



University of La Verne Institutional Review Board Faculty Use of Their Own Students in Research

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The policy of the La Verne IRB is that all research be conducted in accordance with the tenets of the Belmont Report. This includes maintaining the highest ethical standards and full respect for persons participating in human subject research. A core principle of the regulations governing the use of human subjects in research is that each person's participation is voluntary, based upon full and accurate information and with full informed consent.

- As a general policy, IRB **discourages** faculty from using their own students and/or student materials in human subjects research, unless there is a compelling and legitimate justification for its use. Whenever possible, faculty should not collect data from their students directly (see ****Faculty discretion**). IRB approval will be on a case-by-case basis.
- The IRB recognizes, however, that in some research situations, use of one's own students is encouraged, and even integral to the research. This is true in the study of teaching methods, curricula, and other areas related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. These cases may require extra latitude and special attention.
- If one's own students are to be used in research, then the principal investigator (PI) and their research team must take all due precautions to protect the safety, rights and welfare of the participants, ensure the proper privacy and security of the research data and comply with all applicable University policies for the protection of students and student information at University of La Verne.

Unintentional Coercion or Undue Influence in Classroom Settings

Research with one's own students presents unique considerations with regard to human subjects protections. At the center of the issue is the inherent power difference between student and faculty. Regardless of how well a faculty member presents the recruitment and option not to participate, students may feel as though they have to participate or risk having their non-participation impact their grade or relationship with the faculty. In addition, the idea of ongoing voluntary participation is a potential issue if a student intends to enroll in another course with the same faculty or decides they want to discontinue participation after initially consenting. Real coercion is rare, but the perception of coercion can be just as problematic in obtaining voluntary informed consent.

Regardless of intentions, a faculty member's use of their own students in research poses significant ethical issues, creates potential risks to research participants due to the inherent conflict of interests or conflict of commitment situation, and raises the issue of voluntariness. At

the same time, the IRB recognizes that there are a few times when this is the only viable option available in order to obtain reliable data. When faculty propose to conduct research with students as subjects, sampled from their own classrooms or other faculty-sponsored associations, the potential for coercion or undue influence increases and additional protections are required.

****Faculty discretion: Faculty who choose to use their current students as research participants may do so with the following conditions in mind:**

- In cases where there is no requirement beyond the course syllabus (e.g. a pre-post test or an intervention which is not part of the curriculum).
- In cases where there is a requirement beyond the course syllabus, use of a third party is recommended to collect data.
- There are no other feasible alternative methods of data collection.
- Students must be given an opt-in option and not an opt-out option for participation beyond the scope of the regular course requirements.
- There are no incentives, rewards, or extra credit offered for participation.
- Priority remains on teaching, not data collection.
- Aggregated data use is preferred over identifiable data.
- The PI must provide a compelling rationale in the IRB application why they must use their own students for research over any other option.
- Students must be allowed to file a complaint/discuss concerns directly with the La Verne IRB Chairperson, and/or the La Verne Institutional Official (IO) and the faculty must provide contact information before the study begins.
- Students are considered a vulnerable population due to the power dynamic between the faculty and student. As such, the review will be either expedited or full review, unless the IRB determines that the PI must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and obtain signed authorization to use FERPA protected information for research purposes.

Faculty Responsibilities in Data Collection

- When the research is not fully integrated into the course curriculum and teaching methods, it is recommended that the recruitment and/or consent process will be conducted by someone who does NOT have a status and/or classroom relationship with the potential human subjects (i.e., students).
- If the research is conducted within the classroom setting, data can be collected but will not be analyzed until grades are posted with the registrar's office.

- Where applicable, the PI should not know which students have agreed or not agreed to participate in the study.
- Participation of students must be voluntary.
- Students may stop participating at any time without penalty.
- Students must not be penalized for non-participation.
- Students' identity and data collected are to remain confidential.
- Data collection beyond the scope of the course during class time is strongly discouraged because class time should be restricted to instruction activities only.
- If data collection is taking place outside of the instructional time, non-participating students can be excused.
- The research presents no greater than minimal risk to subjects.
- The recruitment/consent language contains clear statements to address and minimize coercion and undue influence.
- Students must be provided with informed consent, following procedures that have been approved by La Verne IRB.

Third Party Role in Data Collection

The third party may be an individual from the department/office, another faculty member, or a co-investigator, etc. who has no relationship to the students or course (i.e. not a co-faculty, peer mentor, teaching assistant, or student teacher).

The specific role of the third party may or may not require them to be listed as a co-investigator on the IRB submission. Individuals who are tasked with obtaining consent (i.e., describing the study procedures, answering questions about the study, ensuring comprehension, etc.) are engaged in human research activities and are considered investigators by the IRB.

Other individuals (i.e., graduate assistants) who are *only* tasked with gathering consent (i.e., distributing and collecting data packets) are not themselves considered investigators on the study. How this process will function for each study will depend on the procedures, the subject population, and other components of the specific research plan.