



External Research Application Resource Guide

Office of Program Evaluation
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Purpose of the External Research Application Resource Guide

The purpose of this Research Application Resource Guide is to provide researchers information about the research application and approval process in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). The division is committed to quality research being conducted in the school district.

The Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) recommends that applicants read School Board Policy 1475.3 (pending School Board approval) and Regulation 1475.4 (revised June 2017) prior to reading the resource guide. The policy describes the requirements for conducting research studies and data collection efforts in the division, and the regulation provides guidance regarding the review and approval process.

OPE monitors data collection and research efforts conducted in FCPS to comply with relevant policies and regulations. The division places great trust in research applicants to maintain the highest standards for research and to comply with policies and regulations as well as the conditions of approval. In June 2017, Policy 1475.3 and Regulation 1475.4 were updated to regulate both external data collection overseen by the Research Screening process and internal survey data collection overseen by the Internal Survey Advisory Committee (ISAC). In addition, Regulation 1475.4 was updated to provide greater specificity regarding informed consent, data collection windows, and requirements for review of data collection related to sensitive topics. This resource guide will provide guidance regarding the research review process. Specifically, this resource guide was developed to:

- clarify the approval process for collecting data in FCPS;
- provide information about the requirements for conducting research in FCPS; and
- outline the structure and jurisdiction of each research screening committee and procedure used for review and approval.

The intended audience of the resource guide includes academic and research staff, students, independent research agencies, employees of FCPS (conducting research outside of their job-related responsibilities), and other members of the community wishing to conduct research in FCPS.

This resource guide is divided into three parts and provides detailed information about the procedures for applying to each research committee.

- **Part I** provides an overview of the application and review process to prospective applicants.
- **Part II** goes into greater detail about the process for each of the three committees: Division Research Screening Committee (DRSC), School Research Screening Committee (SRSC), and Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC).
- The **Glossary** provides definitions of commonly used terms.

We welcome your interest in FCPS and look forward to reviewing your completed application. If research applicants have additional questions upon reading this Research Application Resource Guide, please direct inquiries to OPE at (571) 423-1430 or email ExternalResearchApproval@fcps.edu.

Part I – Research Screening Overview

A. General Information for Applicants

Why is there a process to review and approve external research?

FCPS reviews research requests to protect student and staff time, to ensure all federal, state, and local laws and FCPS policies are followed, and to ensure there is benefit to FCPS.

Which external research studies require approval?

The following types of research activities require approval:

- Surveying, observing, or conducting focus groups or individual interviews with students, parents, teachers, administrators, or other staff members;
- Requesting personally identifiable student information, personally identifiable personnel information, or other records held by the school division that are protected from disclosure under federal law, Virginia law, or school division policies or regulations; and
- Using FCPS resources (staff, sites) to recruit participants for external research projects.

What type of research is not allowed?

The following research types are not allowed:

- Studies to fulfill undergraduate- or master's-level course requirements by individuals who are not FCPS employees;
- Studies that involve greater than minimal risk; and
- Testing of a product for commercial purposes not related with the FCPS mission to educate children.

Which studies are exempt from approval?

The following types of studies are exempt from approval by the External Research Screening Committee but may be subject to screening by the Internal Survey Review Committee:

- FCPS task forces, review groups, and committees gathering, having access to, or using data that are inherently required and customarily used in the discharge of their responsibilities and functions;
- Data-gathering procedures, tests, or other data accessing forms that FCPS teachers develop and use to assess their assigned students' educational status and growth;
- Classroom work conducted by FCPS students in their schools;
- Information requested from Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs), and school-related organizations directly from parent members. However, data collection activities directed toward FCPS staff members or students are subject to Regulation 1475.4; and
- Studies using publicly available FCPS data.

Who can apply and to which research committee?

