

GUIDANCE FOR CLASSROOM PROJECTS INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Most classroom projects, where the intent at the outset is to be a learning experience (for example, to teach research methods), do not meet the federal definition of “research”, and therefore, do not require SUNY Oswego Human Subjects Committee (HSC) review or approval. Please use the following guidance to assess whether the student projects associated with your classroom activity meet the criteria to be defined as “HSC Classroom Projects”.

Classroom Project Checklist

SUNY Oswego instructors:

- This project is conducted by students in (partial) satisfaction of the course requirements.
- The purpose the project is as a learning experience in the methods and procedures of research.
- This project is not a graduate, honor’s or master’s thesis.
- The information gathered from this project will not be disseminated (e.g., articles, posters, QUEST presentations).
- The instructor is aware of all aspects of the research project, oversees the project, and instructs students to adhere to the ethical principles required for the conduct of those activities.
- The project involves not more than minimal risk to subjects (i.e., when the risk involved to participants is not greater than which is experienced in daily life).
- The project does not involve sensitive topics or confidential information that, if disclosed, could place a participant at risk. Examples include:
 - Information relating to an individual’s psychological wellbeing or mental health.
 - Information relating to sexual attitudes, preferences, or practices.
 - Information relating to the use of alcohol or drugs.
 - Information relating to illegal behavior.
 - Information that if released could reasonably place the individual at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the individual’s financial standing, employability, or reputation.
 - Information that would normally be recorded in a patient’s medical record and the disclosure could reasonably lead to discrimination, stigmatization, etc.
- The project does not involve persons from vulnerable populations as participants such as:
 - Children/Minors (under the age of 18)
 - Prisoners (now includes non-publicly available secondary data)
 - Pregnant women
 - People with diminished capacity to give consent
 - Mentally or physically challenged individuals
 - Refugees
- The project does not coerce or pressure to induce participation.

If the student projects associated with your classroom activity satisfy all of these criteria, then they would be considered “HSC Classroom Projects” and are therefore, not subject to HSC review.

Certain types of classroom projects may still be considered to be human subjects research. In such cases, these projects may require the instructor and student(s) to submit a protocol to the HSC for

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formal review. Examples include:

- Studies that involve human subjects to test or develop devices, products, or materials that have been developed for human use.
- Studies that use bodily materials such as cells, blood, urine, tissues, organs, hair, or nail clippings, even if these were not collected for research purposes. However, such research may be considered exempt or not human subjects research if the materials/data are coded and the investigator does not have access to the coding systems.
- Studies that intend to produce generalizable knowledge about categories or classes of subjects from individually identifiable information.
- Studies that involve retrospective analysis of existing individually-identifiable private information.
- Studies that evaluate human beings under extreme environmental alterations.

Use of the consent process

As student classroom projects are not reviewed by the HSC, the instructor is responsible for ensuring that students appropriately inform potential participants about the purpose of the study, how the data will be used, and state that the data will be kept anonymous, etc. The use of a signed consent document, for example in cases of anonymous data collection, would not be required, but those participants must be informed about the purpose of the study. A student investigator can use an oral consent script explaining the purpose of the study, how the data will be used, how the data will be kept anonymous, etc.

Participant Recruitment

Recruitment of participants for classroom projects is limited to recruitment from the SUNY Oswego campus community. E-Mail and social media recruitment are permissible, however must follow CTS' policy regarding the use of mass email (<https://www.oswego.edu/cts/mass-email-policy>). Recruitment material must indicate that the study at hand is for partial fulfillment of a course and must clearly indicate that the study is neither overseen nor approved by the Human Subjects Committee.

Red Flags

Please be aware of the following “red flags” when reviewing students’ classroom projects. Students wishing to conduct projects that fall into one or more of these categories may require protocol submission and formal HSC review.

- Results of the project activities or data collected are recorded in such a way that the subjects are identifiable (images in videotapes or photographs and voices on audiotape are identifiable).
- There is no informed consent process in place.
- Subjects are under the direction or supervision of students collecting data (e.g. TAs collecting data from their own students or supervisors collecting data from employees).
- Students do not plan to maintain confidentiality of the data (e.g. using subjects’ real names, inability to store consent forms in locked office/cabinet, etc.).
- Subjects are forced to participate or are ostracized if they do not participate.

For questions and concerns relating to classroom projects, as well as SUNY Oswego’s human subjects research policies and procedures, please contact hsc-admin@oswego.edu.