

IRB Approval for Use of Incentives to Recruit Students

IRB requirements are based upon national and institutional policy. The result is that while requirements across institutions are very similar, it is important to also be aware of local policy and practice. Search your institution's IRB website to understand what the policies and practices are at your institution.

Typically institutions include a section of the IRB proposal format that asks about whether you will offer compensation for participants and how you will recruit participants. Information about any plans you have to compensate students for participating should be included in both. It should also be included in the consent form.

Below is an example of questions related to providing incentives or compensation for participants. A similar question will probably be a part of your institution's IRB form:

Compensation Section from IRB (example taken from Penn State IRB):

Will compensation be offered to participants for their participation? Yes** No

***If YES, answer the following questions. This information also needs to be included in the consent form.*

i) *What type(s) of compensation will be offered? (Please check all that apply.)*

Type	Amount?
<input type="checkbox"/> Money	
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra/class credit	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	

ii) *If extra/class credit is being offered as compensation, an alternative to participating in the research must be offered. Describe the alternatives available for earning the extra/class credit.*

iii) *Describe how you will prevent or minimize coercion to participate.*

iv) *Will compensation be pro-rated if a participant withdraws early from the project?*

Yes** No N/A

***IF YES, describe how compensation will be pro-rated:*

Sample Language to Respond to Questions in a Recruitment Section & Consent Form:

"Participants will be recruited through [email, letters, in class, etc.]. As an incentive to participate, they will be offered the opportunity to [participate in a drawing, earn extra credit, etc.] The incentive will be fully explained in the consent form." (See additional sample language in the table below.)

Some Types of Compensation with Descriptions and Language:

In addition to basics of what the compensation is and how it will be awarded, the underlying concerns to address in the IRB are:

- Does the compensation amount to coercion in some way (e.g., if student doesn't participate she or he can't participate in another desirable activity; get extra credit, etc.)?
- Does the participant understand the exact parameters of the compensation (e.g., the amount of money or when the prize will be awarded)?

Note: This table contains suggested language only. Your institution may require changes or additional information. It's a good starting place and, since IRB regulations have become more stringent, the first application for IRB approval is often returned for fine tuning.. Treat it as a learning experience!

The table has two sections:

- Participation in Surveys, Focus Groups, etc for program activities
- Participation in Assessments Related to Formal Courses

I. Participation in Surveys, Focus Groups, etc.			
Type of Compensation	Description	Example of Language	Caution
Random drawings for cash prizes or for gifts	<p>Gifts from industry or t-shirts, cups, etc. from your own program or University.</p> <p>Note: If \$25 or more the SSN is needed for institutional reporting to the IRS. One way around this is to have, for example, five random drawings for \$40</p>	<p>In application: Participants will fill out forms with their names and social security numbers to automatically be entered into a drawing for prizes including [name of items to be awarded].</p> <p>In consent form: I understand that my name will be entered in to a drawing for [name of items to be awarded] and that the drawings will occur [randomly throughout the semester; on January 15; etc.] and that all participants will be notified of winners by [date]. I may choose to withdraw from the study without withdrawing from the drawing.</p>	<p>Amounts not commensurate with amount of time and work can be considered coercive (e.g. \$100 for a 5-minute survey may make a student feel that they have to take the survey because the money is so good.) In this case, you would offer a chance for a prize and explain the odds. "Participants may win \$500 but because of the expected number of participants the possibility of winning is only 1:100"</p> <p>In consent form: "I understand that my name will be entered in to a drawing for \$500 and that possibility of winning is 1:100. The drawings will occur [randomly throughout the semester; on January 15; etc.] and that all participants will be notified of winners by [date]."</p>
Gifts for each participant	Each participant receives an ice cream coupon, mug, etc.	<p>In application: Participants will be recruited through [email, letters, in class, etc.]. As an incentive to participate, each participant will receive a [coupon, small gift worth no more than \$xx, etc.] for participating in the survey.</p> <p>In consent form: I understand that I will receive xxx as an incentive for my participation in this survey and that I may choose to withdraw from the study without returning this incentive.</p>	

