THE NEW SCHOOL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FAQ FOR CLASS PROJECTS

Question 1: I am a student taking a class which requires me to complete a project. How do I know if my project is 'research involving human subjects'? What does this mean?
Question 2: What do I do if my project isn't research, but still involves human subjects?
Question 3: I think I might want to publish the results of my project or present it at a conference at some point in the future. Does this matter?
Question 4: What are 'vulnerable populations' and why should I worry about them?
Question 5: I am a faculty member teaching a course on methodology/statistics/ ethnography and want to include a project involving human subjects as a course requirement. How do I ensure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of human subjects?
Question 6: Where can I find additional information on federal regulations regarding human subjects and ethical practice?

Question 1: I am a student taking a class which requires me to complete a project. How do I know if my project is 'research involving human subjects'? What does this mean?

Federal guidelines dictate that all research projects conducted at universities and research facilities undergo review by a qualified IRB to ensure that human subjects are properly protected. Research is defined as "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" and human subjects as "living individual(s) about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information". Classroom projects, conducted for pedagogical purposes, which will not be published, and which involve only normal adult participants, are not generally considered research.

Question 2: What do I do if my project isn't research, but still involves human subjects?

If your project isn't "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" but does involve interaction with living individuals, you do not generally need to have your project approved by the IRB. It is the policy of the New School, however, that all faculty and students affiliated with the school take reasonable measures to ensure that human subjects are protected. You should fill out the short form available on this website and return it to your instructor who will advise you about ways to protect human subjects.

Question 3: I think I might want to publish the results of my project or present it at a conference at some point in the future. Does this matter?

Yes! If you intend to publish your results or present them in some way to a larger audience you must obtain

approval or exemption from the IRB. Fill out the full IRB application on this web page and return it to the IRB.

Question 4: What are 'vulnerable populations' and why should I worry about them?

Certain categories of persons may face barriers that make it difficult for them to adequately give informed consent to participation. Children, the mentally disabled, prisoners, and other groups which might feel compelled to participate are all vulnerable populations. It may be more difficult to ensure that members of vulnerable populations are being adequately protected. You should obtain approval or exemption from the IRB before working with vulnerable populations.

Question 5: I am a faculty member teaching a course on methodology/statistics/ethnography and want to include a project involving human subjects as a course requirement. How do I ensure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of human subjects?

Classroom projects undertaken for pedagogical purposes do not generally fall under the purview of the IRB. Federal IRB guidelines only dictate that investigations "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" are reviewed by an IRB. It is the policy of the New School, however, that all faculty and students affiliated with the school take reasonable measures to ensure that human subjects be protected. Moreover it can be pedagogically useful for students, as scholars in training, to understand when and why IRB review is necessary. Faculty should review projects undertaken by students to ensure that human subjects are adequately protected, make sure that the privacy of the subjects is protected, the confidentiality of individual responses are maintained, and participation is voluntary. If you are unsure about whether the protocol which your students will be following adequately protects human subjects, you may seek advice from the IRB. If your students wish to study vulnerable populations who may not be able to adequately give informed consent or who may be at elevated risk, such as children or political dissidents, you should seek advice from the IRB. If your students wish to publish their data, their project is a research project and they must submit an application to the IRB.

Question 6: Where can I find additional information on federal regulations regarding human subjects and ethical practice?

Additional information about the New School IRB can also be found in the IRB FAQs. The University recommends that all researchers conducting human subjects complete the National Institutes of Health training tutorial, available online at: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.