



**Conducting research abroad**

When students are planning to conduct research abroad, they must submit documentation showing that they have established ties with a reputable institution or agency at the intended research site.

For all investigators, if an IRB exists at the site of your intended research (or nearby, such as a medical center), it is important for you to contact them to find out what documentation they may need from you before you begin your research. Sometimes IRBs will accept the approval of research using human subjects by another IRB, but investigators should never assume this is the case. Often--especially in developing nations--information about your research project should be shared with community leaders. Working with these leaders can help you to fine-tune your project so that you and your research team can work in harmony with the local population and contribute to the success of your study. And remember, in addition to gathering valuable data, your research project should include as a result the betterment of the subjects or community you are targeting. Please contact UCHS if you would like further information on IRBs abroad. □

**Are identities really kept private??**

UCHS often finds that investigators state on consent forms that subjects' identities will not be revealed for those who are video or audio taped. Usually they mean the names will not be revealed, because people's faces or voices can reveal their identities. Please keep this distinction in mind when drafting consent and assent forms. Precise language communicates more clearly. □

**Need to know if your students have passed the UCHS training?**

Did you know that you can check to see if your students have passed our online human subjects training program? Go to <http://www.osp.cornell.edu/hscompliance/quizsearch.cfm> and enter the names or e-mail addresses of your students. (Remember, though, if you enter e-mail addresses for the search, be sure to enter the entire address, not just the net ID--i.e., include the "@cornell.edu" part.) The resulting search will give you a list of individuals with those e-mail addresses (or last names) who have successfully completed our training program (received a score of 90% or better). □

**Accreditation process update**

UCHS recently hosted an outside reviewer to complete a preliminary evaluation of policies and procedures we use. We learned a great deal of valuable information that we intend to incorporate in the very near future into application forms and educational documents.

Please be sure to download new forms from the UCHS web site each time you submit a new proposal, renewal, or amendment. If you have older forms stored on your computer, please be advised that they will not be acceptable for submissions.

Twenty institutions have achieved accreditation of their human research protection programs, including five major academic institutions. Approximately 200 other institutions are in the accreditation pipeline. The National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other major federal funding sources are promoting voluntary accreditation. □

**Undergraduate class projects involving contact or interaction with identifiable human subjects**

Many undergraduate classes at Cornell assign students to tasks that require interaction with identifiable human subjects, such as practicing experimental research techniques, interviewing other students, conducting self-administered surveys, or analyzing data from subjects.

When the class involves undergraduates doing individual research projects, professors and lecturers have the option (which we strongly encourage) of applying for human subjects approval with one application rather than asking students to submit individual applications to UCHS for approval. The form you need to complete can be found at...(keep the same until). First, class assignments often do not fall under the federal definition of "research" outlined in the federal regulations. Second, we have observed that most professors structure the assignments so that research activities fall under categories that can be exempted from further review under federal regulations. Thus we can defer to professors and lecturers the oversight and management of these projects.

When you design your class and complete the application, please keep in mind the following cautions. We have offered these to many course instructors in the past:

- Students should take our online training program (you can check to see who has successfully completed it at



<http://www.osp.cornell.edu/hocompliance/quizzes/search.cfm>);

- Students should conduct anonymous surveys/ interviews (in which no names whatsoever are recorded) whenever possible;
- Data collection should NOT be about any illegal behaviors or highly sensitive issues;
- Subjects must be 18 or older and must *not* be incarcerated;
- If Cornell staff are to be included among the sample population, permission from Mary Opperman (VP for Human Resources) must be obtained before any contact with staff begins.
- UCHS has received complaints in the past from community agencies that are overwhelmed with student requests for names of people to interview, including local patients suffering from chronic and acute diseases. We ask that you limit such requests from your students.

**Try This:** One professor had her students complete the UCHS Initial Approval Request form to hand them in for her perusal/feedback. This gets the students to really think through their research design/plan, and helps keep them focused once they begin their projects.□

### Coding your data

The National Research Council's report "Protecting Participants and Facilitating Social and Behavioral Sciences Research" (2003) recommended that researchers adopt additional practices to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of their data. One of the issues addressed is the assignment of code numbers to subjects, among other precautions, to maintain data security. UCHS is now asking investigators to modify the way ID codes are assigned.

When coding your data for security purposes, do NOT use such things as initials, birth dates, parts of Social

Security numbers, etc., to create a composite code. These partial identifiers could allow knowledgeable readers to detect the identities of your subjects. Instead, assign your subjects' data completely random code numbers/letters that can in no way give clues to their identities.□

### Turnaround time on applications

As we approach summer, we at UCHS think it is timely to remind faculty and students of our estimated turnaround time on applications.

Reviews for UCHS are conducted by faculty members and Ithaca community members who volunteer their time to the university for this important function. They receive no release time from the university to serve on UCHS. Because of the scientific and technical knowledge required to review UCHS applications, they must be active practitioners of research, clinical medicine, or other professional fields. In other words, they are people just like you, not administrative support staff. They often work under time pressure to complete their UCHS reviews as well as perform the jobs for which they are paid.

The UCHS chair and her designated reviewers can, and often do, perform *expedited* reviews on an "emergency" basis for those who are in a hurry because of federal or other funding requirements. Those of you who submit protocols frequently are also aware that many protocols are turned around very quickly. However, this does not mean that every protocol can and should be treated as an emergency. The two-week turnaround time estimated for expedited reviews is a realistic estimate when university activities are at their height (at the beginning and the end of the semesters), during the summer, during holiday breaks, and when the UCHS chair and/or administrator are out of town.

Please plan well ahead when submitting your applications and renewals.□

### Have you taken the UCHS Survey yet?

If you have served as a subject in a study conducted by a Cornell student, staff or faculty member, we invite you to take our UCHS Survey. You probably saw our e-mail message about this study in early February, but if you lost it, here it is again:

The University Committee on Human Subjects (UCHS) is interested in hearing about the experiences of participants in Cornell-affiliated research studies. If you have participated in a Cornell study in the past two years (conducted by faculty, staff, or students), we invite you to complete our survey about your experience. All responses will be anonymous, so your identity as a respondent will not be revealed to us. The survey should only take a few minutes to complete (or more, at your discretion), and it will help UCHS make the Cornell research experience succeed for all of us. To access our survey now, please copy and paste into your web browser the following link: <http://www.osp.cornell.edu/Compliance/UCHS/survey.htm>.

This survey will be available at least through the end of the spring semester. Thank you.□

**Please note that UCHS has a new (but temporary) address:  
1162 Comstock Hall**