



**Institutional Review Board  
for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research**

**Guidelines for Instructors of Research  
Classes and Labs**

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**Any time you or your classes are doing research with people (human subjects), you must submit the research for review by the IRB.**

In order to keep your research in the "minimal risk" category, and to help facilitate quick approval for your research, New Mexico Tech's Institutional Review Board provides the following recommendations:

- When doing a survey, be sure to explain to the subjects that it is a survey, tell them what the survey is about, tell them how long the survey will take, and limit the survey topics to relatively innocuous topics (for example, asking about subjects' use of illicit drugs would not be innocuous).
- Be sure to keep all information on the survey anonymous - do NOT include identifying information like a code number, social security number, birth date, name, or address.
- Research done with public officials, where the researcher is asking the public official only about his/her job, is exempt from full IRB review and would therefore receive very quick approval from the IRB administrator.
- Be sure to interview/observe/experiment only with persons over age 18.
- If you are doing observational research in a public place (elevator, laundromat, grocery store, biology classroom, public park, hallway of the student center), then the research will be classified as exempt from full IRB review and would receive very quick approval.
- If you wish to ask for personal, private information from individuals, keep it anonymous, not merely confidential. *Confidential* means that you know who they are or have some way to identify them associated with a code number. *Anonymous* means that you do not know who they are and there is no way you could possibly find out.
- Research done on the Internet may, or may not, be considered public. Many listservs consider themselves to be private, so it is appropriate to ask permission of the listserv group or the Internet community which you are observing. For example, networks of breast cancer survivors often resent researchers who want to observe their Internet bulletin boards or chat rooms. Also, since you can never be certain who is responding to internet surveys (e.g. they could be under age 18 or prisoners or some other protected category), it is usually best to keep questions relatively innocuous. For advice on exceptions, please see ask the IRB Administrator.
- If the project will not be published, or made public in any way (except as an in-class presentation) the project will not usually be considered to be research and will receive very quick approval from the IRB administrator.

If you keep to the above guidelines, you can submit classroom-based research projects to the IRB prior to the beginning of classes, and the IRB administrator should be able to approve the project(s) in a timely manner.