



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA

IRB SOP 905
Students and Employees as Research Subjects

Purpose

This purpose of this document is to address the safeguards the researchers must consider and that the IRB will examine for research projects that includes a student or employee as the research participant to minimize possibilities of coercion or undue influence.

Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all researchers and the USA IRB members where research is engaged at the University of South Alabama.

Definitions

Coercion occurs when is person is completed to involuntary behave in a certain way by use of overt or implicit threat, harm, intimidation or other form of pressure or force. Coercion also occurs when potential subjects perceive pressure or force to participate. For example, if a researcher indicates to a potential subject that failure to participate will result in loss of benefits, lowered course grade, etc.

Undue Influence occurs when a person takes advantage of a position of power by offering excessive or inappropriate rewards for compliance, or whether intended or not, the person in the position of power undermines the potential subject's freedom of choice. For example, if a researcher indicates to a potential subject that the decision to participate will result in a job promotion or better course grade, etc.

Policy

Student subjects are an integral part of certain research studies, such as research on teaching methods and comparisons of curricula. Any subject's participation in research must be voluntary and based upon full and accurate information. The relationship of instructor and student is inherently of unequal power. No matter how well intentioned the instructor is, students may feel compelled to participate and believe that failure to do so will negatively affect their grades and the attitude of the instructor (and perhaps other students) toward them. In pursuing research activities wherein students are research subjects, the protocol must be thoughtfully developed to balance the interests of subject protection and research goals.

When USA students and/or employees are being recruited as potential subjects, researchers must ensure that there are additional safeguards for these subjects. The voluntary nature of their participation must be primary and without undue influence on their decision. Researchers must emphasize to subjects that neither their academic status or grades, or their employment, will be affected by their participation decision. When entering a classroom to recruit students and conduct research (e.g. administer a survey), investigators must do so at the end of the class period to allow non-participating students the option of leaving the classroom, thereby alleviating pressure to participate.

Procedures

1.0 Student Participation

The IRB will review the following factors:

- 1.1 Student participation must be voluntary. Students must not be penalized for refusal to participate in research
- 1.2 A student's voluntary decision whether or not to participate will not influence class standing, grades, or any other benefit under the control of the researcher
- 1.3 Reasonable levels of extra credit/incentive may be offered for participation, however, students must be provided with and informed of non-research alternatives to obtain equivalent credit.
 - 1.3.1 It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that non-research alternative methods are adequately disclosed in the informed consent.
 - 1.3.2 Alternative choices should be comparable in both time and effort of the anticipated study participation.
- 1.4 Subject recruiting should be accomplished in a non-coercive manner, such as general announcements
- 1.5 If participation in research is a course requirement, the student must be informed of non-research participation alternatives
- 1.6 A "student subject pool" is a recognized approach for identifying students who are generally willing to participate in research. Students must consent to participant in

each individual research study, and must be free to decline participation in any available projects without penalty

2.0 Employee Participation

University employees, such as faculty, office staff, lab technicians, and postdoctoral fellows, are similar to students in that they are vulnerable to perceived, even if not intended, pressures to appear cooperative and supportive of their supervisor's work. Accordingly, many of the same procedures described above to reduce the likelihood of coercion in recruiting student volunteers apply equally to university employees.

Additionally, the IRB will review the following factors:

- 2.1 Employee participation in research must be voluntary. An employee shall not be required to participate in research as a condition of employment.
- 2.2 An employee's voluntary decision whether or not to participate will not affect their employment, performance evaluation, or any other employment practice.
- 2.3 Recruitment is conducted through the use of flyers, advertisements, postings, and/or announcements targeted to a larger audience than just to the employees.
- 2.4 If employees are specifically targeted, the researcher must provide a rationale for subject population (i.e., just selection of USA employees)
- 2.5 Data are collected and stored in manner that protects the privacy of the employee
- 2.6 If the researcher is obtaining consent and collecting the data (when the researcher is the employee's supervisor), there must be a method of obtaining consent/data collection that minimizes the possibility of coercion or undue influence.

HISTORY

Effective Date:

Revisions: November, 2018

Responsible Office:

Office of Research Compliance and Assurance