



Mohave Community College IRB Guidance for Student Research and Class Projects

IRB Approval for Research Involving Human Subjects

Federal regulations and university policies **require** Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for any research involving human subjects. This requirement applies to both faculty and student researchers, whether conducting studies individually or as part of a group.

Failure to obtain IRB approval in advance may:

- Jeopardize the validity of your data,
- Prevent you from publishing your results, and
- Place both you and the university in violation of federal regulations.

However, many class projects are conducted solely for educational purposes and **do not** qualify as research requiring IRB approval. This guidance will help you determine whether your project requires IRB review before you begin.

Important: IRBs **cannot** grant retroactive approval after research has been conducted. If you are uncertain whether approval is needed, it is best to submit an application or consult with the IRB beforehand.

For forms or additional guidance, please contact IRB@mohave.edu

Student Research

Student research activities encompass various projects, including undergraduate honors theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. If the research involves human subjects—either directly or through identifiable data—**and** aims to generate new or expanded knowledge, **Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is generally required.**

Student researchers have the same submission options as any investigator:

- **Submitting as Principal Investigator (PI):** A student may serve as the PI with a faculty advisor as a co-signatory. This option is suitable when the student takes a leading role in a new research project.
- **Joining an Existing IRB-Approved Project:** If the student's research aligns with an ongoing study that already has IRB approval, they may be included in that project. In such cases, modifications to the existing IRB application may be required, but a separate IRB submission from the student is not necessary.

Each research scenario varies, and the appropriate IRB process will depend on the specifics of the study. Below are common research scenarios and their corresponding IRB processing requirements.

Scenario One:

<p>RESEARCH that involves direct interaction with individuals (e.g., in person or via mail, email, web survey, or telephone) or data from human subjects for which the researchers will have access to <u>identifiers</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRB approval required • Submit the IRB application form, either with the student as PI (Primary Investigator) or listed as study personnel on the faculty application, or modify the existing study if the student project is directly related. • Student researchers, co-investigators (if a group) and faculty advisors are required to have current research ethics certification
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Scenario Two:

<p>RESEARCH that is limited to secondary analysis of data, records or specimens that are either publicly available, de-identified or otherwise impossible to be linked to personal identities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit form for “Determination Whether Research or Similar Activity Requires IRB Approval.” • A data use agreement between the researcher and the data custodian may still be required to verify that the researcher will not have access to identifying codes. It is this “de-linking” of data from personal identifiers that allows the IRB to make this determination. • If the IRB determines that this project is not human subjects research, research ethics certification of the student(s) is not required by IRB, but may be required by the faculty advisor
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Scenario Three:

RESEARCH-like activities using departmental subject pools (e.g., Psychology, Business, Political Science, Journalism and Mass Communication) even when the activity is conducted for educational purposes as a class requirement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRB approval required• Submit an IRB application form for each activity by an individual or small group• Student researchers, co-investigators (if a group) and faculty advisors should have current research ethics certification
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Class Projects and IRB Considerations

Class projects are typically conducted for educational purposes rather than research. While some may require an IRB application or a formal determination that IRB approval is unnecessary, many do not require any submission.

Instructors and departments are encouraged to consult with the IRB for guidance on handling key ethical considerations, including privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and professional ethics when class projects are part of the curriculum. IRB chairs and staff can provide expertise on:

- Managing risks of **deductive disclosure** (identifying individuals from data),
- Ensuring **coercion-free recruitment**,
- Addressing **informed consent requirements**, and
- Navigating special considerations for projects involving **potentially vulnerable populations**.

Even when IRB approval is not required, these ethical concerns may still arise. In such cases, instructors, advisors, departments, and schools play a crucial role in ensuring appropriate oversight and guidance for student projects.

Class Project One:

Patricia is a student participating in a practicum as part of her coursework. Her practicum involves **direct interaction** with individuals, such as conducting interviews, taking histories, administering assessments, or performing in-house evaluations. The purpose of her work is strictly for **training, educational exercises, or professional development**, meaning it is **not considered research** under IRB guidelines.

Key Considerations:

- Since Patricia's activities are **not research**, **no IRB approval is required** for her practicum.
- However, if Patricia later decides to **use the same information** from her practicum for a **master's project or paper**, she must submit an **IRB application for approval** to describe the research use of the secondary data.

This distinction ensures that Patricia follows ethical guidelines while maintaining compliance with IRB policies regarding research involving human subjects.

Patricia's Research Plan

Patricia is planning a class project that involves **direct interaction** with participants. She intends to conduct interviews and collect private, identifiable data as part of her educational experience. However, she also plans to **use the collected data for research purposes**, such as presenting findings publicly or storing the data for future research use. Because her project goes beyond an educational exercise and qualifies as **research**, it requires **Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval**.

IRB Considerations for Patricia's Project

Patricia's project falls under the category of **class projects or practica that involve both an educational experience and research**. As a result, the following IRB guidelines apply:

- **IRB approval is required** before beginning data collection.
- If **multiple students** in her class are conducting similar projects, the **course instructor may submit a single IRB application** as the **Principal Investigator (PI)**, listing all students involved.
- If projects vary significantly, **individual IRB applications** may be required, with each student serving as **PI**.

Submission Tips for Patricia's Project:

- The **PI must have research ethics certification** before submitting the IRB application.
- Given the **sensitivity** of the information collected, the instructor may require students to complete the **CITI online course** or provide comparable **IRB-approved training**.
- If the projects follow a **shared protocol** (e.g., structured interviews, surveys), the **IRB application** can summarize the overall structure, with a table or chart describing individual project differences.

By following these guidelines, Patricia ensures that her research complies with ethical and regulatory standards while maintaining academic integrity.