Do I need IRB Approval for my online Survey?

The University of Connecticut IRB was established to protect the rights and welfare of human research participants and to ensure that proposed research studies encompass the ethical principles of the Belmont report and the protections provided by the regulations and University policies. The IRB is charged with ensuring that those individuals participating in research are not subject to undue or inappropriate risks, that participation remains a voluntary right, that vulnerable participants are protected and that the conduct of research is upheld as a privilege. The IRB first determines whether the activity involves *research*, as defined by the federal regulations and second, whether it involves *human subjects*.

- **Research** is defined as "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" [Federal Policy §45 CFR 46.102(d)].
- **Human subjects** are defined as "living individual(s) about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information" [Federal Policy §45 CFR 46.102(f)].

In addition, some research that involves human subjects may be **exempt** from continuing IRB review [Federal Policy §45 CFR 46.101(b)]. Exempt studies require initial review by the IRB but are exempt from annual continuation reviews.

Quality improvement/assessment studies generally do not require IRB review because the results are not generalizable. Examples may include surveys conducted by an instructor to improve a course, program or quality assessment of a service on campus (such as food in dining halls), or data collection for required reporting to State or Federal agencies, do not require IRB review and approval. Studies conducted in support of a Ph.D. dissertation, Masters' thesis, undergraduate honors thesis, etc. must be submitted to the IRB for review because the results will most likely be published and are designed to make conclusions that contribute to generalizable knowledge. Investigators with questions about whether the research study requires IRB review are encouraged to contact the IRB office during the planning stages of the research study. **Please be sure that your online surveys incorporate the following:**

- Allow participants to skip any question they do not want to answer.
- For *required* questions, include a "no response" option, so respondents are not forced to answer any question.
- The first page that participants view should be an IRB approved information sheet that incorporates the required elements of consent including: the nature and purpose of the study, study procedures, a statement regarding the voluntary nature of participation, and other details, as appropriate, including but not limited to:
    - What the nature of the questions are;

    - Approximately how long it might take to complete the survey;
    - Whether it is a one-time only survey, or if participants will be contacted again for a follow-up survey;
    - The extent to which privacy and confidentiality of the responses will be collected and maintained. The following statement must also be included, "Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties."
- Sensitive data must be protected as it moves along communication pathways between computers. This is ensured by Qualtrics using single sign-on through NetID and encrypted transmission.

UConn's guidelines for Internet research can be found at http://irb.uconn.edu/internet_research.html.

Contact information for IRB staff is located here - http://www.irb.uconn.edu/contacts.html#Staff.

Details of Federal Regulations Regarding IRB Review

Refer to the IRB website for additional information – http://www.irb.uconn.edu.