

**Chestnut Hill College Institutional Review Board**  
**Students as research subjects: Toward general guidelines**

**Draft 04-16-08**

***Introduction***

*This draft of general guidelines is intended for Chestnut Hill College researchers who wish to invite students in any institution to be research subjects. It has been formulated through review of IRB responses to individual proposals and review of relevant literature. The purpose of this draft is to foster collective consideration of the issues involved, to promote congruence among responses to similar proposals, and to provide guidance for researchers and advisors who are considering similar research designs. All interested individuals and groups are invited to contribute ideas and information for revision of these guidelines.*

**A. Institutional approval**

1. Research projects involving human subjects require prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from all other relevant authorities, such as sponsoring offices or departments, depending on the nature of the proposed study. If more than one institution is involved, whether as sponsors of studies or as sources of potential research subjects, then the research proposal must be submitted to the IRB or equivalent and other relevant authorities at each institution.
2. Investigators are responsible to think about the possible impact of research on potentially affected individuals and groups and to learn and follow policies and procedures of all relevant departments, offices, or programs. For example, the CHC Counseling Center requests copies of surveys used in studies for which the Counseling Center will be named as a referral source, and a small college where students meet one another and their professors in multiple classes and contexts presents particular challenges that must be taken into account.
3. Proposals submitted to the IRB for approval must describe, accurately and in detail, how the research will be conducted and what it is expected to accomplish, including details about recruitment, consent procedures, and the proposed uses of data to be gathered. Additional requirements and details are described below and in the Chestnut Hill College IRB Guidelines.
4. Once approved, the research must be conducted according to the approved procedure, without any changes, unless the IRB approves a later request for a modification.

**B. Voluntary participation/ free choice: Informed consent by research subjects**

5. Students who are minors (under 18) must be informed that they are not eligible to consent/ assent to participation in research without the permission of a parent or guardian.
6. The researcher is responsible to inform potential subjects about all the factors they need to know in order to decide whether to consent to or decline participation. This information, to be provided in advance to the IRB in the form of an introductory script or letter, includes: the amount of time the experiment is scheduled to take; the purpose of the study (unless deception is deemed necessary, in which case subjects will be debriefed at as early a stage as possible); limits of confidentiality (unless information is anonymous); the nature of any incentives; support services available to participants; and any foreseeable benefits or risks posed by the research. Potential participants must be told that they may withdraw from the research process at any time without penalty of any kind.

7. In order to avoid even limited coercion, after receiving information about a research opportunity, all potential subjects must be given time to think about whether or not they wish to participate. (*How much time? Discussion needed on this point*)
8. To ensure voluntary participation, if classroom time is used for any purpose beyond an invitation to participate, research activities should begin at the end of the class, so that students will feel free to leave the room, if they do not wish to participate.
9. If students will be offered academic credit or any other reward for participation in a research project, they should know the nature of the incentive in advance. If extra credit is offered, a clearly equivalent alternate opportunity for extra credit, requiring equal time and effort, must be also offered to those who decline to participate, to avoid coercion of any kind. It must be clear that declining to participate in research will not have an adverse effect on student grades.

### **C. Confidentiality/ anonymity/ professional obligations to human subjects**

12. Special care must be taken to guard confidentiality or anonymity as well as free choice for research participants who are in other relationships with each other, with investigators, or with advisors, for example, as peers or students. In cases of multiple relationships, data should be coded, and students who qualify for studies on the basis of problem behaviors or possible clinical conditions should have their identities shielded from instructors and peers.
13. When information will be confidential but not anonymous, potential research subjects must be informed about the limits of confidentiality, for example, in cases of possible harm to self or others. See CHC IRB Guidelines for details.
14. In order to protect both student researchers and research participants, once personal information has been gathered and analyzed, research participants may only have access to aggregate data and not to individual information.
15. Deception about the purpose of the research must not be used unless investigators have received approval after showing that the use of such techniques is justified because of significant scientific, educational, or applied value and a lack of effective nondeceptive alternative procedures. Subjects are then debriefed at as early a stage as possible.
16. If research topics include reference to clinical conditions or problem behaviors, student investigators should indicate a plan for addressing any issues that arise for individual participants in studies; the plan should include contacting their research supervisor as soon as possible for a professional judgment as to the best way to proceed. In some cases, the plan should also include provisions for referral to another licensed professional. All potential subjects must be provided at the outset with information about relevant counseling and hotline or other services, both within institutions and community-based. It is recommended that Counseling Center brochures or similar information be available whenever instruments that screen for clinical disorders are used.
17. Investigators should provide the IRB with a debriefing script that reviews the purpose and other main features of the study and includes an opportunity for participants to ask questions. When problem behaviors or clinical conditions are a focus of study, the debriefing should reinforce information about available support services and resources.

## Chestnut Hill College Institutional Review Board

Students as research subjects: Toward general guidelines

Draft 12-07-07

### Sources

All interested parties are invited to contribute information about additional sources to consult in the process of formulating general guidelines for Chestnut Hill College researchers who propose to invite students to be research subjects/ participants.

*Chestnut Hill College Policies and Procedures of the Institutional Review Board: Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research.* Approved March 2001, revised August 2006.

*Chestnut Hill College Undergraduate Research Projects Involving Human Subjects: Guidelines for projects exempt from IRB review.* March 2007.

*Chestnut Hill College Mission and Values.* Approved by the Chestnut Hill College Board of Directors, October 2002.

American Psychological Association. (2002). *APA ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct/ section 8, Research and publication.* Washington, DC:

Author. <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>. Retrieved 9/23/07.

Chastain, G., & Landrum, R.E. (1999). *Protecting human subjects: Departmental subject pools and institutional review boards.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

IRB Forum. [www.irbforum.org](http://www.irbforum.org). Online newsletter free to members of past and current members of Institutional Review Boards. Discussions about students as research subjects:

- October 2005, Szabo and Noble: research requirement for psychology classes
- September 2006, Cohen, Benham, Walker: class time for research/course credit for being a research subject;
- June 2007, MacCluskie: faculty doing research on students