How to Avoid Common IRB Application Mistakes

This document provides directions in writing your research proposal to be submitted to IRBNet. Common proposal issues are outlined for each section of the proposal. Adherence to the recommendations below may result in a quicker review of your proposal.

Common Issue	IRB Recommendations
Project Title	
	The project title in an IRB application should be unique and clearly reflect the focus of your research. It should be the same on all forms. Simply putting *My Thesis* or *My Dissertation* is not acceptable.
Study Objectives	
Insufficient attention to the details surrounding the study objectives.	Be sure to include defining the major constructs measured in your study and detailing the hypothesis and/or research questions to be examined. *Example: Not explaining what a literacy coach does or not describing what transactional leadership means.*
Jargon is used to describe the purpose of the research.	Study objectives should be described in language understandable to a non-expert. Remember to clearly identify acronyms that may be prevalent in your discipline that others may not know. *Example: The purpose of this study is to examine the role of IPT in relationship satisfaction.*
Research Participants	
Insufficient detail surrounding participant characteristics.	The proposal does not provide the goal number of participants, and does not identify the organization, corporation, business, school, etc. from which participants will be drawn.
Recruitment/Selection	
Insufficient attention to the details surrounding participant recruitment.	Describe in detail how and where you will recruit participants. All recruitment materials must be included in your proposal. You may need to provide documentation of permission to access the sample (e.g., supervisor approval, school district approval, etc.).
No acknowledgement of potential conflicts of interests.	If the researcher has a dual role within the organization, school, institution, business, etc., in which participants will be drawn, then potential conflicts of interest must be explained. The researcher must describe how that conflict is being minimized through recruitment techniques (e.g., a different person is recruiting participants) or is not a risk to participants (e.g., a researcher has no direct supervision over the participant pool) or data collection (e.g., all anonymous data).

Obtaining Consent	
Consent Section	This section describes the process of gaining participants' consent. Do simply insert a consent form into the text box (consent forms are submitted separately). Instead describe in detail how consent forms will be distributed and explained or how they will be accessed by participants.
Insufficient detail and missing information from the **consent form.**	All the elements of consent must be included in the consent form. IRB recommends using the consent form templates provided through our website or IRBNet to ensure that you have provided all necessary information.
Inappropriate language or too much unnecessary information.	Descriptions of the research should not be overly technical to ensure that all participants understand why the project is being conducted and the goals. For procedure, be sure to focus only on what participants will be asked to do, not focusing on what the research process will be like (e.g., coding data, analyzing statistics, etc.).
Research Procedures	
Insufficient attention to the details surrounding the research procedures.	Explain precisely what participants will do or have done to them, including where the study will be conducted. If not on the Edgewood campus, explain the nature of your cooperative arrangement and attach all appropriate forms.
Risks	
Insufficient recognition of potential risks to participants.	Even minimal risks, such as discomfort answering questions, must be identified and included on the consent form. • *Example: Risks also have to be viewed within the context of the proposal. If the researcher has a conflict of interest (e.g., works for the business where participants are being drawn) and is evaluating the business in terms of employee satisfaction, quality of work, etc., then risk is increased for participants. This increased risk should be clear to participants*.
Benefits	
Not stating that there are not any direct benefits.	Most research conducted at Edgewood does not have direct benefits. If your study does not, it is acceptable (and recommended) to simple state, "there are not any direct benefits."
Going beyond study parameters regarding the indirect benefits	Some research may result in progress for literature, have an impact on a school district, change business practices, etc. But often research will not have a tangible impact on everyday life for participants and researchers should be cautious in highlighting the indirect benefits of participating.

Confidentiality	
Anonymity and confidentiality confused.	All research should be confidential (where information provided to researchers is kept private and secure) but not all research is anonymous (where even the researchers do not know who participated). Anonymous data results in less risk for participants and should be clearly conveyed.
IRBNet issues	
No "sign off" from the advisor (officially via the IRBNet system).	All advisors must have their own IRBNet account in order to "sign" their student's project. All signatures for IRB are now electronic through the IRBNet system. All projects must be "signed" by the researchers and the advisor before being submitted to IRB.
Uploaded documents cannot be opened.	Be sure to submit either pdfs or ideally Microsoft Word documents. Other document types may not be able to be opened easily and could result in delays in reviewing the project.
All documentation uploaded as a single file.	The IRBNet system allows for labeling of files (e.g., proposal, consent, etc.) so all associated documents should be uploaded separately and appropriately labeled.
Following revisions, did not mark "revisions complete".	Be sure that once you complete revisions, you click "revisions complete" because this will send a notification to the IRB Administrator that your proposal is ready to be checked and approved. Clicking this button then locks your project signaling it is ready for review. If it is not clicked, then no notification is sent.
General Issues	
Typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors.	Please check all documents for typos and other grammar mistakes. Errors like this will slow the review process slightly as it will take longer for reviewers to fully understand the project.
Did not make all of the revisions across documents as requested.	It is important for researchers to double-check that when changes are made to the procedure, that those changes are carried forward to all other necessary documents.
Proposals submitted without enough lead time before research is planned to start.	IRB recommends working with your advisor to determine the lead time needed to submit your research proposal. IRB cannot guarantee a specific turn-around time as length of review time differs by proposal due to individual factors such as risk level, complexity of the study, quality of the proposal materials, time of the semester, etc.
Confusing file names	Ideally for ease of reviewing, files would be named very clearly using the following format: type of document, name of researcher: i.e., consent_Smith, proposal Smith, survey Smith.
Not clearly organizing and identifying attachments.	When referring to other documents in your proposal, please then refer to the document by the name of the file. • *Example: All participants will be sent an email outlining the study (see recruitment_Smith).*