External Parties are individuals desiring to collect or obtain data in part or in full for their own use. FCPS employees are considered external parties when data is collected by or released to them for a reason other than the fulfillment of job responsibilities, e.g., as part of coursework for a graduate degree. FCPS students

are considered external parties when they collect or request the release of data from or about other FCPS students, staff, parents, volunteers, or community members.

Internal Parties are FCPS staff engaged in data collection as part of their job responsibilities or designees contracted by FCPS to collect data for FCPS' exclusive use.

The following table directs specific persons to the appropriate review committee. Descriptions of each review committee follows the table.

Who	External Research Screening Committees			Internal Survey Advisory Committee ISAC	No formal review process; Typically Department Director
	<u>Division RSC</u>	<u>School RSC</u>	<u>Student RSC</u>		
External Individuals or Organizations	X				
Teacher (for own purpose-multiple sites)	X				
Teacher (job related or own purpose at a single site)		X any data collection			
Central Office Staff (non-job related purpose)	X				
Central Office Staff (job related)				X surveys only	X focus groups, interviews, etc.
Student (own purpose)			X		
Student (coursework/newspaper, etc.)		X			

There are three research committees in place to review external research requests: Division Research Screening Committee (DRSC), School Research Screening Committee (SRSC), and the Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC). These committees use common standards for review and approval of research requests.

- The **Division Research Screening Committee (DRSC)** reviews requests from all non-FCPS individuals or organizations (except as defined under the SRSC below), all dissertation candidates, and FCPS employees proposing studies for a master's thesis or research projects that involve more than one site.
- The **School Research Screening Committee (SRSC)** reviews requests from FCPS employees proposing studies for master's theses or course assignments (dissertations excluded) at a single school, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) proposing research at a single school, and school-affiliated organizations conducting research in the FCPS schools with which they are associated.
- The **Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC)** reviews research proposals involving human participants from FCPS, students conducting research for local, regional, state, or international science competitions, and non-science fair related projects that involve FCPS staff or students as participants or the use of the FCPS name or data.

In addition to the three research review committees, there is a committee to review surveys administered by FCPS. **The Internal Survey Advisory Committee (ISAC)** is a committee solely focused on reviewing surveys conducted by FCPS staff for their job. A description of the role and responsibility of ISAC is provided on the ISAC intranet page linked [here](#). (This document is available only within FCPS.)

For internal staff wanting to collect data beyond surveys, there is no formal review process at the division

level. However, each department may have established their own approval processes and procedures to ensure all data collection is relevant, well designed, and will provide greater benefit than demand on participants.

B. Considerations for Applying and Approval

What are some practical considerations?

In advance of submitting an application, researchers should be aware of the following practical considerations by reviewing the factors listed below as these factors are considered by FCPS prior to moving an application forward. In addition, researchers should be far enough along in their training to understand how to develop a research question and design an appropriate study to answer the question without guidance from OPE staff.

- Interference with school instruction and operations must be kept to a minimum;
- FCPS reserves the right to charge fees at any time for data requests not covered by the Freedom of Information Act. Research applicants will be notified of the cost before it is incurred. (See Part III of the Data Agreement for more details.);
- Research applicants may request to do research with specific staff members or schools, and effort will be made to honor these preferences;
- FCPS reserves the right to have blackout windows such as during Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Standards of Learning (SOL) Testing. Please consult FCPS' website for blackout dates; and
- FCPS staff and its employees cannot provide endorsements for products.

What criteria are used to screen research applications?

The committees consider each of the following areas:

- **Relevance** – The relevance and utility of the collected information for informing division plans, goals, priorities, commitments, or specific interests;
- **Technical Adequacy** – The technical adequacy of the data collection design and instruments, as well as the feasibility, and the appropriateness of the data collection activities in a public school setting;
- **Demand** – The minimizing of time demands on respondents for participating in data collection activities, as well as the time demands for staff in overseeing, and supporting data collection activities;
- **Legal, Ethical, and Political Considerations** – Adherence to legal requirements, ethical aspects of data collection and reporting, and potential political consequences of a decision to approve or deny a proposal; and
- **Benefit to FCPS** - a specific benefit to FCPS for participating in the study. This should be in the form of a specific FCPS report or information for FCPS to make decisions or take action to improve conditions for teaching and learning in FCPS.

