

## Grinnell College IRB Policy on Student Research

2016-2017

### *Classroom projects*

Classroom activities may or may not be considered “research” as defined by federal regulations, depending upon the nature of the work. In general, it is the policy of the Grinnell College IRB that projects undertaken solely as part of a classroom assignment are usually not classified as research, and thus will typically not require IRB review. Title 45 CFR 46, also known as the “Common Rule,” defines research as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of most classroom projects is to help students learn the process of doing research, rather than to actually contribute to generalizable knowledge, and thus such projects fall outside the scope of IRB review. Still, faculty advisors and students are strongly encouraged to follow Grinnell College IRB policies when designing and conducting class projects and assignments involving human volunteers or respondents, and to exercise appropriate care to protect human subjects. Training in the responsible and ethical conduct of research through the assignment of CITI modules is also encouraged. Although class projects may not meet the formal definition of research under federal guidelines, investigators should be aware that they represent Grinnell College when carrying out their studies and should thus exercise the highest ethical standards. If faculty members have questions about a particular project or assignment, they are encouraged to contact a member of the IRB for guidance.

### *Student Researchers and Faculty Responsibility*

Although most work by students does not require IRB review, two types of student work will often require IRB involvement.

1. Work conducted as part of the Mentored Advanced Project (MAP) program and through independent research (Catalog number 299 or 399) is often intended to be shared in off-campus forums, and so may be more likely to contribute to generalizable knowledge. Thus, perhaps most MAP projects and many independent research projects involving human subjects should be submitted for IRB approval. If investigators are uncertain about whether to submit a particular project, they should contact the IRB chair for guidance.
2. Class projects that involve vulnerable populations or greater than minimal risk require IRB approval. Vulnerable populations may include but are not limited to elderly persons, persons with physical or mental disabilities, pregnant women, prisoners, and children. In particular, most exemptions in the federal regulations do not apply to studies with these populations. The Grinnell College IRB will work with investigators to ensure that studies

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<sup>1</sup> The *generalizable knowledge* criterion reflects an intention, on the part of the researcher(s), to share, publish, or present to colleagues the results of a study, so as to have an impact on others beyond the population or situations being studied, such as within one’s discipline. The actual sharing of results is not required, only an intention.

involving vulnerable populations or greater than minimal risk meet the appropriate guidelines.

*Students and Principal Investigators*

Students may be a principal investigator (PI), but they must have a staff or faculty supervisor. In addition to the student's own training in research ethics (see section on Training in the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research), the supervisor must be trained in research ethics and be willing to take responsibility for the competent and ethical conduct of the research project by the student PI. Oversight of student projects may require the faculty or staff supervisor to provide training and assess the student's competence in specific research methodologies with specific human subject populations prior to the initiation of the project. CITI training modules are available to assist in the ethical conduct of research with many human subjects populations and are strongly encouraged prior to the initiation of all student research projects.