Procedure 908: Human Subjects Research

Category: Administrative

Covered Individuals: All CEI employees, students, and external researchers

Approved: 03/10/2025

Formerly Approved: 12/13/2021

908.1 Purpose

College of Eastern Idaho (CEI) is committed to protecting the rights, welfare, and privacy of individuals participating in research conducted by faculty, staff, students, or external researchers. To ensure compliance with ethical standards and federal regulations, all research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by Institutional Research (IR) before commencing, except for activities specifically listed in 908.2.

908.2 Exclusions

Institutional research approval is not required for human subjects’ research that meets these criteria:

* Faculty-supervised research that contributes towards students’ academic progress, e.g., student-performed surveys as part of a course project
* Event evaluations by participants
* Client feedback at the point of service
* Teaching evaluation forms
* Forms used to collect information for administrative purposes (e.g., for scheduling)

In case of exclusions, researchers and/or their faculty supervisors are responsible for the proper use, handling, and security of data, including ensuring it is not distributed without authorization.

908.3 The Approval Process

Researchers are encouraged to consult with Institutional Research (IR) before beginning the formal research approval process. IR will discuss the project with the researcher and decide what additional information is required. Typically, researchers will submit all relevant study materials, including the survey instrument, participant invitation, and any other required documents, such as IRB approval/exemption and graduate research supervision documentation.

Approval is based on an assessment of potential risks to participants weighed against the expected benefits. IR evaluates research proposals based on the following criteria:

* Participant Protection: IR ensures safeguards are in place to protect participants from harm, including physical, emotional, and privacy risks. Additional scrutiny is applied when research involves students or other vulnerable groups.
* Institutional and Resource Protection: Research must align with CEI’s mission and responsibly utilize campus resources.
* Legal and Policy Compliance: Research must comply with institutional data protection policies, government regulations, and other legal constraints, including the following specific compliance considerations:
  + FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act):

- College employees may use non-public student data for legitimate educational purposes without student consent if individual students cannot be identified.

- All other users must obtain written student consent to access non-public student data.

- Research involving academic or contact information of CEI students will be referred to the Registrar’s office for additional approval (Assistant.Registrar@cei.edu).

* + HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act):

- Surveys requesting individual physical or mental health information are subject to HIPAA regulations.

- Applicable research projects will be referred to HR for additional approval (HR@cei.edu).

After reviewing all relevant factors, IR will make a recommendation to the President’s Advisory Council, which may approve, deny, or request further information regarding the study.

908.4 Protecting the Rights of Respondents in Approved Research

If a research project is approved, the researcher agrees to protect the rights of the respondents, including the following.

* All participants must fill out a consent form prior to the initiation of the survey. It must
  + Notify them of the research’s purpose and where any results will be published.
  + Explain the expected time commitment, any potential risks associated with their participation, and the data handling procedures.
  + Notify them that their participation is voluntary.
  + Include the researcher’s contact information, including name, email address, telephone number. Respondents should be invited to ask any questions about the content of the form or about the use and/or publication of survey results.
* Researchers must follow the institution’s policies on data security, confidentiality, and information handling.
* Respondents must be notified in advance if data collected will not be anonymous. If a survey promises anonymity but requires login (e.g., student IDs), researchers must ensure login data is not linked to survey results.
* Respondents must be protected from risk of unreasonable harm, including any risks regarding confidentiality or privacy.
* A summary of the survey results should be available upon request.
* For external researchers:
  + Per Idaho Code 33-133, CEI does not release lists of student names, emails, phone numbers, or other contact information.
  + Per Idaho Code 74-106, CEI does not release lists of employee names, emails, phone numbers, or other contact information.
  + Accordingly, if any external research instrument is approved for distribution to students or employees, CEI’s IR department will administer it.

908.5 Incentives

If researchers plan to offer any incentives, they must have a compliance plan in place before the initiation of the research.

If the cost or fair value of a participation incentive is greater than $50, the value of a survey incentive may be taxable to the recipient. The survey requestor needs to provide the tax reporting information to the Accounts Payable Office within one week of issuing the survey incentive so that CEI can comply with tax reporting requirements.

To offer a participation incentive to faculty and/or staff, it is imperative that the research requestor first consult with the Vice President of Human Resources and the Director of Financial Systems and Disbursements in Accounting and Budget Services well before the participant incentive is offered. This will help ensure that the research incentive does not create additional compensation and/or tax reporting requirements for CEI.

Please see [Policy 412: Gift Cards, Gift Certificates, Other Prizes, and Awards](https://www.cei.edu/policy/polciy-412-gift-cards-gift-certificates-other-prizes-and-awards) for details.

908.6 Assistance with Survey Development, Administration, and Reporting

IR will aid with survey development, deployment, and/or analysis for CEI academic and administrative units as resources allow. Assistance with external projects (e.g., grants, dissertations) may be considered, but it will have lower priority. Requests may be denied if resources are unavailable.