While each of these areas are rated separately, a summative judgment is reached by weighing the potential benefit to FCPS against the demand of the study. Relevance and technical adequacy can be used to infer potential benefit to FCPS if the application does not address this directly. Therefore, studies with high demand must provide very high specific benefit to the division to be approved. Studies with low potential benefit to the division must have little to no demand on the division to be approved.

What elements are required on consent forms for studies in FCPS?

Informed consent is required for all data collection in FCPS. The details of what is required in the informed

consent process varies as described below. The only exception to the informed consent requirement is for the release of anonymous FCPS data except in the case of sensitive topics ([found here](#)).

The following elements of informed consent must be provided in writing to participants (*applications not using the proper form of consent will be rejected*):

- Purpose of the study
- What participants will do in the study
- Time requirements
- Risks/Benefits
- Privacy/Confidentiality
 - Data linked with identifying information (if applicable)
 - Anonymous data (if applicable)
 - Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (if applicable)
- Voluntary participation
 - Right to withdraw from the study
 - How to withdraw from the study
- Compensation/payment (if applicable)
- Contact information for questions about the study

FCPS requires active consent for data collection and release of protected data to external parties when the data identifies individual students, parents, or staff. Typically, this takes the form of a signed consent form or opt-in process (e.g., parents return a form indicating their child may participate). FCPS reserves the right to require active consent even if it is not required by state code or has been waived by an Institutional Review Board (IRB).

What are the Special Consent Requirements for Research Involving Student Participants?

Data collection and research involving students (children under 18 years of age who are not emancipated minors) by external parties require active consent from a parent or legal guardian when personal identifying information is collected or requested. If data collection procedures ensure anonymity and do not collect information on sensitive topics, passive consent from parents may be permitted in lieu of active consent.

In addition to parent consent, researchers shall obtain child assent in cases where students have the capacity to understand the proposed research. Child assent must explain the required informed consent elements described above to students but should use language appropriate for the student's age/developmental level. In addition, child assent procedures must also inform students that parents have given permission for participation and that the student may decide for him or herself whether to participate.

Any release of individually identifiable information requires active written consent from the student's parent/guardian. Consent forms must include a full description of what the student will be asked to do, the potential risks and benefits of participation, and/or any information about the student that the researcher plans to obtain. Record data should be specifically listed on consent forms. For example, do not say demographic data; instead, specify race/ethnicity, gender, English proficiency, free-reduced price lunch status, and disability status. FCPS will not provide individually identifiable information that is not explicitly stated on the consent form. Personnel records of school staff are confidential, and information cannot be released from these records except in certain conditions and formats. Consent forms must be collected before the data collection is initiated. The legal guidelines on which data release procedures are based and drawn are from the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CRF Part 99).

What are the Consent Requirements when the Data Collection Involves Sensitive Topics?

Sensitive topics are:

- political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parents;
- mental health information including psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
- sexual behavior, attitudes or any other sexual information (not permitted for grade 6 and under);
- illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and clergy;
- religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parents;
- income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program);
- medical information;
- information on student health risk behaviors pursuant to § 32.1-73.8; and
- information on controlled substance related to alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs, or controlled substances.

External parties collecting data on sensitive topics, as described in this section, shall obtain active parent consent, even if responses are anonymous.

FCPS staff and students collecting data (e.g., surveys, focus groups, interviews) on sensitive topics shall notify their principal/director in advance of data collection.

