**Exempt Category 1 – Tip Sheet**

**What is Exempt Category 1?** This category includes research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students’ opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

**What is an established or commonly accepted educational setting?** Commonly accepted educational settings can be almost anywhere as long as the setting is one where specific educational offerings normally take place or a setting where one would go in order to have an educational experience. Nontraditional settings may be included in "commonly accepted educational settings," as long as the educational setting is established in the local area.

**What are considered “normal educational practices?”** Normal educational practices are those activities that are routinely used in similar educational settings and/or are considered proven educational practices with the population under study. Examples of normal educational practices include:

* Development and pilot testing of new educational assessment tools.
* Experimentation with instructional methods.
* Collecting affective data, specifically attitudes toward learning.
* Assessments related to educational activities.
* Collecting data specific to teacher and/or student current knowledge, beliefs, or attitudes towards learning, or data about how these change over time.

**What activities are considered “Not likely to adversely impact students’ opportunity to learn?** To assess potential issues impacting the opportunity to learn required educational content, IRB reviewers will consider whether the proposed activity requires students to deviate from a curriculum that is aligned with any national or state-level indicators of student achievement (e.g., state end of grade testing) or if the activity will take instructional time away from students.

**What activities are considered “Not likely to negatively affect teacher rating”?** When assessing the impact on the assessment of educators, reviewers will consider whether participation, or the refusal to participate, in research will be a factor in the assessment of educators. In a similar manner, IRB reviewers will also consider whether the outcomes of the research will be a factor in the assessment of participating instructors.

**What about children under the age of 18 and research in Exempt Category 1?** There are some instances in which children under the age of I 18 cannot be included in research in this category. These include:

* conducting surveys or interviews with children under age 18
* any research activity that involves interacting with children under age 18
* collecting identifying information from children and is required to undergo Limited IRB Review

**NOTE: FERPA and PPRA may still apply to your research study, even if it is determined to fit into Exempt Category 1.**

**iMedRIS Application Tips**

The following issues should be addressed in your iMedRIS application when applying to conduct research under Exempt Category 1:

* Describe whether the research activities occur during class time or outside of class time.
* If implementing a novel educational method, describe how it differs from the standard method.
* If conducting educational tests, describe when and how frequently they will occur.
* If reviewing and/or collecting student grades and/or standardized test scores, describe what grades or scores will be reviewed and/or collected, and if they will be individually identifiable.
* Describe whether you will be observing and recording data on teachers and/or students. If so, describe the activity.
* If reviewing student coursework, describe what coursework will be reviewed, if it will be identifiable, and how subjects’ identities will be protected.
* State if the educational activity is solely related to the research OR if the educational activity will occur regardless of whether the research is conducted.
* If extra credit will be offered for participation in the research activity, an alternative activity (involving a comparable amount of time and effort) must be provided to non-participating students for a comparable amount of credit. Such activities must be described.
* If the researcher is not directly involved in the implementation of the intervention, particular attention must be paid to the description of how the surrogate researchers will be trained in the conduct of human subjects research (e.g., obtaining consent, ensuring that those students whose parents do not want them to participate are excluded from the intervention). Describe who is responsible for distribution and collection of signed consent documents. Describe what plan is in place to monitor and manage data collection.
* Describe the plan for accommodating a student who wants to withdraw from the study after permission/consent/assent has been obtained.
* Clearly describe the difference(s) between what would typically occur in class and what will occur related to the research (i.e., Will all students be involved in the same activities or will there be individuals or groups of students singled out within a classroom?).
* Coercion and undue influence is difficult to avoid in a classroom setting in which activities are determined and implemented by educators. Research designs should include strategies to reduce this risk. For instance, clear procedures should be in place for maintaining the educational activities of students who are not participating in the study in order to minimize interruption to the typical school day. Although students are generally obligated to participate in activity designed for the whole class, activities specifically implemented for the research need to be clearly explained and alternatives be provided for those choosing not to participate. Appropriate alternatives should be provided for those who opt out, and must be described in the protocol as well as the consent documents.
* The risks and inconveniences should be assessed and clearly described in the protocol and consent process. For instance, in studies involving examination of classroom management techniques, will individual students or groups of students be singled out for use of specific techniques? If so, what risks does that present to that child and to the other students (e.g., possibility of increase in disruptive behaviors)?
* Describe how privacy and confidentiality of all participants (e.g., students, teachers) will be maintained. For example, will study results be shared back with the school on an individual level or in aggregate? Will information about teacher performance be shared with school administration? What risks to participants are presented given how data will be both managed and shared?
* The time commitment required to complete assessments should be described and should not exceed reasonable limits. The protocol design should clearly describe how results will be shared back with the school staff to assist in their instructional decisions as well as potential associated risks (e.g., Will students’ grades be affected by their scores on the assessments? Will results be shared at the individual student level or in aggregate? How will the data be used by the school?).

Thanks to Clemson University for allowing us to share the above useful tips for what to include in an Exempt Category 1 Application: <https://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/b1exemption.html>