

Miami Dade College

Student Research Projects (01/05/2011)

A. Introduction

Miami Dade College (MDC) requires that research involving human subjects conducted at the College, be reviewed and approved by the CASSC Research & Testing committee prior to initiation. Investigators may not solicit subject participation or begin data collection until they have received written approval from the CASSC R&T committee. However, some types of student research activities may not require review above and beyond faculty supervision. The purpose of this document is to clarify when student projects/assignments must be reviewed by the CASSC R&T committee, or if it is deemed as "Student Research," who is responsible for reviewing that research.

B. Student Research

"Student Research" means any observation or intervention, including administration or survey or interview questions, by a student as part of a course which is designed to develop or contribute to student learning or class discussion, but which will not lead to generalizable knowledge or publication/dissemination of findings outside of the classroom.

Research conducted by MDC students as a part of classroom assignments does not usually fall under the federal regulation of research because it is not intended to, or likely to, lead to generalizable results. Rather, the activities are resources of teaching which facilitate learning of concepts and the opportunity to practice various procedures, including research methods (interviewing, observation and survey techniques, as well as data analysis). In such cases, the classroom project does not require CASSC R&T submission and approval.

Classroom projects that meet ALL of the conditions stated below may be conducted under the supervision of the faculty member without submitting a research request proposal to the CASSC R&T.

1. The project is a normal part of the student's coursework;
2. The project is supervised by a faculty member;
3. The project has as its primary purpose the development of the student's research skills;
4. The project is not "genuine research" that is expected to result in publication or some other form of public dissemination;
5. The project does not present more than **minimal risk** to subjects or to the student investigator (i.e., when "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests").

6. The project does not involve **sensitive topics** or confidential information that could place a participant at risk if disclosed.

Categories of *sensitive topics* include, but are not limited to, information:

- a) Relating to sexual attitudes, preferences or practices;
- b) Relating to use of alcohol, drugs or other addictive products;
- c) Pertaining to illegal conduct;
- d) That if released could reasonable damage an individual's financial standing, employability, or reputation within the community;
- e) That would normally be recorded in a patient's medical record and the disclosure of which could reasonably lead to social stigmatization or discrimination;
- f) Pertaining to an individual's psychological well-being or mental health;
- g) Genetic Information.

7. The project does not involve persons from **vulnerable populations** as participants.

Vulnerable populations may include: pregnant women, fetuses, children (with the exception of observational studies), prisoners, persons at high risk of incarceration or deportation, or mentally disabled. Projects involving such subjects require review and approval by the CASSC R&T committee prior to beginning research.

Projects that do not meet all of the above conditions must be submitted to the MDC CASSC R&T for review (see <http://www.mdc.edu/ir/rt/researchproposals.aspx> for submission guidelines).

C. Independent Research

Those independent research projects conducted by students, such as honors projects, and independent study projects, that collect data through interactions with living people or access to private information must be reviewed by the CASSC R&T committee. Application to the CASSC R&T for these student research projects must include overall responsibility by a faculty member who will be named as the Principal Investigator of the project.

D. Faculty Oversight Responsibility

Faculty teaching research methods and overseeing student research projects are expected to understand the philosophy, ethics and practice of protecting human subjects in research; to adhere to these principles during the conduct and supervision of student research projects; and to teach these practices and principles to students. Faculty will be responsible for ensuring that all student research projects are conducted in accordance with federal regulations and principles regarding protection of human subjects in research.

Faculty who will supervise student research projects must complete the NIH Computer-Based Training module which may be found at the following address: <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>.

E. Tips for Faculty

Please note that, consistent with College policy, all teaching assignments involving human subjects must respect the rights and welfare of all individuals involved. The following suggestions for the faculty members provide guidance concerning student research projects:

- 1) **Consider the nature and intent of the activity.** If the course assignment involves systematic data collection and if any intent of the activity is to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge -- an indication of which is intent to publish the data -- then the student research project is probably research and needs to be individually reviewed and approved by the CASSC R&T committee.
- 2) **Approval cannot be made retroactive.** If there is any likelihood that the results of the project might later be used for research that does lend to generalizable knowledge (for example, a presentation to a group other than the class), CASSC R&T committee approval must be sought prior to conducting the research. CASSC R&T committee approval cannot be granted retroactively.
- 3) **Minimize risks whenever possible.** Faculty members should help students understand that they are obligated to minimize risks for human subjects with whom they interact during the completion of their assignments. Depending on the circumstances, faculty members may find some of the following suggestions for students helpful:
 - a) Have students take the NIH on-line training on human subject protection (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>) before collecting information from others.
 - b) Encourage the use of anonymous data collection so that data is not linked to specific individuals.
 - c) Have information identifying individuals kept separately from the information collected from those individuals.
 - d) Collect project data at the end of the course, or within a short time afterward, and request all copies in the student's possession be destroyed.
 - e) Encourage the use of consent forms.