The following procedures must be followed for any data collection involving sensitive topics. Parents/guardians shall be notified 30 days prior to administration of the study and shall have the right to inspect data collection instruments as well as any additional materials used in connection with the data collection activity. In addition, parents/guardians shall be informed about the following:

- how to decline their child's participation
- the nature and types of questions that will be asked
- the purpose and age appropriateness of the survey
- how the information collected will be used and who will have access
- how student privacy will be addressed
- whether and how the findings will be disclosed

Note: The Superintendent reserves the right to deem other topics as sensitive in nature and subject to these requirements.

C. Researcher Responsibilities

If you have submitted a request that has been approved, the following sections will become relevant to you when completing your data collection.

What happens after a research request has been approved?

Once approval is granted, a researcher will be notified. Researchers may not begin data collection until they contact the FCPS administrative sponsor (for the DRSC), the principal/or designee (for the SRSC), or the sponsoring teacher (for the SSRC).

What are the responsibilities of the researcher?

The researcher assumes the responsibility for conducting useful and high-quality research. Upon granting

approval to conduct research in FCPS, OPE expects all researchers to:

- Abide by all FCPS policies and regulations.
- Follow the procedures as approved in the application and modify procedures and instruments only with prior approval from the appropriate research screening committee. If data collection procedures or instruments change, the researcher must notify the appropriate review committee (see Part II for details).
- Conduct and complete the research study within the approved timeline and meet any stipulations accompanying the letter of approval.
 - For division research screening applications, if data collection is anticipated to go beyond the approved timeline but within the same school year, the researcher must file a Modification Request Form.
 - For division research screening applications, if data collection is anticipated to go beyond the approved timeline and will need to continue into subsequent school years to be completed, the researcher must reapply for approval for the new school year. To reapply the researcher will submit a Division Research Screening Application.
 - For school research screening applications, if data collection is anticipated to go beyond the approved timeline but within the same school year, the researcher must inform the principal in writing (hard copy or email is acceptable) of the request for changes in data collection timelines.
 - For school research screening applications, if data collection is anticipated to go beyond the approved timeline and will need to continue into subsequent school years to be completed, the researcher must reapply for approval for the new school year. To reapply the researcher will submit a School Research Screening application
- Work closely with the FCPS sponsor and keep this person informed of the status of the research study, including any changes to methodology from the approved application.
 - For division research screening applications, if there are changes to methodology from the approved application, the researcher must file a Modification Request Form.
 - For school research screening applications, if there are changes to methodology from the approved application, the researcher must inform the principal in writing (hard copy or email is acceptable) of the request for changes.
- Share a copy of the final study report with the sponsor and, where applicable, OPE.
- Comply with general standards of best practices in conducting research as outlined by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) at http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/13127_Standards_from_AERA.pdf.

OPE expects that all researchers will **not** identify or include identifiable characteristics of schools or of the school division without authorization from the Superintendent or designee. OPE expects that all researchers will **not** publish any information that could be used to identify individual students or employees of the school system without authorization from the individual and the Superintendent or designee.

What about the sharing of the results?

FCPS requires researchers to provide results of the study as described in their research application to the committee that reviewed the application and to the sponsor (for DRSC). If no reports or results of the study are shared with FCPS, there is no benefit to the school division. Once a researcher has established that his or her studies provide no benefit to the school division, this will be taken into consideration if the researcher applies to conduct additional studies in the future.

D. Summary

After reading the previous sections, a research applicant may want to consider the following questions prior to submitting a [research application](#):

- Are you eligible to conduct research in FCPS?
- Is this research topic valuable to FCPS?
- Do you have a FCPS sponsor?
- Have you designed a study to minimize the impact of participants' time?
- Have you designed a study that avoids blackout dates?
- Does your research project involve sensitive topics?
- Does your study involve greater than minimal risk?

OPE fields many research requests each year. We ask that you visit [OPE's Research Approval Process webpage](#) for answers to some of your initial questions. You should also review Policy 1475.3 and Regulation 1475.4 linked from our website prior to reaching out to staff. If you have questions after reviewing the website, policies, and regulations, you may direct questions to ExternalResearchApproval@fcps.edu. Inquiries will be responded to in the order they are received.

