**Whitman College Institutional Review Board Policies Regarding COVID-19**

September 2020

COVID-19 poses unique challenges to research with human participants. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to regular requirements for the ethical conduct of research, all research by members of the Whitman Community must abide by the requirements listed below. Researchers proposing in person research must include in their IRB proposals detailed and thorough descriptions of their COVID-19-related precautions and policies.

1. **Research should only be conducted in person if absolutely necessary.** 
   1. Many research projects can be carried out without in person contact. For example, surveys can be distributed over the internet, and many types of interviews can be conducted over phone or video calls.
   2. Researchers should carefully consider whether the benefits from in person data collection justify the additional risks to participants and researchers. Researchers must think broadly about possible risks, including but not limited to: risks of COVID-19 infection; stress and anxiety associated with in person contacts; possible loss of confidentiality due to necessary contact tracing; possible requirements for isolation if contact tracing reveals a COVID-19 exposure (including forcing individuals to stay home from work, forcing children to stay home from school, etc.).
2. **If research can only be conducted in person, researchers must adhere to the following health and safety requirements:**
   1. All researchers and participants must follow all public health requirements from federal, state, local, and Whitman officials. This includes requirements governing size of groups, out-of-household contacts, physical distancing between people, and face coverings. This also includes participation in Whitman-approved methods of Contact Tracing.
      1. Researchers must clearly explain all COVID-related precautions in their IRB proposals. Researchers should include recognition of COVID-related risks in their Informed Consent documents.
      2. Researchers must clearly and thoroughly communicate with participants about COVID-related expectations and precautions. This information should be included in the Informed Consent document and relevant recruitment materials.
      3. In their proposals, researchers should explain how they will respond to non-compliance with public health measures by participants (e.g., what happens if a participant refuses to wear a face covering or does not wear it properly).
   2. **In person research on the Whitman College campus:**
      1. Research on the Whitman campus is possible if it involves only members of the Whitman community approved to be on campus. This includes research in outdoor spaces on campus.
      2. Research can only be conducted inside Whitman buildings under the following conditions:
         1. All people involved in the in-person research must be approved to be on campus and to be in specific spaces/buildings. Those individuals must also receive approval to be inside that particular building.
         2. A faculty member (either Principle Researcher or Faculty Sponsor) must seek approval to use a campus building as an approved location for a specific research project or set of projects (e.g., all senior thesis research within a department) following the procedure described in [this document](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dgle8mCddaKKeHdtp59wA2wcTIvri_96/view). The faculty member must complete [this form](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iS3NT6U-6Izf_fc_iTrss-mk6ULStzdB/view) explaining the research, have that formed signed by their Department Chair, and submit it to Alzada Tipton. If this access is approved, the faculty member will subsequently need to provide the names of all people who need access to those facilities. Researchers must ensure that all participants follow Whitman’s protocols for contact tracing (including use of the Everbridge app or alternatives), and should include that information in recruitment and Informed Consent documents.
            1. The IRB recognizes that this involves disclosing to Whitman College the identities all participants, which limits confidentiality of participants and requires advance planning of who will participate. Whitman College deems this loss of confidentiality necessary to ensure COVID-19-related public health protections.
            2. Faculty sponsors are encouraged to submit one approval form per project or multiple projects (that is, many names in one application), thus partially limiting the impacts of this loss of confidentiality and streamlining the application process.
   3. **In person research off the Whitman College campus:**
      1. All research involving in person research off the Whitman College campus will require Full Board Review. Review the timeline for Full Board submissions on the [Whitman IRB website](https://www.whitman.edu/provost/faculty-development-and-support/institutional-review-board).
      2. Research off-campus must follow all public health requirements from federal, state, local, or Whitman officials.
      3. Research projects conducted off campus must include a protocol for contact tracing should anyone involved in the in-person research learn they were potentially exposed to COVID-19 or test positive within the 14 days leading up to the in-person research activities. This process must be clearly explained in the IRB proposal. At a minimum, this must include:
         1. a protocol for collecting identifying information from all participants (names and contact information),
         2. a protocol for providing participants with full contact information of the researcher, their faculty sponsor (if applicable), and Whitman College’s COVID-19 Task Force, and
         3. a commitment by researchers and participants to disclose the COVID-19 exposure to all involved parties and to Whitman College for contact tracing.
      4. Proposals should include a procedure for destroying Contact Tracing-related identifying information 15 days following in person contact.