



WHITWORTH

UNIVERSITY

Whitworth University IRB
Guidance for Class Projects, Independent
Studies, Capstone Projects, and Theses

The Role of the IRB (Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research)

The role of the IRB is to review and approve research involving human subjects that is conducted, supported, or otherwise subject to oversight by Whitworth University (see Policy A.1(a)). Federal Regulations require research supported by the Federal Government to be reviewed and approved by the IRB. Many venues for dissemination (journals, conferences, etc.) require documentation of approval by the IRB to publish research that involves human subjects. The IRB considers its work in promoting ethical human subjects research to be an expression of the Whitworth mission. The IRB considers that its role extends to supporting Whitworth's educational goals, and is available to review projects that would not otherwise require review to support those educational goals.

Definition of Human Subjects Research

The Policy defines "human subjects" and "research" in ways that may differ from their use in the relevant academic disciplines.

Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research: (i) Obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and, uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or (ii) Obtains, uses, studies, analyzes or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens (see Policy A.2(e)(1)).

Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (see Policy A.2(l)). The following activities are not considered "research" in this context: Scholarly and journalistic activities (e.g., oral history, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship), including the collection and use of information, that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected (see Policy A.2(l)(1)).

For purposes of IRB review, projects that are only shared in the classroom are not considered "generalizable knowledge," but public dissemination of research may fulfill the definition of generalizable knowledge. For example: Oral presentation at a scholarly conference, publication in a book or journal, poster presentation at a scholarly conference, posting on a website or blog. Theses, typically graduate-level theses, that are made publicly available in the library, are also considered "published", and, so, may fulfill the definition of generalizable knowledge.

If you are unsure whether your project meets these definitions, please contact the IRB Chairperson.

If your venue for dissemination requires an IRB determination of "not human subjects research", you may submit an application, and the IRB will supply documentation of that determination. You must apply for the determination **before** beginning your research.

Guidance for Class Projects

Class projects, especially in undergraduate methods courses, that are primarily intended for educational purposes and do not have a goal of creating generalizable knowledge are not considered "human subjects research" by the Federal policy, and do not require IRB review. However, if there is an

additional goal of dissemination, for example at SIRC (Spokane Intercollegiate Research Conference) or a disciplinary conference, students should submit an application to the IRB **before** beginning research, either to have the research approved, or to receive documentation of a “not human subjects research” determination. **The IRB cannot approve research retroactively.**

Some courses, especially at the graduate level, may incorporate IRB review and approval as part of students’ educational experience. The Whitworth IRB considers supporting these educational activities part of its role. **The IRB considers it the responsibility of instructors to determine the appropriate practice for students in their courses.** Instructors are encouraged to consult with the IRB chairperson at the beginning of the academic term to determine an appropriate approach for their students.

The IRB provides further contextual guidance:

- If the goal is that students submit an application only, but not complete the review process, include at the beginning of the purpose statement the following language:

This project is submitted for educational purposes only and is not intended to lead to generalizable knowledge.

The IRB will then make a determination of “not human subjects research”.

- If the goal is that students undergo the complete review process, even if an additional factor would normally result in a “not human subjects research” determination (for example, there will be only one subject), include at the beginning of the purpose statement the following language:

This project is submitted with the request that it undergo review as “exempt”, “expedited”, or “full board”, to fulfill certain learning objectives.

The IRB will then forego any “not human subjects research” determination. **Note:** Under this process the IRB will expect the investigator to make any indicated changes to the protocol and receive approval before beginning research.

- For class projects that would not otherwise require approval, but specific projects would likely require full board review if reviewed, the IRB **strongly recommends** that the instructor guide the investigators to submit an application under the above process. Factors that indicate likely requirement of full board review include: interventions with children, greater than minimal risk of harm to subjects, specifically studying a protected population, use of deceit. See the Policy for details. Instructors are encouraged to consult the IRB chairperson about specific studies.