

UW-Superior Institutional Review Board (IRB) Policy on Student Learning Assessment Research

When do I need IRB approval?

Often times, academic assessment data (e.g., grades, outcome assessment results, survey responses, reflections, etc.) are collected and used to provide feedback to students, improve a course or program, or report findings to the Office of Assessment for University-wide educational program improvement. For such cases, IRB approval is not required as long as students' identities are kept confidential. (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA makes exception to the disclosure of students' academic records to school officials with legitimate academic interests.)

However, at times, there are plans to disseminate results outside of the University (e.g., publish, present findings at a conference, report findings to a granting agency, conduct research in the field of Scholarship in Teaching and Learning or SoTL). For such cases, IRB approval is required.

Note: Releasing aggregated data to accrediting agencies in order to present evidence of improvement of student learning does not constitute dissemination of research results/data, and therefore does not require IRB approval.

What stage of research process do I need IRB approval?

Before collecting assessment data, ask yourself whether you intend to disseminate findings or would disseminate if the findings are interesting / valuable. If the answer to either of these questions is 'yes', IRB approval is required PRIOR TO the collection of data.

Students should be provided advanced notice of the classroom-related research project within the class syllabus. In addition, IRB approval is required PRIOR TO the analysis of previously collected (e.g., past semesters) data (e.g., coursework, grades, attendance rates, etc.) for research / dissemination purposes.

If decisions are made later to disseminate results or analyze data for research / dissemination purposes, IRB approval for the analysis / use of existing data is required as soon as there emerges the intent to analyze the existing data for research / dissemination purposes.

Do I need to obtain signed and/or informed consent from students?

If your research requires IRB approval, you need to acquire informed consent. The UW-Superior IRB has set the general guideline on informed consent. Please check with the website <http://www.uwsuper.edu/irb/consent.cfm>.

Approved by IRB on November 10, 2011