

Standard Operating Procedures for Conducting Psychology 3101 Class Projects

Revised October 6, 2023

This document has been created to provide guidance for the conduct of class projects in Psychology 3101 classes at Clemson University. Students in Psychology 3101 are expected to follow this guidance as they design and carry out their class projects. Instructors must ensure that their 3101 students follow guidelines outlined below, and when questions arise, they should check with another experienced 3101 instructor; graduate student instructors must have another 3101 faculty member in charge of reviewing their students' projects.

Contact Information for Reporting Incidents

Should any problems arise during the conduct of Psychology 3101 projects, they should be reported first to the instructor of the course. If they cannot be addressed by the instructor, they should then be reported to the Psychology Department Human Subjects and Ethics Committee. Problems would include things such as students conducting research that was not approved by the instructor or unanticipated problems or adverse events that arise during the conduct of the research. See below for a definition of adverse events.

Developing and Revising Templates

- Only the Psychology Department Human Subjects and Ethics Committee will be allowed to revise templates used with Psych 3101 class projects.
- These templates should be reviewed every two years.
- All instructors of Psychology 3101 must use the prescribed templates for the information letter and the protocol.

Research Methods

Class projects for Psychology 3101 must be considered NO RISK studies and must be 100% anonymous (see definition below).

- Correlational studies are allowed, as long as they do not involve controversial hot button topics (see note below).
- Observational and in-person interventions are not allowed.
- Research involving "benign behavioral interventions" (see definition below) that include simple independent variable (IV) manipulations are allowed so long as they are anonymous and do not involve any in-person interaction (i.e., they must be completed online and no names/email or IP addresses are collected) and have no potential for risk to the participant. Provided all such criteria are met, examples of such benign behavioral interventions could include manipulating types of media shown to participants (e.g., songs, audio clips, videos, words, stimuli, or images/colors), manipulating simple scenarios (e.g., vignettes about people, places or events), or varying the different types of studying techniques (e.g., changing instructions for a task to see

how instructions impact task performance, reading out loud versus silently or using active vs. passive learning techniques, etc.). All media (audio, videos, stimuli) presented to participants must be considered material that does not contain offensive or controversial behavior, including no sexual content or swear words, should be free of anything gory or graphic, and should be considered no risk and contain no potentially traumatic content. If there is any potential concern of the content of the media used, consult standard rating scales (PG-13, PG or General Audience and no violence/explicit/sexual content).

- All online platforms used to collect data must make sure that IP addresses or geo-tagging of data is NOT allowed to ensure anonymity of data.

Interviews, interventions that involve physical interactions with the participants and/or are not considered benign interventions, and behavioral observations are not allowable methodologies with Psychology 3101 class projects, since all of these designs would require some degree of identifiability/interaction with the participant.

Any methodology that would pose more than minimal risk to participants is not allowed; that is, any methodology that would expose participants to discomfort or stress beyond the levels encountered in daily life is not allowed.

Additionally, any methodology that requires that participants be deceived is not allowed. Please see below for a definition of deception.

Students must avoid using certain terminology in their information letter and surveys that suggests that the project was reviewed by the Clemson University Institutional Review Board as a research project as opposed to a class project. Specifically, students must avoid using the terms “research” or “research study.” Instead, they must use the term “class project.” Students must also avoid the terms “informed consent” and “study participants.”

Class Project Topics Not Allowed

A broad range of topics are allowable for class projects in Psychology 3101. However, certain topics may not be investigated. For example, topics that ask participants about illegal activities (including drinking by persons under 21 years of age), activities that violate the student code of conduct (see link below under Resources), or that focus on issues of a highly personal and private nature, such as sexual behavior, sexuality, eating disorders, or alcohol/drug use are not allowed.

Procedures for Reviewing and Approving Class Projects

The instructor will be responsible for reviewing and approving all class projects. If students submit project proposals using the approved forms that do not meet the guidelines, then the

instructor will provide detailed feedback and will work with the students to ensure that any necessary changes will be implemented.

Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The IRB at Clemson University is a federally mandated body that works to protect the welfare of humans participating in research conducted by faculty and students at Clemson University. Individuals connected to Clemson who desire to conduct research with the intention of disseminating their research findings in a way that contributes to generalizable knowledge must submit the appropriate materials and forms to the IRB prior to the conduct of the research.

Retention of Documents

All documents related to student projects (i.e., information letters, protocols, and surveys) must be retained for 3 years. If these are electronic documents, they can be stored on a university approved cloud storage system. Each Instructor is asked to create a subfolder titled their last name and the semester taught (e.g., Kowalski Fall 2023). If the documents are paper documents, they must be stored by the instructor. In the event that the instructor leaves the university, the documents will be transferred to the chair of the Psychology Department Human Subjects and Ethics Committee.

Publications and Presentations

Students who desire to present or publish their class projects for Psychology 3101 as a class project and not as contributing to generalizable knowledge do not have to submit the proper documentation to the Clemson University Institutional Review Board. These students cannot make reference to their project being research or a research study. They also cannot make generalizations based on the findings. However, if they desire to turn it into a research study, enroll new participants, and want to generalize the findings, then they will need to submit to the Clemson University Institutional Review Board.

Resources

- **Student Code of Conduct:** https://www.clemson.edu/studentaffairs/community-resources/oces/documents/student_code_of_conduct.pdf
- **Clemson University Institutional Review Board:** <https://www.clemson.edu/research/division-of-research/offices/orc/irb/index.html>
- **Clemson University Psychology Homepage:** <https://www.clemson.edu/cbshs/departments/psychology/>

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Unanticipated problems** – situations that arise during the class project that are unexpected, that appear to be related to participation in the class project, and

that seem to place a person at greater risk of harm than initially expected or anticipated.

- **Adverse events** – physical or psychological harm resulting from participation in the class project. While unlikely to occur in survey research, some individuals could experience psychological harm, for example, based on the nature of certain questions asked.
- **Interventions** – the introduction of a variable, such as a drug, to examine its effect on a particular outcome. **Intervention**, as defined on the Clemson IRB website, includes “both physical (in person) procedures by which information or biospecimens are gathered (e.g., venipuncture) AND manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for research purposes” (Clemson IRB website, 2023).
- **Benign behavioral interventions** - which are included in the exempt categories for the Clemson IRB protocol, are “brief in duration, harmless, painless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on the subjects, and the investigator has no reason to think the subjects will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing” (Clemson IRB website, 2023).
- **Deception** – informing participants that the study is about one thing when, in fact, it is about something else. The use of deception requires a debriefing at the end of the project. Because of this, use of deception is prohibited in student projects.
- **Anonymous**- “the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects” (Clemson IRB website, 2023).

Revised by the Psychology Human Subjects and Ethics Committee: November 9, 2023

Revised and approved by the Clemson University Institutional Review Board Office: November 9, 2023