FAQs Regarding Honors Project Surveys and Research

What is the IRB?

The Lone Star College System Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. The LSCS IRB exists as a safeguard to promote ethical and responsible treatment of human subjects/participants in research. The LSC IRB also aspires to be a helpful agent in the progression of research involving human subjects within Lone Star College System. The LSCS Institutional Review Board reviews human subject research to ensure that:

- The rights and welfare of human subjects are protected.
- Risks have been considered and minimized.
- Potential benefit has been identified and maximized.
- All potential participants are being provided with legally effective informed consent.
- All research is completed in an ethical manner, and in compliance with established standards.
- All private information is kept confidential.

Who serves on the IRB?

The LSCS IRB is composed of faculty members, administrators who have responsibility for research, institutional researchers, and members from the community. The human subjects review process is administered through the office of Resource Development and Administration.

Do surveys for honors projects need to be submitted to the IRB for approval?

Yes, an application is required, because the research involves human subjects, and because of the “Honors Day Presentations” and the potential “to present at local or regional conferences.”

Note: It is crucial that you submit your application early in the semester in order to meet Honors Program deadlines!

For more information on how to get started, see below: “How do I begin the application process?”
As part of the application process, will I need to complete online training?

Yes, Federal Regulations require that all research investigators [this includes honors mentors (PI’s) and honors students (co-PI’s)] to complete a training course regarding research with human subjects. Note: Both honors students and honors mentors who have completed this training have reported that it helps students prepare for future research opportunities or requirements often encountered in academic and professional careers.

Certification may be obtained online at the following site: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php

First time users must complete the registration form on the linked page before starting the course. Please allow 1-2 hours to complete the course. Certificate will be available to print following completion of the tutorial.

For assistance with training, or for more information contact the IRB Office at 832.813.6588 or IRB@LoneStar.edu

What is the role of the student’s honors mentor?

The sponsoring faculty member must serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) and submit the application to the IRB. The student should be identified as the Co-PI. A sponsoring faculty is responsible for student research. Faculty will inform students of human subject guidelines and take measure to enforce compliance to those guidelines. It is the responsibility of the supervising instructor/faculty to determine whether projects are subject to review. Always err on the safe-side and seek consultation from the IRB if a question arises regarding human subject research and classroom activities.

Are some surveys exempt for the application process?

Yes, the research qualifies as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2): “Research Involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview protocols, or observation of public behavior.”  Again, always err on the safe-side and seek consultation from the IRB if a question arises regarding human subject research and classroom activities.
What is an example of an exemption?

According to Debra Blackburn, IRB Administrator, exemptions include questions asking participants about education received or about their knowledge base. An example would be the survey on hypertension which assesses students understanding of the causes of hypertension but does not ask participants to reveal any information about themselves. **Sample Question:** "Does the use of excessive salt increase the risk of hypertension?"

Such questions are considered “non-identifying questions.” Again, always err on the safe-side and seek consultation from the IRB if a question arises regarding human subject research and classroom activities.

Is it acceptable for the honors student, or co-PI, to fill out the paperwork?

Yes, as Blackburn writes, the mentor, or PI, can then approve and forward the application and ensure compliance.

What if one mentor has several students applying for IRB approval? Is there a way to streamline the process?

Debra Blackburn’s advice is to “[c]onsider incorporating similar projects on one application; list all students as co-PIs” and then “attach the individual surveys.”

How do I begin the application process?

If you are a student researcher, talk with your mentor. You will need to go to http://www.lonestar.edu/irb-get-started.htm to see the appropriate steps for submitting an application for review, or please contact the IRB office by phone at 832.813.6588, or by e-mail at IRB@LoneStar.edu.

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ww.LoneStar.Edu/irb.htm