

IRB Policies and Procedures for In-Class Research

A. INTRODUCTION:

The IRB distinguishes between research conducted in a classroom as part of the learning experience (“In-Class Research”) from research conducted to add to generalizable knowledge or a professional body of knowledge (clinical research, thesis, or dissertation work, honors research, and summer fellows research). The purpose of this policy is to clarify when student research must be reviewed by the IRB, and if it is deemed as “In-Class Research,” who is responsible for reviewing that research.

B. DEFINITION

1. Dissemination means the distribution of findings and includes, but is not limited to, master’s and doctoral theses/dissertations, presentation at a scientific meeting or conference, submission to or publication (paper or electronic) in a scientific journal, and posting on the Internet. Dissemination includes presentation at PC’s honors day or any other setting in which results of research will be presented to an audience other than the class in which the research was a required assignment.

2. Human subject means 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.

Intervention includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered and manipulations of the subject or the subject’s environment that are performed for research purposes. *Interaction* includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject. *Private information* includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (for example, a medical record). Private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information) in order for obtaining the information to constitute research involving human subjects.

3. Institutional Review Board (IRB) means PC board which reviews and approves the initiation of, and conducts periodic reviews of, research involving human subjects. The primary purpose of such review is to assure the protection of the rights and welfare of the human subjects.

4. Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests of healthy individuals.

5. In-Class Research means any observation or intervention, including administration of survey or interview questions, by a student as part of a course which is designed to develop or contribute to student learning or class discussion, but which will not lead to generalizable knowledge or publication/dissemination of findings outside of the classroom.

6. Student Researcher means any student enrolled in a course at Presbyterian College who conducts research on human subjects as an assignment or project within a course, excluding faculty led research outside of the classroom, honors research, summer fellows research, or any other research that is not required for a specific class.

C. **POLICY:**

1. Assignments for Class

Research conducted by students as a part of classroom assignments does not usually fall under the federal regulation of research because it is not intended to or likely to lead to generalizable results. Rather, the activities are resources of teaching which facilitate learning of concepts and the opportunity to practice various procedures, including research methods (interviewing, observation and survey techniques, as well as data analysis).

While most assignments for class do not require IRB review, some do as a result of the vulnerability of subjects or the potential risk to subjects including:

- Studies in which children will be interviewed or surveyed.
- Studies in which children are being observed, and data collected, where the investigator is also a part of the activities being observed.
- Studies involving prisoners, the mentally disabled, or pregnant women.
- Studies that ask subjects about illegal activities and which place the data at risk for subpoena and/or the subject at risk for loss of civil liberties.
- Studies in which subjects are at risk of breach of confidentiality, such as ones that ask sensitive or intrusive questions about behaviors.
- Studies that place subjects at risk due to emotionally charged subject matter.

Instructors are advised to discuss these issues with their students and clarify the role of the IRB should the student be interested in pursuing a research activity that might necessitate IRB review.

Instructors are expected to review the proposed research to determine if it meets the definition of student research and is permissible under these guidelines. In instances where a class of students will be conducting group or individual research projects as a part of the classroom instruction, and the instructor believes that IRB approval is required, the instructor shall present for IRB approval one application setting forth the information requested within IRB documents.

Student researchers should also note that if there is any likelihood that the results of the project might later be used for research that does lend to generalizable knowledge (ex. within a publication or a presentation to a group other than the class in which it was assigned), IRB approval must be obtained prior to conducting the research project. IRB approval cannot be granted retroactively. It is expected that any data collected as a class project/assignment will be destroyed after grading of the project has been completed.

*Please refer to the form entitled “Research Conducted with Students as Subjects” for information regarding using students as research participants.