



ROBERTS
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) & Guidelines to Follow for a Speedy Review

How long will the IRB take to review my application?

- **From September 1 through May 15**, you should allow three calendar weeks, EXCEPT if submitted during or just prior to any break period. In that case, you should add on the length of the break (e.g., if submitted during Winter Break, please add one week, if submitted during Christmas break, please add 4 weeks).
- **Under extenuating circumstances, we will accept applications until June 8.** (Explain the “extenuating circumstances” in your submission letter; these include reasons for the delay that were outside of your control, reasonable concerns over the negative consequences of a delay, and a well-founded reason for why the application cannot wait till September 1).
- **From June 8 through August 31**, no IRB applications are accepted.
- **The time estimate is an outside limit;** we do our best to review documents quickly.

What are some common errors that I should correct/avoid prior to submission?

Glad you asked! We have found that the review process is quicker if you are sure to conform your application to the following guidelines:

All documents should be consistent with one another. Information on the application should match that given on the Consent form, the Organization Approval letter, and any other document that is part of the application.

Your application documents should make sense; Don't just mindlessly copy the sample forms. Many applicants use the [sample forms provided on the Roberts IRB website](#) without making relevant changes related to their own study. Be aware that these forms may have been created for particular purposes during particular eras and they may not precisely match the needs of the researcher. Some common issues include the following:

- **Use Faculty Advisor.** If you are a student, your faculty advisor should closely review your entire application (a close faculty review usually corrects many of the errors we encounter as an IRB and therefore speeds up the review process).
- **Electronic Consent.** If electronic consent is used, the consent form language in the introduction and signature fields needs to be updated accordingly. Participants cannot sign the consent form on paper when it is provided electronically. Ideally, consent procedures should be detailed in the application form (under procedures), including when and how the consent form is distributed and signed.
- **Are your materials full of spelling and grammatical errors?** Correct them.

- **Anonymity is NOT Confidentiality.** Know the difference between anonymity (i.e., when identifying information is not collected at ANY point in the entire process) and confidentiality (i.e., identifying information is collected, but not shared beyond the research team), and use the correct term throughout.
- **Might this be Published?** If the research study results in presentations or publications, the consent form should mention this possibility and should state that the data will be aggregated to protect each participant's identity. A dissertation is a publication.
- **No compensation? Don't bring it up.** If no compensation is provided, the consent form should not include the following statement from the sample consent: *Whether I complete the study or not, I realize that I will receive the compensation as explained above.*
- **No deception? Don't bring it up.** If the application form states that no deception is used, the following sentence should not be included in the consent form from the sample consent: *Some details of this project may not be made known to me until my session is completed.*
- **No data gathered in a specific session? Don't talk about the option of withholding data.** Unless the research study involves a specific session, the following sentence from the sample consent form should be updated: *I realize at the completion of the session that I have the option of withholding the responses I have provided from subsequent analysis.*
- **If you say that participants can refuse to answer questions, allow them to skip questions on the electronic survey.** If the applicant is using electronic data collection methods, double-check that the electronic survey is not set up in a way that requires participants to answer each question before they can move on to the next page. This would violate participants' right to skip any questions they do not wish to answer.
- **Don't use "irb@roberts.edu."** In the "OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS" section (or ANY section), the contact name and email address should NOT be "irb@roberts.edu." (That address is for the IRB at Northeast Seminary). So, the contact information should be as it appears in the Sample Consent forms:
 - **OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:** If I have any questions about this study, I may contact the researcher, [[insert name of researcher and/or faculty member supervising this research with email address and/or phone](#)]. If I have questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact the Roberts Wesleyan University IRB Chair, Dr. Nicholas DiFonzo (difonzo_nicholas@roberts.edu).

Follow Instructions at the Beginning of the Application. The beginning of the Application reads as follows. Be sure to follow the highlighted instructions (applicants often ignore this):

To ensure your IRB application is complete, **please check each box to indicate that you have included the required documents with the application.** Depending on the nature of your document, you may not need all of the materials listed below. Carefully review the last page of this application for more details regarding these documents:

- This IRB application form
- The survey /interview questions
- The certificate of training on protection of human subjects
- The Adult Participant consent form
- The Participant Consent/Child Assent Form
- The Parent Consent Form
- The Preliminary Participant Checklist

- Documents from any outside organization stating approval to conduct research
- A faculty advisor statement (when the proposal is from a student) to supervise the research.

(last revised 5/21/2024)

(Please refer questions to Nicholas DiFonzo, Chair, RWU IRB: difonzo_nicholas@roberts.edu)