



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research is a standing faculty committee responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of people who are subjects in UNH research activities. UNH's policy regarding the use of human subjects states: **All UNH research activities proposing to involve human subjects must be reviewed and receive written, unconditional approval from the IRB before commencing. This applies to all research activities conducted under the auspices of UNH involving human subjects regardless of discipline or whether or not the activities are funded.**

Several types of activity, both research and non-research, involving human subjects commonly occur at UNH. In order to clarify whether or not an activity is research or if human subjects are involved, UNH employs the federal government's definition of human subjects and research. Human subjects are defined as:

"Living individual(s) about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information."

Research is defined as:

"A systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."

To apply the definition of research to an activity, one must look at the intent of the investigation, the researcher's relationship with the subjects, and how the data will be used.

Activities at UNH involving human subjects commonly fall into the following categories:

Research - the purpose of the activity is to contribute to generalizable knowledge and data gathered may be shared with a research community or the public at large.

Evaluation/Assessment/Service/Reporting - the purpose of these activities is, upon request, to gather data to measure the current situation in regard to a specific phenomenon or set of factors. Data gathered may be shared only with the sponsor /client/requesting party and where appropriate, the faculty advisor, or used for internal decision making or informational purposes.

Classroom Assignments/Educational Inquiry/Practice - the purpose of these activities is the education of an individual student through an inquiry or experiential approach to discover known principles or phenomena. Data gathered may be shared only with the course instructor or faculty advisor, or in the case of an internship/practicum, the collaborating party.

IMPORTANT: Individuals gathering data from human subjects as part of evaluations, assessments, service, reporting, classroom assignments, educational inquiry, or practice abrogate their rights to publish data as research data; if they choose to share observations with others, their actions ought to be governed by the ethical standards of their discipline (e.g., American Psychological Association or

American Anthropological Association). Individuals who wish to gather data from human subjects as part of evaluations, assessments, service, reporting, classroom assignments, educational inquiry, or practice AND intend to use the data as research data for the purpose of publishing or sharing with a research community or the public at large, must obtain IRB approval PRIOR to conducting the activity.

Activities involving human subjects within the context of research methods courses normally require some form of IRB review. Because such courses are designed to lead students to conduct "research," it is plausible to assume that such activities be reviewed as research.

Departmental Review Committees (DRC) have been established to facilitate the IRB's responsibility for protecting human subjects by reviewing no more than minimal risk research projects generated within a department. Such authority, when granted, extends only to protocols classified as EXEMPT under federal regulations. Currently, DRCs exist in the psychology and sociology departments.

The UNH IRB recognizes that human subjects may be harmed by unethical or careless activities resulting from evaluations, assessments, service, reporting, classroom assignments, educational inquiry, or practice. As a board that values the protection of human subjects and the conduct of ethical behavior, the board strongly disapproves of such unethical behavior. However, the IRB recognizes the limits of its mandate and authority.

For more information on the UNH Institutional Review Board or institutional requirements regarding research involving human subjects, contact Research Integrity Services staff: Julie Simpson, Manager, julie.simpson@unh.edu or 862-2003, or Kathleen Stilwell, Assistant, kathy.stilwell@unh.edu or 862-3536. Additional materials are available on the Research Integrity Services webpage at: <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html>