Part II – Research Screening Committees

Part I reviewed general information applicable for research applicants. Part II reviews the various processes established by OPE in consultation with Instructional Services, the Science Office, and region offices to review different types of research requests. This part is divided into three sections and describes the approval process for research requests being reviewed by the Division Research Screening Committee (DRSC), School Research Screening Committee (SRSC), and the Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC).

A. Division Research Screening Committee (DRSC)

What is the DRSC?

The DRSC is a division-level committee composed of a chair and additional FCPS staff, both central- and school-based, called upon for expertise in areas relevant to the study. The DRSC is overseen by OPE and screens requests from:

- Non-FCPS employees, for-profit and not-for-profit research organizations, local/state/federal agencies (for non-mandated data collection), national study groups, doctoral candidates, and other external researchers; and
- FCPS employees proposing studies for (a) doctoral dissertations; (b) master's theses or personal research projects that involve more than one school site; or (c) dissemination of results beyond FCPS.

What is the process?

Prior to submission, the applicant must identify an FCPS sponsor and secure a sponsorship agreement. The applicant should then complete the Division Research Screening Application and submit it to the committee. After submission, the DRSC chair screens the application and assembles the review committee based on the nature of the application. Research requests reviewed by the DRSC are reviewed in the order in which they are received. The review process is usually completed within four to six weeks of submission unless substantial problems are encountered with the proposed study's methodology. If other departments are called upon (e.g., Department of Information Technology, Office of Student Testing, or legal counsel) for input regarding any of the proposed methodology or consent procedures, the review could take an additional two weeks.

The review process does not begin until completed applications are received by OPE. If OPE has not received a sponsorship agreement, consent forms, the approval of the University Institutional Review Board, and payment of the administrative fee, the review process cannot begin. If missing components

are requested but not received within 10 business days, the research application will be rejected. FCPS cannot guarantee a faster review under special circumstances, although we will make every effort to process requests swiftly. We strongly encourage submission of research requests at least 90 days in advance of planned commencement of proposed research.

Where can I find the research application?

Applicants to the DRSC should complete the [Division Research Screening Committee Application](#).

What are the research application requirements?

Researchers must submit a research request in writing. The research request should include the following:

- Application and all supporting documents,
- Administrative fee, and
- Sponsorship agreement.

Who can serve as a sponsor?

A principal may be a sponsor if research is limited to one school. For all other research involving multiple schools or central office staff, the sponsors must be central office directors or assistant superintendents. The researcher will work closely with the FCPS sponsor and keep this person informed of the status of the research study.

What are the responsibilities of the sponsor?

Before the submission of the application the sponsor will work with the researcher to insure that the application reflects a study worthy of FCPS' involvement, to provide justification for the use of FCPS resources, and to sign and return documentation of their intent to sponsor the study. During the review, the sponsor works with the researcher to identify participating schools and timelines for data collection. In the event of an approval, sponsors serve as liaisons between researchers and FCPS participants, brainstorm logistical issues, check in with the researcher to monitor compliance, and review the researcher's written products.

How do I find a sponsor?

To locate an appropriate sponsor, research applicants should focus on three factors:

- 1) **Position level** – The sponsor must be in an appropriate position to sponsor the research. If the research is conducted at a single school, the principal at the school may serve as the sponsor. If the research is being conducted at more than one school, the sponsor must be a central office staff member at the rank of director or assistant superintendent.
- 2) **Area of Expertise** – The sponsor should be in a position to understand how the research will benefit FCPS and whether it will conflict with ongoing FCPS initiatives. Consequently, researchers should approach potential sponsors that have expertise in the subject area of the research or oversee departments that could potentially benefit from the research.
- 3) **Willingness** – The sponsor must express a willingness to review the proposed research, to submit the necessary forms to the research screening committee, to insure that the researcher complies with FCPS policies, and to communicate with the relevant departments, offices, or schools.

