



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) Decision Table

Purpose of the IRB

Bridgewater College recognizes the importance of conducting research using human participants to further the knowledge base of the academic and larger community. The college accepts the responsibility to assure that research conducted under its auspices protects the rights and welfare of human participants in accordance with federal regulations and ethical standards. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) will oversee this process by reviewing research involving human participants conducted by faculty, staff, and students.

The mission of the IRB is to ensure that human participants are treated with the utmost respect and fairness throughout the research process as stipulated by the [Belmont Report](#), [Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects](#), and [Virginia Code 32.1-162.16-20](#). The goal of IRB review at Bridgewater is to help the researcher examine the research design so that 1) human participants are recruited and treated ethically, 2) participants feel their consent to participate is fully informed, 3) the data gathered is confidential, and 4) the relationship of risks and benefits to participants is fully considered.

Should I submit an IRB review application?

This part of the document is intended to help scholars determine whether their projects should be submitted to the Bridgewater College IRB. Not all scholarship falls under the guidelines of IRB review. At Bridgewater College, faculty are required to submit a “self-development report” each year using the categories of “Teaching, Service and Scholarship.” If an activity falls under the categories of teaching or service, it is not included in the purview of the IRB. If the activity is considered scholarship, then the type of scholarship needs to be examined. Scholarship such as producing creative art (novels, art, poetry, theater), acting as a reviewer for journal or writing a book review would not require IRB review.

The Code of Federal Regulations (Title 45, Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects) offers a definition of “research” as a sub-type of scholarship for IRB review. Research, as defined by the federal guidelines, can be further broken down into two categories, human-participant research (HPR) and non-human participant research (NHPR). The IRB is only concerned with HPR. If you are conducting NHPR research, such a textual analysis of documents or studying chemical interactions in a beaker, your research is excluded from IRB review. If you are using humans as participants (engaging in HPR) in a research project, then the IRB is a necessary step in the research process.

IRB SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Must I initiate an IRB Review?

Here are questions to consider when trying to decide, “should I submit my research project proposal to the IRB at Bridgewater?” If you are unsure of an answer, continue to the next question.

