

Guidance on Students as Research Participants

The IRB reviews protocols for the potential coercion, undue influence, power disparities, and whether or not the process for recruiting students is fair. An underlying principle of the federal regulations is that participation is voluntary and based upon full and accurate information.

Researchers should consider the following when recruiting students:

- Studies should not involve more than minimal risk;
- Research involving minors requires parental permission/notification and assent from minors;
- Research involving data from students' educational records requires the students or parents/guardians' consent. Researchers may request a FERPA exception from the registrar's office or data holder (school administrator or district office). Students or guardians have the right to exclude data from the study. Refer to the guidance on FERPA and Educational Research, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/resources.html>, for more information.
- Students should not feel pressured to participate in the study. The IRB office recommends making a general announcement or using central posting. There are special relationships (i.e., the relationship between a faculty member and research advisees) in which the potential for coercion, however unintentional, becomes a concern. Researchers should be sensitive to such situations as they call for special considerations.
- The informed consent documents must clearly state if extra/course credit will be offered and if the students will receive partial credit for early withdrawal or dismissal from the study. Alternative means of obtaining credit should be made available to the students, which are comparable in terms of time, effort and educational benefit if they decide not to participate in the research.
- Research involving disclosure of information which participants may view as personal or sensitive must be collected in a private setting, minimizing the chances of one participant learning the responses of another.
- If the research involves the collection of data from a group project or an audio/video recording of group interactions, each student must give permission to use the data. The data may be used only if a non-consenting student's data can be effectively excluded.

This is not a complete list of issues that should be considered before submitting an IRB protocol. Each research protocol has unique implications, settings, and study participant protection issues that must be addressed. Contact the [IRB office](#) for additional guidance.