

SDSU IRB Policy

Determination of Generalizable Knowledge in Graduate Thesis/Dissertation Research

Approval Date

09-16-2025

Effective Date

09-16-2025

Last Revision Date

08-26-2025

Responsible Party

SDSU Research Support Services

Scope and Audience

This policy applies to all faculty advisors and their graduate conducting thesis or dissertation research or program evaluations involving human participants.

Additional Authority

N/A

Policy Purpose

To establish a clear process for evaluating graduate student thesis/dissertation research that may involve human participants, specifically when the student and faculty advisor assert that the research does **not** contribute to generalizable knowledge and therefore may not require IRB oversight.

Policy Statement

The IRB Application

- The following information must be included in the IRB submission:
 - ✓ **Research Purpose section of the Application:** A brief description of the research objectives, methodology, and intended audience or use of findings.
 - ✓ **Justification:** A rationale explaining why the findings will not be published, presented publicly, or otherwise disseminated in a way that contributes to generalizable knowledge.

Review Process

- The IRB will evaluate the submitted documentation to determine whether the project qualifies as **non-research** under federal definitions at 45 CFR 46.
- If the IRB concurs, no further IRB review is required.
- If the IRB determines that the project may contribute to generalizable knowledge, the student must submit a revised IRB application for review.

Responsibilities

- **Graduate Students:** Must consult with their faculty advisor and submit accurate documentation.
- **Faculty Advisors:** Must ensure that the determination is appropriate, support the student in preparing the IRB application, and attest to the accuracy of the application by signing off on the application in iRIS.
- **IRB:** Responsible for final determination and issuing review determination correspondence.

Frequently Asked Questions

Additional Information may be posted on the IRB webpage.

Related Information

- I. The San Diego State University Human Research Protection Program Standards and Practices