

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

VERSION 2/21/05

Mercer County Community College is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of all who participate as subjects in research conducted under the auspices of the College and to ensure that such subjects are aware of the rights and protections available to them. Major responsibility for assuring this commitment is assigned to the Director of Institutional Research and the Research Review Board (RRB). The Director of Institutional Research and the RRB are responsible for reviewing and approving all proposed research involving human subjects except that exempted in section II.A. below.

I. Human Subjects

- A. Definition Of Human Subjects – A human subject is a living individual about whom an investigator (a professional or a student) conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or identifiable private information through any means. Intervention means any physical procedures undertaken with the subject or any manipulation of the subject or the subject’s environment for research purposes. Interaction means any communication or other interpersonal contact between the subject and the researcher.
- B. Definition of Human Subject Research- Human subject research is any research involving a human subject as defined above. Such research includes that conducted by an outside researcher using subjects associated with the College.

II. Human Subject Research Approval

- A. Scope Of Research Covered- All human subject research as defined in Section I above is covered by this policy except
 - 1. assessment done in the context of a class for the purpose of evaluating student performance, for teaching improvement, or for the purpose of augmenting class content so long as the rights and privacy of individuals are not violated.
 - 2. research and reporting done in the context of responding to required Federal or State submissions.
 - 3. research in which there is neither intervention nor interaction as defined above and in which no results are disseminated by which any individual could be personally identified.

- B. Submission Of Research Proposals- The conduct of any human subject research not exempted above must be preceded by the submission of a research proposal to the office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The purpose of this process is to enable the College to fulfill its commitment to the rights and protection of human subjects. It is not the purpose of this process to otherwise restrict the freedom of researchers to conduct research and report findings. Sixty days of lead time is recommended for submission. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with that schedule for consideration by the Director of Institutional Research and the Research Review Board (described below) prior to the initiation of any applicable human subject research.
- C. Composition And Scope Of Jurisdiction Of Research Review Board- The Research Review Board (RRB) will be constituted by (1) one full-time faculty member familiar with social science research appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, (2) one full-time student affairs professional appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs, and (3) the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. The faculty and student affairs members will normally serve two year terms and may be reappointed. These terms will be staggered so that, normally, the RRB will not have more than one new member in a given year. The Director of Institutional Research and the RRB are responsible for considering all human subject research proposals for the purpose of ensuring the rights and protections of human subjects. The RRB may approve a research proposal as submitted, approve the proposal with specific modifications, return the proposal to the researcher for more extensive modification, or reject the proposal as violative of human subject privacy or other appropriate protections. Other considerations (such as the perceived quality or value of the research) are not the purview of the RRB. The appeal of any RRB decision will be adjudicated by the President of the College.
- D. RRB Research Review Process- The RRB will meet as announced to consider submitted research proposals. In reaching one of the four decisions indicated above, the RRB may employ a full review or an expedited review. A full review will be used when the Director of Institutional Research believes that the proposed research may be problematic with respect to human subject privacy or proper protection. In that case, the RRB will undertake necessary discussion which may include further contact with the researcher before making a decision. An expedited review will be used when the Director of Institutional Research believes that the proposed research raises no applicable concerns. In all cases, the RRB will respond promptly to the person submitting the proposal. The RRB will develop criteria to be used in consideration of research proposals. Such criteria may be revised from time to time and will be made available to anyone wishing to review them.

- E. RRB Record Keeping- The IR&A will maintain, for the RRB, records of all submitted proposals, all responses and decisions, all related correspondence, copies of research instruments (when applicable), and other pertinent materials. Such records will be maintained for two years following the completion of the research or, in the case of research not approved, for two years from the date of denial.

- F. Research Done By or In Cooperation With Other Organizations- Whether initiated by the College or by another organization, all proposed research must be considered by the Director of Institutional Research and the RRB following the guidelines described above. Normally, research using subjects from the College but conducted by an outside organization will be expected to have a College representative as a 'co-researcher' on the project.

III. Dissemination Of Research Results

- A. Prior Determination- Plans for the dissemination of research results must be approved in advance by the Director of Institutional Research and the RRB. Normally this will be done as part of the overall research approval. Any variations from the initial plan must be approved by the RRB prior to implementation.

- B. Protection Of Subject Privacy- Dissemination of any results that would permit identification of individuals will be done only with the prior written permission of such individuals and the approval of the RRB.

SPECIAL NOTE: It is the intent of this policy to provide appropriate human subject research protection for research conducted under the auspices of the College or in conjunction with another organization. Federally sponsored research or research sponsored by other agencies may require other protections and/or other approval guidelines and procedures.