

The University of Scranton’s IRB policy and practices are grounded in the federal [Common Rule](#) and the tenets of the Belmont Report<sup>1</sup>, which guide institutions in maintaining the highest ethical standards and full respect for persons recruited for and participating in human subjects’ research (HSR). Individual participation in research must always be voluntary, based upon full and accurate information, and with full informed consent.

plans to use the data for research purposes, IRB approval is not required. However, if those plans change, IRB approval may be necessary.

- Individual scholarly disciplines may provide other unique comment or ethical guidance relating to students as research subjects. However, University policy and guidance will supersede any local expectations.
- Requirements and procedures for the recruitment of participants, including students, on the University of Scranton campus by external researchers are outlined in Section 10.01.01 of the University's IRB policy.

### **IRB Considerations: Students as Research Subjects**

There are many instances when students may be appropriate research subjects. However, there are well-established ethical implications that researchers must consider when seeking to conduct research with this often easy-to-reach, captive population. The relationship of instructor- as well as other professionals such as advisors or mentors in an authority/ supervisory role – and student is inherently one that raises issues of voluntariness, vulnerability, ~~2U:2020~~ or coercion, whether real or perceived. Students should always feel that they can make a free and independent choice whether to participate in research or not.

### ***Vulnerability and Voluntariness***

- IRBs are particularly attentive to issues of vulnerability, voluntariness, and the potential for coercion (explicit or implicit threat of harm or loss from not taking part) or undue influence (explicit or implicit sense of reward for taking part), for all research subjects. z.n.004c 04(i)-2 (n)-1- (b)

be or feel influenced to take part due to a sense of simply responding to the request as they would any other activity presented to them during class.

- Within the class setting, it is very difficult – if not impossible – to provide anonymity of participation and maintain true confidentiality of data collected. Although anonymity is not necessarily required for all research activities, it may be an important part of subjects' decision to be involved and of a research methodology. Researchers should give careful thought to how a students' participation, and the data collected, will be protected.

### **Selection of Student Participants & Recruitment**

- Applications for research involving students must describe why students, or a particular group of students, are logical and appropriate subjects for the research project. If a study topic does not necessitate the recruitment of students specifically, researchers should recruit from a more general population.
- Students, groups of students (e.g., a class section), or advisees should not be singled out or selected due to convenience/accessibility to the researcher. In addition to ethical and other IRB concerns, this may lead to researcher bias and limit generalizability of results.
- The IRB discourages and may not approve the use of a faculty member's own students in their classes and/or student materials from those classes in human subjects' research **Section 2.01.02**, such as when the research is directly derived from/connected to the normal educational practice of the course or program.
- Faculty should not directly recruit from their own students for research purposes unless necessary. Generally, the IRB would consider the faculty member's "own students" to mean those under their direct supervision or instruction for the period of time of the research. If the instructor's own students are necessary subjects, as is often the case when research involves normal educational practices of a course or program, the IRB may **Section 2.01.02** use of a trusted, appropriately trained third party to conduct recruitment and/or data collection.
- In cases where students enrolled in a particular course or learning activity are being recruited by an instructor(s) not associated with that course, the instructor conducting the research may provide the instructional faculty or other appropriate staff with information about the study to pass on to students, providing that all informed consent requirements

**Appropriate Inclusion of Students and IRB Expectations**

Again, the IRB recognizes that in some research situations student subjects are the natural subject pool or are integral to the research question being examined. As required under federal regulation, participants of research in educational settings may not be required to devote time to the research at the expense of learning or in a way that is disruptive to the class environment, and non-participant students should not be penalized in any way or excluded from learning

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- Participants must be given ample time to consider whether they want to take part. The time constraints of a class period are unlikely to provide sufficient time and space to make that choice. Whenever possible, recruitment and presentation of informed consent should not take place during class time. If possible, the possibility/probability for becoming a potential research participant should be provided to students at the start of the course or educational activity.
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