Special IRB Review for Classroom-Based Research Involving Human Subjects

Research involving human subjects conducted as part of a course project solely for pedagogical and evaluative purposes (i.e., teaching and learning) may qualify for special and streamlined IRB review. The following process balances federal requirements for IRB oversight of research involving human subjects against an instructor’s desire to use their time (inside and outside the classroom) efficiently and effectively.

For a classroom-based research project to qualify for special IRB review, the following conditions must be met:

- The purpose of the project is to teach research methods (such as interviewing, surveying, or experimental design) and the data are gathered solely for the purposes of teaching class-based material;
- the results shall remain in the class setting (i.e., will be presented in oral or written form as part of the regular coursework within the confines of the institution); and
- the procedures involved create at most minimal risk to non-vulnerable populations.

Instructors doing classroom-based research should recognize that this special IRB review may be appropriate for introductory courses and courses in basic research methods. This special IRB review process may not be appropriate for senior-level research projects (e.g., capstones) and is certainly not appropriate for independent undergraduate research, pilot studies, and research that may lead to publication. The latter project types should obtain IRB approval through the standard approach.

To employ this special IRB review process for classroom-based research, an instructor fills out a short form (below) for each class assignment that involves human subject research and submits some basic information on the research assignment. Instructors are asked to remember that the IRB is composed of professionals from a variety of areas. When a research assignment given to students relies on specialized vocabulary, the instructor should assist the IRB by also submitting an assignment description that a layperson can understand.

The IRB expects an instructor to have an up-to-date certification in the ethics of research involving human subjects. In the past, CSU Channel Islands has used the online certification course provided by the National Institutes of Health, but we also accept certification from CITI. (See the IRB web page for more information.) The special IRB review process requires an instructor to verify their certification either by submitting a copy of their certificate or by having an online certification through CITI.

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Instructors are also encouraged to embed into their course training experiences for students in the ethics of human research. Faculty already do this in one (or more) of the following ways:

- assigning students the task of completing the online training through the NIH or CITI (whichever the IRB is preferring at the time) for course credit,
- including during class time an orientation to the ethics of research involving human subjects in class discussions, or
- inviting a colleague with IRB experience to use class time to give a lecture or series of lectures on the ethics of research involving human subjects.

The instructor form verifies that the research project meets the guidelines for class-based research. Once the application package is assembled as directed on the Instructor Form, the instructor should submit materials to the Research & Sponsored Programs (RSP) office, Madera Hall 1304. Alternatively, a scan (in PDF form) of the package may also be submitted by email to irb@csuci.edu. Only after the IRB has reviewed the package and contacted the instructor may students commence their research.

Questions about this special review process for classroom-based research should be directed to Jason Miller, Senior Research Officer, via email at irb@csuci.edu.

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Instructor Form

Program: __________________________ Start Date: __________________________
Course #: ________________________ End Date: __________________________
Assignment Title: ______________________________________________________

This classroom-based research project meets the following requirements for human subjects research at CI:

• The project is assigned as an instructional component in my course, primarily for the purpose of teaching and/or evaluating my students.

• I have educated my students regarding ethical practices when conducting research with human subjects.

• I have verified that the course project involves no more than minimal risk to participants; do not focus on subjects who are members of vulnerable populations; and will not be published or presented outside of the university context.

By completing this form and submitting it to the IRB, I certify that this classroom-based research project satisfies the above requirements.

Instructor Name (printed): ____________________________________________

Instructor Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

Please submit this form to the IRB to the Research and Sponsored Programs Office in Madera 1304 along with the following materials:

• a copy of the project assignment as distributed to the student, along with any additional descriptions or definitions that the IRB will need to understand the project;

• an up-to-date, copy (completed within the last three years) of the instructor’s Principal Investigator certification from the National Institute of Health or CITI; and,

• a roster (including full name, student ID number, and email address) of students in the course who will participate in the assignment.

Alternatively, you may submit scans (in PDF form) of these materials to irb@csuci.edu. Once this package of materials is completed and submitted, the IRB will verify that the proposed work qualifies for the IRB exempt categorization, and will notify the instructor in writing that students are free to commence their projects. The IRB reserves the right to audit projects to verify information submitted.

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