

Guidelines for Exempt Studies

Generally research that involves people (human subjects) must be reviewed for compliance with ethical standards designed to protect the rights of subjects in research studies by a formal committee. There are however some very specific situations where, because a study involves little or no risk to subjects, it may be deemed as exempt from full committee review. Those specific criteria for which a study may potentially claim exemption are listed at the [end of this document](#).

- In keeping with Federal guidelines, no researcher at SPC, regardless of their position or training may certify their own research as exempt: only the Research Review Committee Chairs may grant exemptions for faculty and staff member projects. At SPC the following persons may recommend certifying a study as meeting federal guidelines for exemption from SPC Research Review Committee formal review:
 - The Chairs of the Research Review Committee may recommend certification of any research as exempt from SPC Research Review Committee formal review
 - Faculty members who have successfully completed the *SPC Exemption Certification Module* may certify student's SPC class project research as exempt from Research Review Committee formal review.
- Application for exemption status by researchers may be made in one of two ways:
 - A Non-student researcher (faculty or staff) who believes that their study qualifies as exempt should indicate this in their cover letter when submitting their packet for SPC Research Review Committee review. The Chair of the SPC Research Review Committee will assess the project and make a determination of exempt status.
 - Student researchers conducting studies as part of their SPC class project or degree requirements may be granted exemption by the faculty member overseeing their project (if the faculty member is certified to grant exemptions) or by another faculty member or administrator within their Department who is certified to grant exemptions if so requested by the faculty member responsible for the project. If there is no certified exemption reviewer within the student's Department then the student should contact the Chair of the SPC Research Review Committee to assess the project and make a determination of exempt status.
- Notwithstanding who has recommended certifying the project as exempt, all exempted research will be reported to the SPC Research Review Committee at the next formal meeting following the certification recommendation.
 - This report will include the researcher(s) name, researcher(s) role(s), study title, course (if applicable), term, exemption category determined and reviewer's name.
 - The committee will conduct a formal vote to accept the exemptions as recommended. A simple majority vote will be used to approve, disapprove, or note the study as undecided.
 - Approved: Exempted studies that are approved are considered as having fulfilled institutional requirements. They are required to submit a summary of any results/findings that are to be presented outside of SPC. This summary is not submitted for approval, but as evidentiary documentation to be kept as part of an institutional record in relation to SACS accreditation.
 - Disapproved: Any study failing to receive a simple majority vote of approval will be required to undergo formal committee review.
 - Undecided: Any study for which the committee is undecided will be required to provide more information so a decision may be rendered. Depending upon the circumstances the research may continue or the committee may require the study to be placed on hold pending a final determination.
- Denial of an exemption should in no way be construed to indicate that the project cannot be approved; simply that it cannot be exempted from Research Review Committee assessment and must go through the formal research review process before a decision is made.

- Previously approved exempt projects that make substantial changes to their methods such that they would no longer qualify as exempt must submit a packet with the requested changes to the Research Review Committee for approval before they can commence with non-exempt research activities.
- Faculty member who wish to be certified to provide student exemptions should contact the Research Review Committee for details. Research_Review@spcollege.edu.

St. Petersburg College adheres to Federal Regulation [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)](#) in defining exempt research as research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories:

- 1) *Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.*
- 2) *Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:*
 - i) *information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and*
 - ii) *any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.*
- 3) *Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if:*
 - i) *the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or*
 - ii) *Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.*
- 4) *Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.*
- 5) *Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:*
 - i) *Public benefit or service programs;*
 - ii) *Procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs;*
 - iii) *Possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or*
 - iv) *Possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.*
- 6) *Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies,*
 - i) *If wholesome foods without additives are consumed or*
 - ii) *If a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*