Research Protocol

ALVERNO COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

In order to review your study, the IRB and its representatives need to know what you intend to do in that study. Each study is different and depending upon the nature of your research you may need to go into detail about one of these areas but give only a brief overview in other areas.

The purpose of this part of your proposal is to provide the specific information about your study that an IRB reviewer will need in order to make an informed decision about your study's ethics.

In each section of this protocol description you will find some questions. Please read them carefully and answer each of them briefly. Remember that what you provide here will be what we know about your proposed project, and most of the basis for our judgment about whether or not to approve the project.

Study Identification

Principal Investigator: _____

Study Title: _____

IRB# (assigned by IRB): _____

Date: _____

Who are you?

Are you an Alverno student? Why are you doing research at all? Is this for a program requirement? If so, identify the program, your role in it, and the research requirement.

Are you an Alverno faculty or staff member? Identify your role at Alverno and any co-investigators. Is your project funded through Alverno or some outside funding source?

Are you unaffiliated with Alverno? If so, identify your affiliation (college and program at that college, employer, etc.). Are you conducting this research as a student?

Purpose of the Study

Here we just need a brief introduction to your reasons for the research you plan to conduct. What is the purpose of your specific project? What are your research questions? What do you hope to find out as a result of this project?

Who are the Participants?

We need to know about the people who will serve as participants in your project. That is:

- Who will you gather information from?
- Who are the participants?
- How many participants do you hope to include?
- How do you plan to identify and recruit the participants?
- Are any of the participants chosen because of an affiliation with Alverno College?

Consent

A basic principle in research ethics is informed consent of your participants. That is, they should know what they will be asked to do and how you intend to protect them including protect their privacy. Then they should make a free decision about whether or not to participate in your project. In general you should plan to collect written consent documents from the participants. When that is not possible you should explain why not and how you know that they are freely choosing to participate.

Protections for Participant Privacy

Research projects can involve different levels of privacy for the participants. There is a basic distinction that you need to know between participants who are anonymous and participants whose data are confidential.

The participants in a study are anonymous if you do not know who provided you with a given piece of information. That is, when you have collected your data and you look at particular information, do you know the identity of the participant who provided you with that information? If you do, then your study is not anonymous. But if after you have collected your information you cannot identify the person who provided you with each piece of information then your study is anonymous. An anonymous study provides a high degree of privacy for the participants.

If you do know the identity of the persons who provided each piece of information then your study is not anonymous. But it can still be confidential. If you know the identity but you are careful not to reveal that identity then the data are confidential. Data are confidential relative to a specific group of people, so if you collected data and the identities of the persons who provided those data were known by you, your advisor, and another person who helped you to code the data then those data would be confidential to that group of three people.

Research Activities and Measures

What is it that you expect to ask your participants to do?

Does the study involve some kind of treatment? That is, do you plan to have some or all of your participants do something that they otherwise would not do? Typically this might be a new teaching method, or exposure to some information they would not otherwise have.
If so, are participants assigned to treatment and control groups? How will they be assigned to groups?

How much time do you expect to require of the participants? Will the study be done in just one session, or will you need them to come back a second time?

What are you measuring about the participants?
Will they fill out questionnaires or respond to a survey, or to interview questions?
Will they participate in a group, or individually?
You will need to submit any questions or interview protocols along with this research protocol.

Will the study involve any withholding of information or any deception of the participants?

Data Analysis and Reporting

What form will your data take?

Will the study be conducted anonymously? To be anonymous it must be true that no-one can tell who any particular data came from. That is, a person who has access to your data set (yourself, for example) cannot tell who provided any of the responses. *If the study is not truly anonymous, you cannot tell your participants that it is anonymous.*

If your study is not anonymous, will the data be confidential? That is, will the identity of the participants providing particular data be known only to some small set of people (yourself, perhaps your advisor and/or some research assistants)? Who are the people who can know the identities of the participants?

How do you intend to store the data securely?
How long do you intend to keep the data?
How will the data be destroyed when you are done with them?

When you report results what form will your reports take?
Will you report only summary statistics (means, percentages of participants, etc.)?
Will you report any direct quotations from the participants?
Will you report descriptions of specific participants' behaviors?
Will participants be given the opportunity to approve how you identify them?
Generally we need to know how you intend to protect participants' privacy.