

## PPA Thesis IRB Process Guidelines

These IRB guidelines highlight common issues PPA students experience as they navigate the IRB process. This is not a comprehensive list, but it does capture many relevant steps and requirements.

Please note that IRB approval is only required when you conduct original data collection with human subjects or use secondary data sets which include identifiable private information gathered in earlier research. You do not need permission to use secondary data sets without identifiable private information (e.g., polling or aggregate data downloaded from ICPSR, etc.) or use data from publicly recorded/accessible meetings, hearings, etc. If you are uncertain about whether you need IRB approval, make sure to discuss this with your adviser early in your thesis preparation process.

While the IRB process can feel very compliance-driven, it also provides an excellent opportunity to help you think through your thesis plans intentionally and systematically to strengthen your approach and address any potential ethical dilemmas.

Please note that you may not set up or conduct interviews, surveys, or other primary research with human subjects before you complete the IRB process. You need approval from your primary reader and from the IRB office before you can begin any scheduling or data collection.

IRB completion steps:

- **Complete a solid draft of your methods chapter** (Chapter 3) before submitting IRB request/questions to your first reader (your first reader must approve your interviews, surveys, or other such instruments before you submit them to IRB).
- **Complete the free online CITI student training** and receive certification before you submit your IRB request/questions (you will not be allowed to submit your request without completing this certification and prior thesis students report that the CITI training takes 2-4 hours to complete).
- **Provide the IRB office with your student information** including your name, program information, and student ID # before you complete and submit your Sac State IRB request.
- **Complete the online Sac State IRB request forms and receive university IRB approval** before you begin any primary data collection involving human subjects—this may take you several hours and will require you to answer questions about who you will collect data from, how this data is relevant to your study, your plan for collecting data, and how many participants you will collect data from, as well as how you will ensure anonymity to participants and keep data protected/confidential. As a part of this process, you must submit a Consent Form that you will provide to all participants you plan to include in your study (and, you may not collect data from these participants without their signed consent form).
- **Adhere to everything you commit to in the IRB application.** For example, if you state that you will not use any information that would identify an interviewee, you must adhere to that decision. If you make changes to your plans, including changing the instruments you use, you must submit those changes to the IRB office in advance.

Remember, field research is often about developing relationships. You are representing yourself, our department, the college, and the university when you conduct field research. Please represent all parties appropriately and have fun!