

GUIDANCE 35

GUIDANCE FOR IRB REQUIREMENTS FOR SELF-STUDY RESEARCH PROJECTS

Purpose

This guidance defines self-study research methodologies and details the requirement for researchers to submit their self-study research project to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review prior to data collection.

Definitions

Self-Study: Self-study research methodologies require the researcher to systematically self-reflect, analyze, and write about their lived experiences in narrative format to better understand the phenomena under study. Examples of self-study methodologies include, but are not limited to auto-ethnography, narrative inquiry, self-reflection, and life history.

Guidance

Self-study research may be subject to the Common Rule ([45 CFR 46](#)) if it involves a “systematic investigation... designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge”. While self-study methodologies generally take place in natural settings, these research projects may require review by the IRB to assure the rights and welfare of human subject participants are protected.

When conducting self-study research, individuals or groups of people besides the primary researcher may intentionally or unintentionally become part of the study, particularly if conversations are audio or video recorded. During the course of conducting a self-study, information and data collected about individuals or groups of people may meet the federal definition of human subjects research.

Self-study research projects are reviewed on a case-by-case basis due to the complexity and considerable variables. IRB is the only Rowan University institutional body authorized to make the determination that a research study does *not* involve human subject participants. Researchers using self-study as a research methodology must submit to IRB *prior to data collection*.

Researchers should submit to the Rowan IRB if:

- A. A student researcher is conducting self-study research as part of their thesis/dissertation (See [Student Self-Study Research](#)), or;
- B. The research includes any of the following:
 - data collected via an interaction with an individual (emails, interviews and/or surveys);
 - intervention with an individual;
 - manipulation of an individual’s environment;
 - notes, memos and articles and data collected that has identifiable information about individuals, observational data collected about individuals;
 - interview/observational data collected in an environment and/or location where the observed individual expects privacy (for example, at an individual’s home or in a clinical or office setting);
 - any data recorded about the researcher that includes information and data about other individuals (for example, a researcher writes down notes or collects articles/documents/emails about themselves but also writes notes about other individuals or articles/documents/emails have other individuals’ information, such as name or email address).

Students who have questions regarding whether their research activities should be submitted to IRB should contact their research advisor and [Rowan IRB](#).