

Guidance: Special Subject Populations: Students and Employees (last updated June 17, 2011)

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Overview

UCLA students and/or employees that are asked to volunteer as participants in research are considered a potentially vulnerable subject population because they may feel some pressure to participate, especially if the requesting Investigator is their supervisor or instructor, or someone who might be in a position to influence their future. Students and employees may volunteer to participate out of a belief that doing so will place them in good favor with the Investigator (e.g., participating will result in receiving better grades, recommendations, employment, and the like), or that failure to participate will negatively affect their relationship with the Investigator.

This guidance outlines special ethical considerations that investigators and the UCLA IRB must make when UCLA students and employees are involved in human subjects research.

Research Involving UCLA Students

When investigators propose to recruit students, including undergraduates, graduate students and medical students, from their own classes to participate in research, they need to consider that student participation in such research may not be truly voluntary because of a desire on the part of the students to appear cooperative or highly motivated or because participation in research is a course requirement. Various alternatives have been used to reduce the possibility of unintended coercion, while still permitting students to participate as subjects in research. These include:

- Posting IRB approved advertisements throughout the university to recruit subjects from a broad base of students ([Click here](#) for campus flyer posting procedures and policies);
- Avoiding any personal solicitations of students by faculty, graduate assistants, or fellow students;
- Providing a number of research projects from which to choose, if participating as a subject in research is a course requirement;

- Providing alternative and equal methods for meeting course credit (or extra credit) requirements, such as attending a series of research presentations by faculty, writing a brief paper, conducting one's own research.

Investigators and the IRBs need to assess the potential for coercion or undue influence and consider ways in which the possibility of exploitation can be reduced or eliminated. The IRBs may ask investigators to provide justification for including student volunteers from courses for which they are the instructor.

Click here for information about [Student Subject Pools](#).

Research Involving UCLA Employees

University employees, such as office staff, lab technicians, and post-doctoral fellows, are similar to students in that they are vulnerable to perceived, even if not intended, pressures to appear to supervisors and/or colleagues as cooperative and supportive of their unit's work. Such pressure may manifest itself with respect to both the initial decision to participate and any subsequent decisions to continue or discontinue participation. Participation in research conducted by one's unit may also pose unique confidentiality considerations.

Many of the same procedures (described above) to reduce the likelihood of coercion in recruiting student volunteers apply equally to university employees. The UCLA IRB requires investigators who wish to recruit employees from the investigator's own lab or office to:

- provide justification; and
- outline procedures to be followed to minimize the appearance of coercion or undue influence of the employees.

Typically, the UCLA IRB would expect investigators who wish to include employees from the investigator's own lab or office develop recruitment procedures for the research such as posting recruitment flyers on campus, that include but are not limited to, the investigator's lab or office.

Important note: State law includes specific prohibitions regarding employee participation in stem cell research using human oocytes. [Click here](#) for additional details.

Regulations & References

California Health & Safety Code §125343

U.S. Office for Human Research Protections' (OHRP, formerly OPRR) *Protecting Human Research Subjects Guidebook* (1993), [Chapter 6, Section J, "Students, Employees and Normal Volunteers"](#).