If the applicant is able to identify an appropriate sponsor and contact information, the applicant should contact the staff member to gauge his or her willingness to be a sponsor. The sponsor must submit the Sponsor Commitment Form directly to the DRSC to indicate their support for the proposed study. The committee will not review an application until the sponsor has emailed a Sponsor Commitment Form to

ExternalResearchApproval@fcps.edu.

If you need assistance in finding a sponsor, please complete the Division Research Screening Committee Application, indicate on page 3 of the application that you do not have a sponsor, and email the completed application and supporting materials to ExternalResearchApproval@fcps.edu. The Chair will attempt to identify an appropriate sponsor. If the Chair cannot identify a sponsor within 10 business days, the research application will be rejected.

Are there fees for an application that is reviewed by the DRSC?

Yes, a non-refundable administrative fee of \$25 for processing the application, checking the completeness of the submission, and communicating with the researcher is required. If the submitted application is incomplete, the researcher has 10 business days to provide the necessary documents and submit the application fee. If the researcher does not complete the application within 10 business days, OPE will deny the application. The 10 business day completion window starts on the day that OPE first communicates with the researcher about the status of the partially completed application (known as the Phase I contact).

If the Research Screening Committee rejects an application, no additional administrative fee will be assessed for the first resubmission within three months of the same school year. In addition, administrative fees will be charged for the review of modification requests conducted within the same school year.

Are there administrative fee waivers?

FCPS and DRSC set the rules for requesting a fee waiver or a reduction in fees under certain limited circumstances (e.g., studies funded by internal sources, nonprofit community organizations, or government agencies). If the researcher is seeking a fee waiver, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide detailed information to support the request. The DRSC chair will decide whether the waiver should be granted.

What happens if my research request involves a secondary data request?

Requests that require one or more hours of staff time will incur a \$50 hourly fee for the data request. As part of the review, the DRSC chair will contact the researcher to work out the details and provide an estimate of how much the data request will cost in advance. If the researcher agrees to pay the estimate, a data request invoice will be prepared outlining the services provided, with total hours and charges. If there are additional data requests or data analysis requirements, a memorandum of understanding called a Data Agreement will be created and the anticipated cost to complete the data provision will be provided.

What are common reasons for applications to be rejected?

Common reasons for application rejection are:

- Incomplete application (missing supporting documents)
- Lack of sponsorship
- Improper form of consent proposed or consent forms missing required elements
- Data collection proposed during black out window
- Legal, ethical, or political concerns
- Anticipated demand outweighs potential benefit
- Little to no benefits due to methodological concerns
- Little to no benefits due to lack of relevance to division strategic priorities

What happens if my research request is denied?

The DRSC has an appeals process. Please email ExternalResearchApproval@fcps.edu for additional details.

What are some considerations following approval?

Research conducted on accepted proposals must occur within the approved research window. Researchers must request a modification for approved research proposals that were not initiated and actively underway or completed within the approved research window in the same school year. If time has passed such that the research would need to be conducted in the following school year, the researcher must submit a new application for that school year.

Researchers are responsible for notifying the appropriate research committee of any changes made to the original proposal. The authorization to conduct research may be revoked at any time based on procedural violations, ethical issues, a change of interest in research participants or the school division, or other good cause.

For multi-year projects, researchers must submit a new Division Research Screening Application each school year. Approval is granted for one school year at a time.

B. School Research Screening Committee (SRSC)

What is the SRSC?

The committee is chaired by the principal or an administrative designee and may include up to two other staff members; however, the chair has the option of being the sole reviewer for an application.

