



Qualitative Research Application Tips

The IRB recognizes that qualitative research includes unique characteristics; however the basic ethical principles, federal regulations and campus procedures are the same for all research involving human participants. Outlined below is guidance to assist qualitative researchers in completing the IRB application.

Recruitment

- Qualitative researchers often surround themselves in a population in order to collect observational data and/or develop a cultural context for their research. While acceptable, it is the expectation of the IRB that researchers identify themselves as a UCCS researcher (unless IRB reviews and approves otherwise).
- If a researcher plans to use snowball sampling to recruit participants, the subject population should be taken into account. For example, it is not appropriate to use conventional snowball sampling to recruit participants involved in illegal activities, as just providing the name or contact information to the researcher could present a risk to the potential participant. In these situations, the researcher has the option to provide their contact information to a participant and request that the contact information be shared with others.

Number of Participants

- While qualitative researchers rarely know how many participants may eventually be enrolled, a number is required in the application to assess risk and meet regulatory requirements.
- It is recommended to indicate the maximum number of participants anticipated in the IRB application, as a Request for Change will be required to recruit more participants than approved in the original application.

Interviews/Focus Groups

- Semi-structured interviews, conversational interviews, and community-based focus groups, and other discussions are all acceptable methods for collecting qualitative data. To satisfy regulatory requirements, the IRB needs an outline of the scope of questions, the general topics/themes that will be covered, and/or sample questions/conversation starters that are planned. The IRB understands that the flow of the interviews will vary but will need to see general information at the very least.
- If there is a change in or expansion of the scope of the project, a Request for Change will need to be submitted prior to implementation of the changes to assess if the changes impact the risk level to the participants.

Informed Consent

- Data collection cannot include identifiable data about a third party who has not been consented (e.g., tell me about your neighbor's experiences with the new rules). If the researcher wants or needs those details, the third party should be contacted and consented.
- If direct or indirect identifiers will be part of the research, this should be clearly stated to the participants on the informed consent document. Signed consent will likely be required in such cases, and it should be clear if the research will be confidential. Some possible ways to retain confidentiality are the use of pseudonyms and study codes in place of identifying information.
- Any potential risks associated with being identified must be included on the informed consent document and the application.

Additional general information for completing the IRB application is available on the [IRB website](#).

Please note this is not all inclusive and additional information is available on the website..