



Classroom Research and the IRB

Some class projects involve human subjects. Faculty members should understand their students' plans before students recruit participants or collect data. These guidelines should help determine when IRB approval is needed for class projects. It also provides tips and best practices for managing classroom research.

Note: Faculty members should review [IRB Standard Operation Procedures \(SOPs\) XXVIII: Student/Classroom Research Projects](#) to determine if classroom projects require IRB review.

Classroom Research Qualifications

A student's class project is considered **not research** if:

- It is an activity that does not meet the definition of human subject research.
 - Human subject research is defined in the [IRB's SOP II](#).
- It is an activity that does not include vulnerable populations.
 - The IRB considers the following to be vulnerable populations:
 - Children
 - Pregnant Women and Neonates
 - Prisoners
- It is an activity designed as part of a course requirement to learn research methods, AND
- The results and data will not be presented, posted, or published outside of the classroom. This includes using the project for any presentation, conference, publication, thesis, dissertation, or report outside of the course for which it is assigned

If a project meets the above criteria, then it is not considered research and does not need IRB review.

However, IRB approval is required if there is any intention to use the project outside of the classroom. This includes events on campus, such as Mountain Lion Research Day. IRB applications must be approved before the student starts the project. Faculty members should make this clear to their students.

Faculty will need to require IRB approval if...

- The student wants to use the project for a presentation, conference, publication, thesis, dissertation, blog, and/or poster.
- Students collect data in a way that the subjects are identifiable. Images in videotapes or photographs and voices on audiotape are identifiable.
- A project has no informed consent process in place.
- Participants are not made aware they are in a classroom project.
- Students are collecting data from people under their direction or supervision. Examples include TAs collecting data from their own students or supervisors collecting data from employees.



- Students do not plan to maintain confidentiality of the data. This might include using subjects' real names, being unable to store consent forms or data in a secure location, etc.
- Subjects are forced to participate or are ostracized if they do not participate.

Training Recommendations

The IRB strongly recommends that faculty members complete the [CITI human subjects training](#) if they oversee students conducting classroom projects. If IRB approval is required, CITI training is required for all research personnel. This includes any student working on the project and the overseeing faculty member.

Things to Remember

- Data collected for a classroom project cannot be used for research purposes later. The IRB can't provide retroactive approval. We **strongly** encourage students to get approval if they have any plans at all to continue their project as research.
- Projects involving vulnerable populations must be submitted for review. Vulnerable populations are children under the age of 18, pregnant women, and prisoners. These applications will likely go before the Full Board.
- If there is any question if the project is research, please submit an IRB application.