

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board will review and approve proposals from students and instructors in the master of science in education program for research with human subjects. The function of the review board is to assure compliance with federal law and professional ethics in the conduct of research. The board is appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies and includes two members of the graduate faculty for a term of five years with the Director serving ex officio.

The relevant Federal law affecting research is Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects (1991). This law specifically refers to educational research in the following section:

§46.101 To what does this policy apply?

- (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, this policy applies to all research involving human subjects conducted, supported or otherwise subject to regulation by any Federal Department or Agency which takes appropriate administrative action to make the policy applicable to such research. This includes research conducted by Federal civilian employees or military personnel, except that each Department or Agency head may adopt such procedural modifications as may be appropriate from an administrative standpoint. It also includes research conducted, supported, or otherwise subject to regulation by the Federal Government outside the United States.
- (1) Research that is conducted or supported by a Federal Department or Agency, whether or not it is regulated as defined in §46.102(e), must comply with all sections of this policy.
 - (2) Research that is neither conducted nor supported by a Federal Department or Agency but is subject to regulation as defined in §46.102(e) must be reviewed and approved, in compliance with §46.101, §46.102, and §46.107 through §46.117 of this policy, by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that operates in accordance with the pertinent requirements of this policy.
- (b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:
- (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods
 - (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
 - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
 - (3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if:
 - (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
 - (4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

In sum, educational research, particularly that likely to be done by graduate students in the masters program, is exempt from the informed consent requirements of this statute. Exempt research has the following characteristics:

- With very few exceptions, private identifiable information **cannot** be recorded by the investigator or members of the research team
- Research participants **do not** sign a consent form
- Exempt protocols will be approved for **3 years**; studies continuing for more than 3 years will have to be re-submitted as **new** protocols.

Persons, who believe their research qualifies for this exemption, must submit a request for exemption to the Institutional Review Board (see form). While informed consent with a right of refusal is not required in exempt research, it is the policy of the MLC Institutional Review Board that parents of minors be informed of any research done in a school setting. Ethical principles particularly respect for persons, emphasizes the importance of ensuring that subjects are fully informed about the nature of the research project so that they can make an informed decision to participate or not. An “informational script,” provides that kind of information. A sample of such a form, sent to parents, is shown below. (*Key characteristics of the note are in italics.*)

The purpose of this research (*use the word research in your letter*) study is to determine whether boys or girls get called on more frequently in a classroom discussion. For that reason, I will be observing a classroom of sixth grade students in St. Paul’s School and I will be giving them a brief form asking them to evaluate their experiences in the classroom. I will also observe the classes for one complete day, noting on a class seating chart who is called on. The chart will not contain the names of any children; it will indicate only if the child is a boy or a girl. (*briefly describe what you will be doing and asking the students*) If you are willing to have your child or children participate, the form I will be giving the students will ask about his or her feelings about school and classwork. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, nor are there any direct benefits to you. This is an entirely anonymous questionnaire so all responses will not be identifiable in any way. All responses are confidential and results will be kept under lock and key. (*describe how you will assure confidentiality and anonymity*) Your child’s or children’s participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this project at any time. I plan to provide a pizza on Friday for the class as a way of thanking them for their participation. (*indicate any payment that will be made*) This study is being conducted by Jim Schwartz, who can be reached at 507 354 2492, (*provide contact information*) if you have any questions.

The Institutional Review Board will determine whether such a note is appropriate for the proposed research and will review the note as part of the proposal.

IRB approval must be obtained before the beginning of the research. Direct all questions regarding this policy to

Institutional Review Board
Graduate Studies
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