INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD POLICY

I. Policy Section

3.0 College Operations

II. Policy Subsection

3.1 Institutional Review Board Policy

III. Policy Statement

All persons who wish to conduct research involving human subjects at GRCC must complete the GRCC Institutional Research Board (IRB) process before commencing research. The GRCC IRB operates to determine and assure the protection of the rights, welfare, and well-being of human subjects involved in research, including research conducted or supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and other governmental agencies.

IV. Reason for the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a single, comprehensive standard of protection for human subjects of research as defined in 45 CFR Part 46 at Grand Rapids Community College and assure that investigators do not unduly put at risk or harm humans who are participants in research.

V. Entities Affected by This Policy

The information is intended for use by internal and external researchers/investigators, as well as IRB members, members of other GRCC committees, GRCC administrators, or others who are involved with GRCC research involving human subjects.

VI. Who Should Read This Policy

All GRCC faculty and staff as well as any other persons desiring to conduct research using GRCC faculty, staff, or students as research participants.

VII. Related Documents

A. GRCC Institutional Research Review Board Research application
B. GRCC Institutional Research Review Board Research Year-End Final Report
C. GRCC Institutional Review Board Research Amendment Request Form
D. 45 CFR Part 46
E. Grand Rapids Community College Written Public Summary of GRCC's Freedom of Information Act Procedures and Guidelines

VIII. Contacts

Policy Owner: Director of Institutional Research and College Data Officer

IX. Definitions:

A. Institutional Review Board: A committee established to review and approve research involving human subjects. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that all human subject research be conducted in accordance with all federal, institutional, and ethical guidelines.
B. Human subjects research: research that includes systematic investigation, contributes to general knowledge through design, and is often presented/published outside the College.
C. Primary investigator: lead investigator responsible for overall conduct of research. Every study must have at least a primary investigator.
D. Co-investigator: investigator who, alongside the primary investigator, contributes significantly to research development and execution.
E. Exempt research: research that qualifies for an exemption from the regulatory requirements of the Common Rule and does not require review from the IRB committee. This designation means that the research poses minimal to no risk to participants and meets at least one federally defined exemption category, as outlined in 45 CFR Part 46.104.
F. Expedited research: research that involves no more than minimal risk to research participants and, for that reason, requires approval to conduct.
G. Quorum: minimum number of members required to be present for the institution's research-related decisions or activities to be valid and official. For expedited or full committee reviews, this will be more than half of the committee members.

X. Procedures

All staff, student research investigators, principal investigators, or research participants are required to report to the Chair of the IRB Committee any of the following upon knowledge of:

A. Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others; or
B. Serious or continuing noncompliance with the federal regulations or requirements or determinations of the IRB.

Committee Composition and Expectations:

1. GRCC's IRB committee is co-chaired by the Director of Institutional Research and College Data Officer and a GRCC faculty member.
2. GRCC's IRB committee is made up of at least five members, including faculty and administrators from GRCC, as well as an external community member (not affiliated with the College). Individuals whose primary concerns are in scientific areas and those whose primary concerns are in non-scientific areas are represented on the committee.
3. Committee members must have a valid certificate for reviewing human subjects research submitted to the Director of Institutional Research and College Data Officer.
4. Membership must be confirmed at the start of the academic year. If the composition requirements are not met, applications will not be reviewed until resolved.
5. IRB committee will make efforts to maintain registration with OHRP.

Application Review:

1. Completed applications are reviewed by the IRB Co-chairs. Investigator(s) will be asked to provide additional or revised documentation if needed.
2. Co-chair decisions will be either a) denied/disapproved, b) exempt from review, or c) elevated to IRB committee review.
    a. Review by the IRB committee will take place as i) expedited, or ii) full committee review. IRB committee will either approve or deny/disapprove research.
        i. Expedited review involves application review by a proportion of the IRB committee assigned by one or both of the co-chairs that maintains quorum. Expedited reviews can be escalated to Full committee review if needed or be reduced to exempt status.
        ii. Full committee review is a comprehensive application review by all IRB committee members.
        iii. Decision outcomes will be carried by a majority vote.
3. The committee will provide an update to the investigator(s) within 4 weeks of submission which may contain additional timeline information depending on the decision made.

4. Approved research applications will undergo additional evaluation against federal, state, and local/college restrictions, procedures, and policies which may carry additional delays or requirements for the investigator(s).
5. The IRB committee reserves the right to suspend or terminate an approved research study. In the event that this action is taken, the IRB committee will notify appropriate institutional officials, the head of any department or agency conducting or supporting the research, any applicable regulatory body, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

Investigator Expectations:

1. External researchers must establish a GRCC sponsor for their research to ensure that the work benefits the college in some way.
2. Exempt research is valid for 3 years from the date of notification.
3. Research approved by the expedited or full IRB committee is valid for 1 year from the approval notification.
4. Amendment requests for exempt or approved research studies must be submitted to the IRB within the validity period. The committee will provide an update to the investigator(s) within 4 weeks of amendment submission. Changes should not be implemented until amendments are approved.
5. Final reports are required for expedited or full committee approved research. Final reports must be submitted to the IRB within 60 days of the end of the validity period.

XI. Forms

GRCC Research Proposal Application
GRCC Research Amendment Request Form
GRCC Research Year-End Report Form

XII. Effective Date

May, 2015

XIII. Policy History

Created - May, 2015
Reviewed - May, 2019
Updated - October, 2021
Updated - April, 2025

XIV. Next Review/Revision Date

April, 2029