent of the project is to teach research methods or to help students understand concepts covered by the course and not to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

When classroom projects are designed to collect data that will be used beyond the classroom, for example scholarly publication or for future research, then the project should be submitted to the IRB for review. It is the faculty sponsors responsibility to assist the student with obtaining IRB approval prior to beginning the project.

Student class projects that are determined to be human subjects research may be submitted to the IRB as follows:

1. For undergraduate courses in which the Instructor designs the course to require student class projects to be human subjects research, it is recommended that the Instructor submit an umbrella protocol, which will include the type of research that will be conducted. The Instructor must serve as PI with the student(s) listed as sub-investigator(s).

Or

2. The individual student may submit the protocol as Principal Investigator; in this case, the Instructor must be listed as the Faculty Sponsor.

For more guidance on classroom projects please refer to the Student Investigator Manual, located on the IRB webpage or contact the IRB office.

IV. IRB Levels of Review for Student Projects Determined to be Human Subjects Research

a) Exempt Research Determination

In reviewing an application for student research conducted in the context of a course, the IRB may determine that it falls under one of several defined categories of "exempt" research. A determination of exemption, which can only be made by the IRB, not by the Instructor or student, means that, so long as there are no major changes in the research, its conduct does not need to be overseen on a continuing basis by the IRB. A determination of exemption does not mean, however, that students should act any less professionally or be any less respectful of
individuals with whom they interact or about whom they collect private information. Please review the IRB policy regarding Exemptions for more information.

b) Expedited Research Determination

In reviewing an application for research, the IRB may determine that it falls under one of several defined categories of "expedited" research. Such a determination means that the IRB Chair or other designated person may approve a project on behalf of the entire committee. If such an application is well formulated and contains all the information required by the IRB, this process may speed approval. Please review the IRB policy regarding Exemptions for more information.

c) Full Review Determination

In reviewing an application for research, the IRB may determine that it is neither exempt nor expedited, and involves greater than minimal risk to subjects. In such a case, the application must be reviewed at a convened meeting of the full board.