

GENERAL GUIDELINES

For REVIEW of RESEARCH PROJECTS

Overview.

The purpose of any research review process is to protect human research subjects from undue physical, emotional, and economic harm. Safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects in research and other activities is a general policy adopted by most institutions of higher education (all institutions if engaged in federally funded research). At MCC, Board Policy 2.15040 BP specifies that although the community college is primarily a teaching institution, the board made a provision for MCC employees (administrators, faculty, or staff) to conduct research activities when it contributes to the professional growth of the individual and the mission and goals of the district. The district officer responsible for insuring appropriate research and analysis is being conducted for the district is the vice chancellor for educational services and instructional technology. The vice chancellor for educational services and instructional technology has delegated the task for review and implementation of district research activities to the director for research, evaluation and assessment. This procedure has historical precedence within the district. Written approval for implementation of a research project is required prior to research activities commencing.

Why does MCC have a Review Process?

Although Board Policy 2.15040 BP allows for district employees to engage in research projects, this does not mean, because you are a district employee, you can conduct whatever research you desire. A review process exists so as to insure the district is conducting the research it should in order to fulfill its mission and goals. Faculty have more flexibility than other employees when conducting research activities, especially when those activities are associated with their discipline and are part of a requirement for MCC course completion.

The greatest asset an institution of higher education has is its students – they are the data pool for all activities: instructional, social, athletic, and research. Our students are flooded with literature and mailings from departments within our colleges and district. The use of students as a data set should be evaluated carefully and prioritized prior to implementation of any research activity. District-wide implementation of research activities has precedence over campus-based or external research activities.

Types of Research Permitted.

Research is defined as a systematic inquiry or investigation to validate or refute old knowledge or generate new knowledge. A research project is any activity conducted by one or more investigators for the purpose of:

- generating new or expanded knowledge,

- formally or informally disseminating the findings orally or in writing via presentations, publications, etc.,
- undertaking a needs assessment and/or program evaluation, or
- fulfilling a course or degree requirement.

Researchers may use either qualitative, quantitative or a mixed-methodological technique to acquire data. Each methodological design, or combination of, can require different actions for human subject protection. The type of research activities MCC supports are those classified as having a “minimal risk” to subjects. These activities include research conducted in established or commonly accepted in educational settings and involving normal educational practices, such as:

- archival research,
- instructional techniques,
- curricula,
- research on types of tests,
- surveys,
- questionnaires,
- interviews,
- longitudinal studies (those requiring student intervention, such as continued contact, or providing on-going information or material requires a participation form),
- videotaping (requires participation and consent form),
- assessment of student learning, etc.

Types of Research not Permitted.

Research that involves intense interaction with individuals, such as:

- children or at-risk individuals in invasive research activities,
- blood drawing
- exceptional invasive questioning (e.g., about criminal or hurtful activities), etc.

NOTE: The only individual that can waive non-permitted research activities is the chancellor.

Getting Approval for your Project.

To obtain approval for administering or implementing a research activity the following must be submitted:

- A letter, memorandum or email that outlines the research activity you wish to conduct; (if this involves pursuit of an additional degree or graduate

research requirement, a letter from your advisor must accompany the request).

- A copy of the research proposal.
- The research instrument (survey) or design that is to followed.
- If in conjunction with another college or university, notification the project has cleared that institutions Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Researchers should note that some requests need to be cleared through the Presidents or Deans. The review process is not lengthy, and it will not be conducted whimsically. Plan ahead when scheduling implementation of your project. Formal notification to you will be a letter, with MCC letterhead, that provides the ground rules for implementation of your project. The review for assessment projects is conducted via the FFR proposal process.

General Ground Rules for Conducting Research Projects.

When authorization is given for a research project your letter will contain many of the following ground rules for implementation:

1. Participation in this study by any district employee (administrator, faculty or staff) and/or students is strictly voluntary;
2. If a project is to be administered in a class other than your own, you must establish an agreement with faculty to use their classes;
3. No student should be forced to participate in an external research activity if not inclined to do so on his or her own;
4. The research activity is to be administered one-time only; this authorization for research is not open-ended and pertains to this project only.
5. Individuals desiring to use rooms, tables and other assorted support must obtain the approval of the appropriate Dean prior to implementation of the study.
6. Data/information collected about students and/or MCC employees (administrators, faculty and staff) will be treated as confidential information, as per MCC's ethical statement on research and data collection procedures.
7. No individual participating in this study will be identified by name or title; all persons shall have their anonymity protected by reporting in the aggregate only.
8. All individuals engaged in any research activity with subscribe to the intent of MCC's Statement of Ethical Conduct and Assessment statement.

Individuals requesting to conduct research activities must also acknowledge and embrace the MCC Statement of Ethical Conduct and Assessment.

Statement of Ethical Conduct and Assessment.

During the development of MCC's *Plan For Assessing Student Academic Achievement*, faculty wanted an assurance that the assessment program would focus on those issues associated with teaching, learning and curriculum revision. It was important for all constituent groups to know that assessment efforts and analysis and reporting of data generated by these efforts are conducted in ways that preserve high professional and ethical standards and that promote the best interests of students. The ethical statement states:

The Metropolitan Community Colleges recognize that the activities associated with assessment must be conducted in an ethical and professional manner. Information, data, and assessment activities designed to present an aggregate picture of MCC shall in no way be used to evaluate individual students or faculty. Also, students, faculty, and staff associated with assessment activities or projects will be treated in a manner that follows accepted practices for dealing with human subjects. The MCC assessment initiatives are designed and conducted so as to improve teaching and learning as well as overall institutional improvement.