COURSE RELATED STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Federal regulations require that research protocols involving human subjects be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB). These regulations also allow certain types of studies to be exempted from IRB review. Rutgers University abides by an approved “Federalwide Assurance” (FWA00003913) that assures the federal Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) that the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of the university are adequately protected. In the case of a student course-related research project assignment, it may be difficult at times to distinguish between that which would require IRB or exemption review and that which is designed simply to provide an experience in research methodology. In an effort to clarify the matter, the IRB has established the following guidelines for determining when institutional review and approval is necessary for projects that are part of an academic course:

1) Student projects that are solely classroom directed exercises do not require IRB review if they meet all following criteria:
   - [i] take place in a classroom, department, dormitory, or other campus setting, or in a public setting with generally unlimited access to the public such as shopping center, park, or street;
   - [ii] the primary purpose is a learning experience in the methods and procedures of research;
   - [iii] involve no more than minimal risk; and
   - [iv] the date must be recorded anonymously by the students (i.e., with no names, social security numbers, or any other codes that can be linked to a list of names, or the recorded data will not identify the subjects through their behavior).
   - [v] the project does not include sensitive topics or

   These projects shall be deemed to be “classroom exercises” and are not subject to review by the IRB. If the instructor is not certain that all of the four criteria above have been met, they should contact his/her local campus Institutional Review Board.

2) Student Projects qualifying under one or more of the six federally allowed exempt categories but not suited to the item 1 above. As an example, all of the students' projects might involve interview procedures in which data is collected anonymously (i.e., with no names, social security numbers, or any other codes that can be linked to a list of names) or otherwise qualifying under exemption category 2 of the federal regulations. Requests for granting this type of exemption must be received at the office of the IRB not later than September 12 for the fall term and February 12 for the spring term. In the case of a two-semester course, the request of exemption should be submitted at least a month before the students will begin their projects. For the purposes of this guideline, an exemption request form should be completed by the course instructor, and all of the student projects qualifying as exempt shall be aggregated as “one classroom project.” Exemption requests are considered and acted by a subcommittee of the IRB.

3) All non-exempt student research projects must be submitted for regular IRB review. A faculty member may choose to have their students design and conduct individual projects that do not qualify under an exemption category. All requests for review of non-exempt projects that are to be completed during the fall semester must be submitted by September 12 for consideration at the October IRB meeting. For non-exempt projects to be completed during spring semester, the requests for review must be submitted by February 12 for consideration at the March IRB meeting. In the case of a two-semester course, the students should submit their requests for review at least a month before they wish to start their data collection. It shall be the responsibility of faculty members to familiarize themselves with the Rutgers regulations for approval of these projects, to review and, if necessary, to assist students in the modification of each project before it is submitted to the IRB office. The IRB is aware that, if approval of student projects is not obtained according to the above schedule, it may not be possible for the projects to be completed in timely manner, and will provide consultation to the extent that its resources allow.