

Status relationships

A. Purpose

To provide a summary of investigator responsibilities when conducting research with participants with whom they have a relationship within the University.

B. Revision history

Originally issued: September 2013

C. Persons affected

All NWSU University faculty, staff, students, patients, and agents of the institution

D. Policy

A status relationship exists when an investigator conducts research with participants who have a relationship with the investigator that may be coercive. Examples of this include a professor or instructor who uses her students as participants, a department head who uses his colleagues as participants, or a dean who uses her faculty as participants. Given the nature of these relationships, participants may feel obligated to participate in the research; therefore, it is important to consider the following guidelines when a status relationship is unavoidable in conducting the research:

- To the greatest extent possible, the research must minimize the risks to subjects.
- If the participants are students or employees, participation in the research must represent a potential benefit for the participants (e.g., new knowledge or improvements).
- The recruitment of participants is considered part of the consent/assent process. It is important to consider how participants will be recruited to ensure it is not coercive. For example, participants should not be recruited on a personal basis. Instead, consider posting IRB-approved flyers/advertisements or sending other IRB-approved communications to a group (such as an email or letter). You may need to obtain permission before sending out a communication based on a list of employees or students.
- The consent process should be conducted by someone with whom the participant does NOT have a status relationship (e.g., a research assistant).
- If the research is conducted within a classroom setting, the instructor should be blinded to the identity of the participants and data cannot be analyzed until final grades have been posted.
- FERPA and other privacy guidelines must be followed when identifying potential participants.

When submitting an IRB application for research that involves a status relationship between the researcher and the research participants, include details as to how potential status relationship issues will be addressed in the research design.