

Information for persons interested in conducting research at Folsom Lake College

A. General Information

If an external researcher would like to request permission to conduct research at Folsom Lake College (FLC) and/or other colleges in the Los Rios District, approval is needed through our local research review process. Current guidelines for external researchers are provided in section C of this document. To obtain the form to request approval to conduct research at a district or a college contact the FLC OIR Office (contact information listed at the bottom of the page.)

FLC employees conducting classroom-based research for internal use at FLC are expected to follow best practices for conducting research involving human subjects but are not required to complete the full local review process. (See guidelines for internal research in section D of this document). If an FLC employee is conducting research that is not classroom-based (e.g., as part of a sabbatical, for professional interest, for publication, or for a graduate thesis or dissertation) and plans to use data either from college students or the community, he or she should contact the college Dean of Research and/or the college Research Office. It is likely that this research will fall under the External Guidelines and require a local research review for approval (see section C of this document).

As with any professional research, approval is contingent upon a review of the research plan to ensure that there is no risk to participants, that informed consent is followed and that anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed. Please note that, because our local review is only an informal review process, we ask that external researchers have permission from a formal IRB at their home institution. In order to process your proposal for approval, we will be requesting the following:

1. LRCCD External Research Request form
2. A description of the proposed research
3. A copy of university/agency research IRB approval, including approved guidelines for human subjects in the research
4. Copies of any consent form for participants (if appropriate)
5. Copies of any draft survey instruments and/or interview protocols (if appropriate)

For more information contact:

Molly Senecal
Dean, Planning and Research
Folsom Lake College
916-608-6688
Senecam@flc.losrios.edu

B. Office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness, Research Proposal Review

FLC and LRCCD provide guidelines that give an overview of your responsibilities in requesting permission to conduct research in the LRCCD or one of its colleges. Two guides are available for those interested in conducting research at FLC. The first guide, **External Guidelines** (section C), is for university students and/or their faculty as well as external agency researchers wishing to conduct research about a Los Rios college or its students. Employees of LRCCD working on research or a doctoral dissertation that is not sponsored by the Los Rios District or College are included under these external guidelines.

The second guide, **Internal Guidelines** (section D), is for current employees of LRCCD. If an FLC faculty member is conducting research that is not classroom-based (e.g., as part of a sabbatical, for professional interest or for a graduate thesis or dissertation) and plans to use data either from college students or the community, he or she should contact the Office of Planning and Research as such work is often covered by the external guidelines rather than the internal guidelines.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF INVESTIGATOR UPON PROJECT APPROVAL

- Ensure that the research participant is not at risk: This means that the questions asked or the tasks that the participants are expected to complete will in no way harm them. Care must be taken to ensure that questions are not loaded, insensitive or biased in any way. Careful piloting of questions is required.
- Ensure that participants have given their informed consent: Informed consent implies that the research participants have been informed with regard to what will be required of them, as well as any danger or risk (physically or psychologically) they may face. The participants must know that they have the right to opt out or refuse to participate at any time during the research.
- Protect the Anonymity/Confidentiality of the Participants: Every research project involving human subjects -- particularly those that gather or utilize personal and/or sensitive data -- should have procedures in place to protect the participants' confidentiality and/or anonymity. The investigator must ensure that all data will be reported at the aggregate level only, i.e., no individuals (students, faculty, staff, etc.) will be identified. In order to preserve individual anonymity, in a case where there is a small "N" (less than 5 records) which might reveal the identity of individuals, the researcher(s) will not make the data available. Upon completion of the research study, all data files that contain individual identification data must be destroyed.

Research Approval Is for a One-Year Period.

C. External Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to persons not employed in LRCCD who wish to conduct research about our colleges or for LRCCD employees who are conducting research for external purposes (graduate degree work, publication, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide an overview of your responsibilities in requesting permission to conduct research in the LRCCD or one of its colleges. This guide is for university students and/or their faculty as well as external agency researchers wishing to conduct research about a Los Rios college or its students. Employees of LRCCD working on research for publication or for a graduate degree are included under these guidelines.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

If a request relates to a single-college study, it should be submitted to the Dean responsible for research at the college. Requests related to more than one Los Rios College should be submitted to the Director of the district Office of Institutional Research. In both cases, a formal research proposal using the LRCCD External Research Request form must be submitted including the following attachments: university/external agency approval including a copy of your approved guidelines for human subjects in the research; an abstract of the proposed research; draft survey instrument or interview protocol; and/or a sample consent form that you will be asking participants to sign, as appropriate, depending on the nature of your study. Your proposal will be reviewed for consideration of approval based upon college/district criteria.

REQUIREMENTS OF INVESTIGATOR UPON PROJECT APPROVAL

Ensure that the research participant is not at risk: This means that the questions you ask or the tasks that the participants are expected to complete will in no way harm them. Care must be taken to ensure that questions are not loaded, insensitive or biased in any way. Careful piloting of questions is required.

Ensure that participants have given their informed consent: Informed consent implies that the research participants have been informed with regard to what will be required of them, as well as any danger or risk (physically or psychologically) they may face. The participants must know that they have the right to opt out or refuse to participate at any time during the research.

Protect the Anonymity/Confidentiality of the Participants: Every research project involving human subjects -- particularly those that gather or utilize personal and/or sensitive data -- should have procedures in place to protect the participants' confidentiality and/or anonymity. The investigator must ensure that all data will be reported at the aggregate level *only*, i.e., no individuals (students, faculty, staff, etc.) will be identified. In order to preserve individual anonymity, in a case where there is a small "n" (less than 5 records) which might reveal the identity of individuals, the researcher(s) will not make the data available. Upon completion of the research study, all data files that contain individual identification data must be destroyed.