This committee processes requests involving one school from:

- a. FCPS employees who are proposing studies for master's theses, coursework, or research projects at a single school;
- b. PTAs and PTSAs proposing research at a single school;
- c. Groups and school-related organizations conducting research in the school in FCPS with which they are affiliated;
- d. Students gathering data via surveys, interviews, or focus groups as part of a classroom assignment, school newspaper article, student government inquiry, or for any other purpose; and
- e. Teachers gathering data on sensitive topics from students via surveys, interviews, or focus groups as part of the instructional program or for any other purpose.

The chair may also call upon central office staff to serve on the committee or transfer the request to the DRSC. The SRSC reviews applications for conducting research in order to allow access to the school while safeguarding the educational process. The committee reviews all applications using the established FCPS criteria described in Part I, Section A.

When the study involves sensitive topics, the SRSC must consult with the DRSC chair during the review process before a decision is rendered. If a request to this committee requires the release of protected identifiable data, the committee must refer the request to the DRSC.

What is the review process?

The review process is overseen by the chair (principal or a designee). After all research materials have been received, the chair and committee members:

- review the proposal to see whether it meets the criteria and policy guidelines for research in the school;
- communicate with educators in the school whose responsibility will be affected by the proposed research; and
- make a recommendation to: (a) approve the research as proposed, (b) approve the research

contingent on suggested procedural changes, or (c) deny approval to conduct the proposed research in the school.

Where can I find the research application?

Applicants should complete the [Application for Approval of School Research Proposals](#). (This document is available only within FCPS.) The signed application and supporting materials (e.g., copies of consent forms and instruments) should be submitted to the SRSC chair at the school.

What criteria are applied by the SRSC when reviewing applications?

Research applications are reviewed with respect to the school's goals and mission of ensuring success for each student. All research conducted in FCPS must:

- protect the rights of confidentiality and the privacy of staff, students, and parents/guardians;
- not interfere with instructional time to the detriment of student learning;
- support continuous school system improvement goals;
- not deal with moral or ethical questions and not infringe on students' rights in any way;
- provide clarity of research methodology; and
- provide feasibility of the study design.

Who may serve as a sponsor for a research request reviewed by the SRSC?

Other than the chair, a school administrator with knowledge of the content area may serve as the sponsor. The sponsor cannot approve the research. The sponsor will advise the researcher to ensure that division policies and regulations are followed, monitor the conduct of the study, and notify the SRSC chair if the researcher alters the approved procedures or if other problems occur.

Are there fees for an application that is reviewed by the SRSC?

No fees are assessed for applications to the school-based committee because the required review process is less extensive, and it is expected that schools will derive direct benefit from their participation.

What happens after my research request is approved?

If the principal requests changes to the proposed research, the researcher must provide written evidence that the procedural changes have been made prior to the start of data collection. The approval is restricted only to the school for which the proposal was submitted. If the researcher wishes to modify the scope, methods, or research activities (including surveys, instruments, or consent documents) after the initial approval, the researcher must submit the changes in writing and obtain approval from the SRSC chair. The researcher and the sponsor (typically the principal or designee) will make practical arrangements for the implementation of the research and ensure that minimal interruptions take place.

What happens after the research is complete?

A written summary of the results of the research conducted in the school is to be delivered to the principal no later than six months after the completion of data collection.

C. Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC)

What is the SSRC?

The SSRC is located in schools and is overseen by the Science Office in the Department of Instructional Services. The SSRC screens requests from FCPS students conducting research for local, regional, state, or international science competition, and non-science fair related projects that involve human participants and dissemination of results beyond FCPS through presentation or publication. The committee reviews all applications using the established FCPS criteria described in Part I, Section A.

What is the application process?

Applicants should complete the research proposal that can be downloaded from the following location: <http://www.societyforscience.org/isef/document>. After an applicant completes the research proposal, it should be submitted to a sponsoring teacher. An applicant's sponsoring teacher will then submit the completed research proposal to the SSRC at the school in which the applicant attends. If the school does not have a committee, the application should be submitted to the Science Coordinator for the school division.

What is the review process?

