Examples of Exempt and Expedited Human Subjects Research

All research involving human subjects at the University of South Alabama is required to be reviewed and either acknowledged or approved by the USA Institutional Review Board (IRB), whether the research fits into the category of Exempt, Expedited, or Full Board.

While the IRB makes the final determination for level of IRB review, the below examples may help guide researchers preparing their study for IRB submission.

Examples of Exempt Categories

Category 1: Educational Research

- Example 1 - A study evaluating the effectiveness of a commonly accepted science curriculum. For the study, investigators will observe classroom instruction and collect quizzes and class evaluations that are part of the curriculum and classroom practices.
- Example 2 – Comparing two curricula that are currently being implemented in a school. Investigators will observe classrooms and interview instructors about their experience implementing the materials (but not about specific students).

Category 2: Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations

- Example 1 – Anonymous surveys regarding workplace satisfaction
- Example 2 – Interviews of college students about their plans after graduation
- Example 3 – Focus groups with expectant mothers regarding perceptions of parenting education

Category 3: Benign Behavioral Interventions

- Example 1 – Solving puzzles under various noise conditions taking 2 hours
- Example 2 – Asking subjects to play an online game that takes 30 minutes to complete

Category 4: Secondary Research of Identifiable Private Information or Biospecimens

- Example 1 – Patient medical chart reviews
- Example 2 – Secondary analysis of coded survey results

Category 5: Federally Supported Research for Public Benefit or Service Programs

*Exempt category 5 only applies to research on public benefit programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, etc. and is rarely used at universities.

Category 6: Taste and Food Quality Evaluations

- Example 1 – A taste-test on different varieties of fruit to determine consumer preference when the fruits do not have any additives and subjects are asked to indicate which they prefer
- Example 2 – Taste-testing of various beef products from cattle that have been given feed

Examples of Expedited Categories

Category 1:

- Example 1 – Comparing how different over-the-counter bandages affect wound healing
- Example 2 – Analysis of how well standard doses of over-the-counter NAIDs relieve headache pain in adults

Category 2:

- Example 1 – Analysis of glucose levels in healthy adults using a finger stick glucometer
- Example 2 – Analysis of human blood interactions with various types of synthetic biomaterials

Category 3:

- Example 1 – Collection of buccal swabs to analyze enzyme function
- Example 2 – Collection of saliva samples to test for markers of environmental sensitivity using genotyping techniques

Category 4:

- Example 1 – Analyzing brain activity through Electroencephalogram (EEG) while viewing different media
- Example 2 – Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans used for recording brain signals from the motor cortex

Category 5:

- Example 1 – Patient registry trials
- Example 2 – Analysis of previously collected specimens that contain identifiable information

Category 6:

- Example 1 – Any project involving the collection of audio/video recordings of minors
- Example 2 – Audio/video recordings of vulnerable populations

Category 7:

- Example 1 – Focus groups or interviews of a sensitive topic or that include minors as participants