The review will also look for the proposal to demonstrate that the research has utility to the LRCCD Colleges and any requests for college resources are feasible.

Research Approval Is for a One-Year Period: Approval to conduct research is for a one-year period. Research activities that must last over one year are subject to annual review. It is the investigator's responsibility to inform the college or district research office that the project has been completed or that they wish to renew the research request. Renewal requires a brief status report about the research. Prior to publication, a copy of the research report will be shared with the research office approving the study.

Changes to the Research Project or Its Design: If, during the course of any research project, a change in design is made such that the research methods or techniques are different or the risk/benefits balance has been altered or the informed consent is modified in some way, the college or district research office must be informed in writing for subsequent approval prior to proceeding with the research.

WHAT YOU MUST SUBMIT FOR APPROVAL

1. LRCCD External Research Request form
2. A description of the proposed research
3. Copy of university/agency research approval, including approved guidelines for human subjects in the research
4. Consent form for participants (if appropriate)
5. Draft survey instrument and/or interview protocol (if appropriate)

WHERE TO SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL

- **Research Involving More than One LRCCD College:** Contact the LRCCD Director of Institutional Research at: (916) 568-3131 **OR** by e-mail to: IR@losrios.edu
- **American River College:** Contact the Dean of Planning, Research and Development at: (916) 484-8307
- **Cosumnes River College:** Contact the Dean of Instruction and Student Learning at: (916) 691-7329
- **Folsom Lake College:** Contact the Dean of Planning and Research at: (916) 608-6688
- **Sacramento City College:** Contact the Dean of Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness at: (916) 558-2512

D. Internal Guidelines

WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH DO FACULTY AND STUDENTS ENGAGE IN?

Below are examples of some of the kinds of internal research projects that involve LRCCD faculty and their students.

Classroom-based or student service research: Basic classroom assessment research is designed to gather information about the effectiveness of teaching and learning for use in the classroom. It generally does not require a formal research protocol or approval. This is because it is formative in nature and not published or used in work toward a graduate degree. The results can be used to inform both student and instructor on the impact of teaching methods and learning processes associated with a particular class. Examples would include research conducted by a professor where data is collected from students on their study habits, test preparation skills, effectiveness of teaching strategies or other factors that relate to the student's successful completion of a course. Data on student performance, such as answers to targeted test questions as part of assessing course or program SLOs, are included here.

Student research projects

Many professors require their students to conduct a research study as part of their coursework. Some of these studies involve developing surveys and collecting data from their fellow college students or even outside of the LRCCD college setting. These projects typically involve, but are not limited to, surveys of social, political, attitudinal, or behavioral aspects of people. Not only do these activities provide a rich experience where students learn about themselves and the scientific method, but they provide an excellent opportunity to teach the ethical and procedural requirements for using human subjects in research projects.

Professional research that is part of a thesis/dissertation or research for external publication (= External research, see external guidelines)

If a faculty member is conducting research that is designed for publication or as part of work toward a graduate degree and plans to use data either from college students or the college community, he or she should contact the Planning and Research Office. It is likely that this research will fall under the External Guidelines and require a local research review for approval (see section C of this document).

Requirements for those seeking access to student subjects other than for classroom-based research

Each LRCCD college campus has a research office with staff who are knowledgeable about research and who have access to a wide range of data and technical resources. Faculty are encouraged to contact these staff for assistance as they design and conduct their studies as well as for help in data analysis.

BEST PRACTICES WHEN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

One of the most important components of any study that involves the collection or use of data from human subjects is the inclusion of a plan that assures that each study participant will be protected from any form of physical, emotional or social harm. Whenever you plan to use human subjects as part of a research project, your study should include the following:

Ensure that the research participant is not at risk

This means that you ensure that the questions you ask or the tasks that the research participant is expected to complete will in no way harm the participant. This is not as easy as it sounds. Sometimes a loaded or insensitive question may evoke memories or responses that cause psychological stress to the research participant. Carefully review your questions and tasks and perhaps pilot test them with a small group of students or other faculty members to verify that they are safe to use.

Ensure that the research participant has given their “informed consent” to participate in the study

Informed consent implies that the research participant has been informed with regard to what will be required of them as well as any danger or risk (both physically and psychologically) that they may face. The research participant must know that they have the right to opt out or refuse to participate without any negative consequences.

Protect the anonymity/confidentiality of the research participant

Every research project involving human subjects— particularly those that collect personal and/or sensitive information—should have procedures in place to protect the participant’s confidentiality and/or anonymity.

- Confidentiality: *While the researcher may know who the research participants were, access to these data is restricted so that nobody else will be able to match research data to a particular participant.*
- Anonymity: *Nobody, not even the researcher, will know which participant provided a particular item in the research data. In other words, names should not be associated with specific responses.*

If you have any questions about how to protect confidentiality, contact your college Faculty Researcher or college Research Office.

Maintaining Data Security

Many research projects collect sensitive information about a study participant. While not typical of classroom based research, examples of this kind of information might be name or social security number. These kinds of variables are called “personal identifiers” and allow for the identification of the individual from whom the data were collected.

Classroom-based research often may collect student IDs which, although not “confidential” in the same sense as a social security number, still allows for linking data to an individual. In general, it is strongly recommended that collecting this kind of data

be avoided—especially social security number. It is absolutely critical that you protect study participants by maintaining their data in a manner that ensures their confidentiality. Keep all data records secured. Do not leave them on your desk or in your computer. Password protect all data files if possible. Consider encrypting data files so that nobody can access them but yourself. If you need help with any of these or other security procedures, contact your college Faculty Researcher.