Student/Classroom Research Projects

According to the Code of Federal Regulations research is defined as “a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge....” 45 CFR 46.102(d). Furthermore, a human subject is defined as “a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: 1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or 2) Identifiable private information” 45CFR46.102(f).

Utah Valley University (UVU) requires that all research involving human subjects conducted by faculty or staff affiliated with the university, be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to initiation.

The IRB further requires that a faculty member supervise all student research activities; however, some types of student based, research type activities may not require IRB review above and beyond faculty supervision. With the recent emphasis placed on “Engaged Learning” here at UVU, more and more faculty members are incorporating practical application assignments into their course curriculums. These assignments may include research type activities where students participate in data collection and reporting of data garnered from interaction with human subject participants.

Learning how to conduct ethical research is a vital part of a student’s educational experience, especially when human subjects are involved. To facilitate this process, and to ensure the ethical and safe treatment of human participants in these types of activities, the UVU IRB provides the following guidelines:

Independent Student Research Projects
Independent student research projects involving human subjects as defined by 45 CFR 46.102 (d,f) require IRB review. Examples of such projects include theses and honors projects as well as projects intended to be presented at local, regional and national conferences (UCUR, NCUR, etc.). For additional information regarding the submission and review of such projects, please visit the IRB webpage at http://www.uvu.edu/irb or contact the IRB Staff at irb@uvu.edu.

Classroom Projects
Classroom projects that are designed with the objective of providing students with training about and experience with human subject research may not meet the federal definition of research, and therefore would not require IRB review if the following conditions are met:

1. Data collection procedures present less than minimal risk to subjects.
   a. Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life (45 CFR 46.102).
2. The data is collected in a manner that subjects cannot be identified i.e. no audio or video recording.
3. The project does not involve sensitive topics or confidential information that could place a participant at risk if disclosed.
   a. Sensitive topics include any information that could place participants at risk
of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

4. The project does not involve vulnerable populations.
   a. In regulatory terms vulnerable refers to a person that may have compromised autonomy, therefore additional protections may be required.
   b. Examples include, but are not limited to prisoners, children, mentally or physically disabled individuals, and institutionalized individuals.

5. The project must involve the voluntary participation of individuals without any coercion or pressure from the student. Though not required, it is recommended that instructors/students consider providing a consent document to participants and fully informing them that the project is for course credit only and has not been subject to IRB review.

6. The results of the project will never be distributed outside the classroom and/or institutional setting or used for publication, although the results may be presented to instructors or peers for educational purposes (department, college, or school symposium) or as part of a class assignment. If the possibility exists that either the instructor or the student would consider disseminating the data as generalizable knowledge i.e. submit the data to a local, regional, or national conference, the research must be submitted for IRB review.

Classroom projects that do not meet these criteria require IRB review prior to subject recruitment and data collection.

Responsibility for Oversight of Student Projects/Classroom Activities

Each faculty and department has the responsibility for: (1) assessing whether student projects/classroom activities involving human participants meet eligibility for review or exclusion from IRB review; (2) overseeing these activities; and (3) assuring that ethical principles are adhered to in the conduct of those activities.

Faculty advisors of undergraduate and graduate students must be certified to conduct research with human subjects. IRB training certification at UVU is offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (for more information regarding CITI student and faculty training, please visit http://www.uvu.edu/irb).

With regard to classroom projects, faculty instructors are encouraged to become fully familiar with each student's project(s). A checklist is available (below) for assessing whether or not classroom projects meet the criteria for exclusion from IRB review. It is also important that instructors who teach research methods courses educate students regarding the existence of IRB’s and discuss the relevant ethical issues surrounding the use of human subjects in research. IRB staff is available to conduct presentations on human subjects research in your class; for further information, please contact IRB staff at irb@uvu.edu.

Classroom Research Project Checklist
This document is intended to assist UVU instructors in assessing whether classroom research projects involving human participants may be excluded from IRB review.

All items below must be satisfied for classroom projects to proceed outside of IRB review. For questions relating to such projects, we encourage instructors to contact IRB Staff at irb@uvu.edu.

- Course instructors and students have completed CITI training.
- The research project is to be performed by students enrolled in a graduate or undergraduate course at UVU as a requirement for completion of the course.
- The overriding and primary purpose the project is as a learning experience in the methods and procedures of research.
- The instructor is fully aware of all aspects of the research project and will take responsibility for overseeing the project and assuring that ethical principles are adhered to in the conduct of those activities.
- There is no intent on the part of the instructor or student to produce generalizable knowledge or to disseminate the findings beyond presentation to instructors or peers in a UVU classroom/institutional setting as part of the course requirement.
- Data collection procedures present no more than minimal risk to subjects.
- Data is collected in a manner that subjects are not identifiable (no audio or video recording).
- The project does not involve sensitive topics or confidential information that could place a participant at risk if disclosed.
- The project does not involve deception.
- Vulnerable populations (children, prisoners, cognitively impaired) are not used as participants.
- The project involves the voluntary participation of individuals without any coercion or pressure being placed upon them. The instructor/students have considered whether a consent document should be provided to participants.