



Guidance: Student Subject Pools (last updated June 17, 2011)

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Overview

Student subject pools are usually comprised of undergraduate students enrolled in particular courses requiring participation in one or more research projects. Departments provide students with incentives (usually extra credit) to participate in the subject pool.

The UCLA IRB reviews both protocols to operate subject pools and all human subjects research projects which propose to recruit from student subject pools.

Voluntary Participation

Student subject pools must therefore meet the following conditions in order to ensure that the student subjects voluntarily choose to participate:

- Students' participation must be entirely voluntary; instructors cannot mandate or require student participation.
- Measures must be built into the research to assure students that their participation is strictly voluntary and that they may withdraw their participation at anytime without penalty.
- Instructors are strongly discouraged from recruiting subjects they directly supervise or selecting subjects on such basis. See [OHRPP Guidance: Special Subject Populations: Students and Employees](#).

Compensation & Alternative Assignments

Payment for participation in research that recruits participants from student subject pools must therefore meet the following conditions:

- When research participation is introduced as a part of class curriculum, students must not be penalized for a decision not to participate in research. Therefore, alternative assignments must be offered to students, and such assignments must not be graded, but rather counted as "complete" or "incomplete", in the same manner that participation in research would be.

- When extra class credit is offered in exchange for participation, the investigator must provide alternate means of earning equivalent extra credit for an equivalent commitment of time and effort.
- The research must not bestow upon participating UCLA student subjects any competitive academic or occupational advantage over other UCLA students who do not volunteer, and the researchers must not impose any academic or occupational penalty on those UCLA students who do not volunteer.
- Reimbursement for participation must not jeopardize subject confidentiality or anonymity which is otherwise maintained through the individual project's IRB-approved procedures.

webIRB Application Content

Investigators who wish to obtain approval to create a subject pool must include the following in their webIRB application:

- Specify how members of the subject pool will be identified.
- Outline the methods by which members of the subject pool will be re-contacted and invited to participate in future research
- Describe in general the types of research which potential subjects will be invited to complete.
- Describe in specific detail the procedures for confidentially maintaining potential subjects' contact information.
- Include copies of sample recruitment materials and newsletters to be provided to members of the subject pool.

Important Note: The application content should refer only to the operation of the subject pool, and not to the individual research projects that will use the subject pool to recruit participants. Examples: The Informed Consent section should describe participants' consent to their information being included in the pool, not their consent to participate in individual research studies.

Regulations & References

[45 CFR 46.117\(c\)](#)

Chastain, G., & Landrum, R. E. (Eds.). (1999). *Protecting human subjects: Departmental subject pools and Institutional Review Boards*. Washington, DC: APA Books.

Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) Correspondence: [Student Subject Pools and Use of Penalties for Students Who Fail to Show up for Scheduled Research Appointments](#), January 8, 2010.