

Lesley University Institutional Review Board Guidelines for Research as a Syllabus Assignment

Research assigned as part of a class syllabus is considered classroom or educational research activity. This includes class projects assigned and conducted to teach methods. These projects and activities do not represent studies that aim to contribute to generalizable knowledge, and do not require IRB review. The intent may be to provide the student with practical experiences, information gathering techniques, and report writing. However, when the primary focus and initial intent of the class activities are to collect data to be used by students or other researchers *beyond the classroom* thereby contributing to “generalizable knowledge,” IRB review is required. All dissertation research requires IRB review and some thesis or honor thesis research may require IRB review.

If Students Conduct Research as part of a Class Assignment

According to the Lesley University IRB Policies research done by a student as a class assignment “does not fall under IRB policies (with exception of some master’s theses and all doctoral dissertations). This includes the gathering of original data on human subjects. In such cases, however, the instructor of the course will be the principal investigator and will be responsible for seeking informed consent of subjects, for informing students of proper procedures regarding the conduct of such research, and for monitoring the work done by students. Thus, it remains important that both faculty and students understand the regulations and procedures regarding the conduct of human subjects research. Faculty are encouraged to include relevant information on their course syllabi along with instruction where appropriate. Any university course that addresses appropriate methodologies for human subjects research should be aware of this entire policy and guide university students in understanding it fully. Faculty who are supervising Independent Study Projects should contact the IRB if there are any concerns that a student research project might qualify for review by the Committee.”

Guidelines and restrictions for class-assigned projects that are not considered human subject research and do not require IRB approval are:

1. Data obtained from class-assigned projects *cannot* be used outside of the class, for example in publications, presentations at professional meetings, applications for funding, or independent, honors, thesis, or dissertation research. Data must be destroyed when the class ends.
2. Students who intend to conduct research to meet the requirements for the class *as well as* to contribute to generalizable knowledge through dissemination in a conference presentation or publication, as a pilot for theses or dissertations, or through other avenues, *must obtain IRB approval prior to beginning the project.*
3. The project must involve the voluntary participation of individuals without any coercion or pressure being placed upon them by the researcher. Students may only work with people over age 18.

Guidelines and responsibilities for instructors who implement class-assigned projects are:

1. Instructors bear the primary responsibility for the class-assigned project activities, and for ensuring the rights and welfare of the human subjects involved in the project are maintained.
2. Instructors review each class assignment project and determine if each project meets the criteria listed in 1-3 (above).
3. Instructors should review all methods, instruments, and communications used in each project. Instructors are responsible for keeping all paperwork associated with the class projects (for example, consent forms) for a period of one calendar year.
4. Instructors must oversee the conduct of all project activities and assure that ethical principles are adhered to in the conduct of those activities.
5. The Lesley University Consent template with logo, etc. may not be used for these activities, but can be adapted.
6. Instructors with questions concerning these guidelines please contact irb@lesley.edu.

For Students - Guidelines for Student Research that is Part of a Class

- The student researcher and/or written materials should explain to participants (1) that they are participating in research; (2) what the research is about; (3) about how long it will take to complete; and (4) how the information will be used and how and when their data will be destroyed, and obtain voluntary informed consent.
- Topics should be kept relatively innocuous. Students should check-in with their instructor if they are unsure if a topic is “innocuous.” For example, a survey about how often homeowners water their lawns would be innocuous; a survey about their involvement with illicit drugs would not.
- Keep all information confidential, i.e., study documentation should contain no identifying information such as a code number, name, birth date, or address. If there is a need for follow-up with the participants students can use code numbers; the data must be kept confidential (this is not the same as anonymous) and the data and code numbers must be always kept separate and in a secure place. Data must be destroyed when the term ends.
- Interview/observe, and/or experiment only with people over age 18.
- If you are doing observational research and the observation is done in a public place (elevator, laundromat, grocery store, biology classroom, public park, hallway of the student center), no video or audio taping is allowed.
- Research done on the internet may or may not be considered public. It is appropriate to ask permission of the group or internet community you are observing.