Each research proposal will be reviewed by the Student Scientific Research Committee (SSRC) at the student's school. Research proposals are provided by sponsoring teachers (described below). The SSRC will review student research applications and notify students of the committee's decision.

What criteria are applied by the SSRC when reviewing applications?

The SSRC will review the application following the criteria set forth in this document and the Society for Science and the Public to ensure the quality of research safety and protection of all human participants.

Who is a sponsoring teacher?

A sponsoring teacher is an FCPS teacher who sponsors an FCPS student submitting a research application for a science fair or for all other student projects involving human participants.

Are there fees for an application that is reviewed by the SSRC?

No fees are required of students conducting research as the research is part of their learning process.

How are decisions rendered by the SSRC?

At the end of a review, the SSRC will provide the following decision:

- Yes – The student researcher may proceed with conducting his or her research.
- No, revise and resubmit – The student researcher may revise and resubmit a research application with necessary modifications.

What is the process after a student researcher has been approved?

When a study is approved, the FCPS sponsor will notify the administrators in charge of the schools or programs that will be affected. The student researcher may begin the study at a time mutually agreed upon with those administrators. The student researcher will work with the sponsoring teacher to conduct the research.

Glossary

Data Collection is the gathering of new information (through observations, tests, surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.)

Data Release is FCPS' provision of existing records from or about individuals, classrooms, or other entities for research, monitoring, accountability, or decision-making purposes.

Exempt Research describes research that is exempt from the research screening process.

External Researcher is any individual or entity that requests the use of division data or resources to engage in a research or data collection activity that is not conducted by FCPS employees as part of their job responsibilities. These entities include, but are not limited to: (1) for-profit and not-for-profit research organizations, community groups, local/state/federal agencies, and national study groups; (2) individuals, including FCPS employees proposing studies for coursework, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, or other kinds of personal research projects; and (3) FCPS students who seek to conduct a research study or data collection activity that is not part of a regular classroom assignment or will result in dissemination of results beyond FCPS through presentations or publication, e.g., science fairs.

Informed Consent depicts how participants in research have the right to be fully informed about the proposed procedures and activities and to voluntarily agree to participate in the research. Informed consent is obtained in writing from participants who have had the research activities fully described to them, been informed of both risks and benefits of participation, experienced no coercion to participate, and been given the opportunity to have all of their questions answered prior to providing written consent. In the case of children under 18 years of age who are not emancipated minors, consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian. Researchers may choose to ask children over the age of 8 years to sign an assent form which contains similar information to a consent form but which is written at a level that will be easier for students to understand. For guidance on writing an informed consent and/or a child assent form, visit <http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-policies-procedures-forms-and-instructions/human-subjects-forms-and-templates/>

Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) oversees research involving humans by health care, academic, governmental and other agencies, organizations, or individuals. They exist to protect the safety, health, and privacy of human research subjects, including those involved in clinical trials and drug research. Federal law offers definitions and guidance on what constitutes research involving human subjects. These definitions determine whether an agency or organization must have an institutional review board and the board's ability to approve, reject, or modify the agency's or organization's activities. For additional information, visit <http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/>

Minimal Risk is the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research, which are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Policy 1475.3 provides guidance regarding the review and approval of all research studies and data collection activities in FCPS.

Protected data is data on FCPS students, staff, volunteers, parents, or the community that is regulated by federal law, state law, FCPS policy or regulation. It does not include data that may be disclosed according to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA).

Regulation 1475.4 establishes the procedures for the review and approval of requests to collect protected data by external researchers.

Research is any systematic investigation, including data collection activity, conducted to identify, improve, or evaluate an educational issue or problem that provides generalizable findings. Research typically

includes, but is not limited to, ethnographic studies, case studies, analysis of written documents, records, tables, primary and secondary data, experimental designs, study grant programs or the evaluation components of grant-funded programs (federal, state, local, foundations, universities, private), and other data-gathering activities.