II. Participation in Assessments Related to Formal Courses			
Type of compensation	Description	Example of Language	Caution
Extra Credit in a Course	Each student who participates receives extra credit; students who choose not to participate have alternate method of earning extra credit	<p>In application (risk section): Students enrolled in [name of course or courses] will be asked to fill out the survey and will be offered extra credit commensurate with the time and effort required. Students not wishing to participate will be provided an alternate means of earning an equal amount of extra credit. The alternate means will require approximately the same time and effort as the time and effort required to fill out the survey. Possible examples of an alternative method for earning extra credit is [reading an article pertinent to the class and writing a brief critique for submission to the instructor.] The survey will be administered by [name of person], who will also explain the IRB process and the consent procedures.</p> <p>If you are the instructor: Students enrolled in [name of course or courses] will be asked to fill out the survey and will be offered extra credit commensurate with the time and effort required. Students not wishing to participate will be provided an alternate means of earning an equal amount of extra credit. The alternate means will require approximately the same time and effort as the time and effort required to fill out the survey. Possible examples of an alternative method for earning extra credit is [reading an article pertinent to the class and writing a brief critique for submission to the instructor.] The informed consent form will be distributed by [name of person not involved in class] and held by that person until the class is completed. The instructors will have no access to information on who participated in the survey until after grades have been turned in at the end of the semester. The survey will be administered by [name of person], who will also explain the IRB process and the consent procedures.</p> <p>In consent form: It is important for you to know that your participation is WHOLLY VOLUNTARY. There is no penalty for non-participation. A choice to not be included in the research activities will not affect your grade in any way. If you wish to not participate but to receive extra credit, your instructor will provide an alternative means of earning extra credit commensurate with the time and effort required to complete the survey.</p> <p>When you are the instructor, add: Your participation or non-participation will not be known to your instructors until after grades are assigned and will not adversely impact your grade or your treatment in the class</p>	<p>Students may feel that they must participate in order to earn extra credit. It is essential to offer alternative means of earning extra credit commensurate with the time and effort required to complete the survey.</p> <p>If someone not involved in the study is an instructor, the instructor simply has you or a member of your team come in and explain the IRB, the consent form and administer the survey</p> <p>If you are the instructor, you must have someone not involved in the class come in to administer the consent form and instrument.</p>

Type of compensation	Description	Example of Language	Caution
No compensation	Participation in the survey is a part of a course without any compensation or extra credit; students who do wish to participate in the study, must still complete the survey, the results of which are then not included in the study	<p>In application (risk section): Students enrolled in [name of course or courses] will be asked to fill out the survey as a part of the course activities. All students will have to complete the survey but students may choose to not have their information used for research purposes. This will be spelled out in the consent form. The survey will be administered by [name of person], who will also explain the IRB process and the consent procedures.</p> <p>If you are the instructor: Students enrolled in [name of course or courses] will be asked to fill out the survey as a part of the course activities. All students will have to complete the survey but students may choose to not have their information used for research purposes. This will be spelled out in the consent form. The informed consent form will be distributed by [name of person not involved in class] and held by that person until the class is completed. The instructors will have no access to information on who participated in the survey until after grades have been turned in at the end of the semester. The survey will be administered by [name of person], who will also explain the IRB process and the consent procedures.</p> <p>In consent form: It is important for you to know that your participation is WHOLLY VOLUNTARY. There is no penalty for non-participation. While all students enrolled in the class are required to complete the survey as a part of the class activities you may choose to not have your survey included in the research project. A choice to not be included in the research activities will not affect your grade in any way.</p> <p>When you are the instructor, add: Your participation or non-participation will not be known to your instructors until after grades are assigned and will not adversely impact your grade or your treatment in the class.</p>	Students may feel that they must participate in order to earn a good grade in the class. It is essential to emphasize that participation will not affect the grade. You may, however, require them to fill out the survey and give them the option of not having it used in the research.