

## Student Guide to Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

### What is the IRB?

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a JMU committee tasked with the oversight of all research that involves human subjects.

### Who are the IRB Committee Members?

The IRB is composed of JMU faculty across a wide variety of disciplines, as well as a representative from the JMU student community and from the local community.

### Why does JMU have an IRB Review Process?

University faculty and students are subject to federal regulations that stipulate "Each institution or agency which conducts or which proposes to conduct or authorize human research shall establish a human research review committee...No human research shall be conducted or authorized by such institution or agency unless...such committee has reviewed and approved the proposed human research project..."

### I am a student doing my research as part of a class project . Why do I have to get IRB approval?

IRB approval is required for any research involving human subjects, whether conducted by JMU students, faculty or staff. The review process protects the University and ensures that any research done in JMU's name provides the maximum possible protection for the human participants involved.

### My research is exempt because I am just doing an anonymous survey. I don't have to do anything with IRB—right?

Not exactly. Only the chair of the IRB, or his/her designee, can determine if your research is eligible for exemption. In order to make this determination, you must submit a Human Research Review Request Form along with a brief summary of your research (answers 7-9 from the form) and all relevant materials (surveys, questionnaires, consent letters, etc).

### Why is on-line training required for me and my advisor?

JMU policy requires that all personnel who are involved with the human subjects portion of a research project must complete mandatory training at the following web address:

<http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irbtraining.html>

This policy was developed in response to heightened federal and state guidelines that have resulted in increased scrutiny of University research programs. Because JMU students perform their research under the responsibility of an academic supervisor, the University must be able to certify that both the student and advisor have completed the training.

### What kind of criteria do the reviewers apply when looking at my project?

The overall criterion for IRB reviewers is that your research plan provides adequate protection for the rights and welfare of the human subjects involved. In particular, your reviewers focus on the following areas:

- Purpose
- Methodology
- Risks/Benefits
- Adequate handling of informed consent
- Whether the research deals with high risk or sensitive issues and if so, whether the benefits outweigh the potential risks imposed.
- The degree to which confidentiality is both assured (commitment made to the participant) and protected (steps taken to fulfill that commitment)

### How much time does the approval process take?

The average review process takes approximately 3 weeks, although it will vary depending on when the protocol is submitted. Particularly high volume times such as the beginning and end of the semester may result in slightly longer review periods. In addition, the faculty review will take additional time if your protocol is submitted during a holiday break or the summer semesters. If the IRB requests modifications, there will be a subsequent reevaluation of the protocol, which can take additional time. In submitting your protocol, you should plan ahead to allow for sufficient lead time before the actual research must begin.

### What is the function of Sponsored Programs in approving my project?

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) has *no role* in the approval or disapproval of your research protocol. OSP facilitates the administration of the approval process and maintains the electronic evaluation system. To preserve reviewer anonymity, students and faculty will find that their IRB correspondence is sent by OSP *on behalf of* the faculty reviewers.

### What is the difference between a full research protocol and a request for exemption?

Both types require a Human Research Review Request, Checklist, protocol details and copies of the questionnaires/survey/letters of consent included in the protocol. The primary difference is in the level of detail provided about the protocol. For exemption requests, researchers submit brief (paragraph) answers to questions 7-9 on the Review Request Form AND select an exemption category. For a full protocol, the researcher does not need to answer 7-9 because he/she will provide much more extensive information.

### What detailed information is required for a full protocol submission?

In addition to the Research Review Request, checklist, survey instrument, cover and consent letters, the researcher should provide a detailed research protocol including the categories listed below:

- Purpose or Objectives
- Research Methodology
- Data Analysis
- Reporting Procedures
- Prior Relevant Experience of the Researcher (or if student, also of the advisor)
- Total Length (**no more than 10 pages**)

*Note: All protocol elements must be submitted electronically including the Human Research Review Request, Checklist, Protocol, Survey, Questionnaire, Letter of Consent, and any additional required materials. The electronic version can be emailed to the following address:*

[jmu\\_grants@jmu.edu](mailto:jmu_grants@jmu.edu)

*In addition—you must provide a hard copy of the signed Human Research Review Request to the Office of Sponsored Programs.*

### Where can I go for more help?

Visit the IRB on the Sponsored Programs web site at:

<http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb.html> (overview)  
<http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irbsubmit.html> (e-tutorial)  
or email: [jmu\\_grants@jmu.edu](mailto:jmu_grants@jmu.edu)

IRB Chair: Dr. Janet Gloeckner ([gloeckjw@jmu.edu](mailto:gloeckjw@jmu.edu))

Office of Sponsored Programs  
Medical Arts West  
Suite 26  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
Phone: 540.568.6872  
Fax: 540.568.6240  
Email: [jmu\\_grants@jmu.edu](mailto:jmu_grants@jmu.edu)



# IRB REVIEW PROCESS

