**COURSE PROJECTS INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
AND IRB REQUIREMENTS**

IRB Procedure Purpose: Class projects that involve active engagement of human participants.
Contact: irb@dmacc.edu

Background

At Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), all research involving human participants must be approved by DMACC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with federal regulations. However, student-led projects conducted solely for educational purposes within the classroom do not require IRB approval, as they do not meet the criteria for IRB-regulated human subjects' research. Student-led projects that do not meet the definition of IRB-regulated human subjects research are not subject to IRB oversight.

IRB regulated human subjects research is defined as

"Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities that meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program that is considered research for other purposes." (45 CFR 46.102(d))

Procedure Contents

Criteria

IRB approval is not required for course-related student projects if ALL of the criteria are met.

1. Educational Purpose: The project is conducted to fulfill a course requirement.

2. Non-Generalizable Knowledge: The results do not develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. They are course assignments concluded by the end of the semester.

3. Limited Dissemination: The results of the classroom project do not leave the confines of the classroom environment (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid).

4. Data Retention and Use Beyond the Course: Data collected as part of course projects must not be retained or used beyond the confines of the virtual or in-person classroom environment.

5. Types of Activities: The project is limited to surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observation of public behavior, or standard educational exercises.

6. Participant Restrictions: The project does not include vulnerable populations or their data (e.g. prisoners, children).

7. Confidentiality: Information is recorded without direct or indirect identifiers linking any participants to their data.

8. No External Compensation: Faculty, staff, and students do not receive monetary compensation or support from an external company, organization, or agency for collecting, analyzing, or reporting the results.

Conditions for IRB Review

Course assignments involving human participants are considered educational and not subject to IRB review when the results, including any recordings or photographs, are used and shared only within the confines of the classroom.
If data will be shared beyond these circumstances (e.g., publication, conferences, theses/dissertations), the project must receive IRB approval prior to initiation.

Retroactive IRB Approval Will Not Be Granted

Carefully consider any potential future desire to publish, present, or use collected data in future research. Retroactive IRB approval WILL NOT be granted for studies conducted without prior IRB approval. For example, if a course assignment or honors project yields unexpected but significant findings without IRB approval, those findings cannot be presented at conferences or used in future research.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Project Review and Approval

- Review student research plans before participant recruitment and data collection.
- Review any revisions to the student projects to ensure continued compliance with course-related project criteria.
- Consult IRB staff if assistance is needed, irb@dmacc.edu.

Ethical and Legal Responsibilities

- Discuss ethical research principles with students before the project begins.
- Monitor project activities to protect participant rights and welfare.
- Obtain appropriate permissions for projects conducted outside DMACC.
- Honor confidentiality assurances made to participants and external sites.
- Address all complaints regarding course-related student projects.
- Assume responsibility for any breaches of confidentiality or misuse of data.

Participant Protection Requirements

- Educate students about potential risks (physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal) and take steps to eliminate these risks.
- Limit data collection to what is necessary for learning objectives and avoid collecting sensitive information.
- If a project involves sensitive data (e.g., mental health, substance abuse), instructors are responsible for ensuring that students have received specific training on handling such data securely and ethically.
- If data is collected outside of DMACC (e.g., in the community or via online surveys), students must obtain permission from the relevant external parties (e.g., local organizations, venues, or community leaders). The instructor is responsible for verifying that these permissions are in place.
- Instructors are responsible for reporting any breaches of confidentiality, ethical violations, or non-compliance with these procedures to the IRB and appropriate campus authorities immediately.
- Consult IRB staff if assistance is needed, irb@dmacc.edu.

Data Handling and Security

- Ensure data collected for course projects is used and shared only within course activities and with the instructor and students enrolled in the course.
- Collect and record data without participants' personal identifiers.
- Provide secure data storage options (e.g., departmental server, locked office space) and instruct students in proper use.
- Require destruction of participant information at the end of the course.

Recommended Practices

- Require students to complete CITI human subjects' protection training before project design or participant interaction.
- Avoid coercive enrollment practices and do not require a specific number of participants for grading.
- Determine that students are qualified to safeguard the rights and welfare of research subjects.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- If data is collected outside of DMACC (e.g., in the community or via online surveys), students must obtain permission from the relevant external parties (e.g., local organizations, venues, or community leaders). The student must show proof to their instructor.

- Students must provide participants with information about their project and its purposes.
    - Identify themselves as students fulfilling a course requirement.
    - Provide their name and the name of the course.
    - Offer the supervising instructor's contact information.
    - Specify that data and results will only be shared with the course instructor and students enrolled in the course and will not be distributed outside these parties.
    - Inform participants that their involvement is voluntary, they can skip any questions, and they can withdraw from the study at any time.
    - Explain the extent of confidentiality for participant identities.
    - Do not state that the project has been approved by the IRB. Write "The project has not been approved by the IRB because it is only for a class assignment."
    NOTE: Do not use the word "exempt" as that means IRB approval (confusing, I know).

- Consult IRB staff if assistance is needed, irb@dmacc.edu.