

**UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
Procedure for Obtaining USC-IRB Approval for Research involving
Human Subjects at USC**

1. The prospective researchers (graduate students) submit their research proposals to their research supervisors for review and if satisfied, their supervisors indicate the researchers' readiness to seek IRB approval. If you are an independent researcher or working with a team of researchers, you may directly submit your IRB applications.
2. Researchers must apply for IRB approval **at least 30 days prior to their data collection.**
3. The researchers can acquire IRB Application form and the related documents via any one of the following channels:
 - a. Contact the Program Coordinator in their respective Schools.
 - b. Email a request to the Co-Chair of USC-IRB (Director of Research and Innovation) at research@usc.edu.tt.
 - c. Fill out IRB Application form online by visiting the USC website:
<https://usc.edu.tt/academics/ori/resources-compliance/>
4. The supporting documents relating to IRB Application include:
 - a. Instruments for data collection
 - b. Informed consent form/assent form (template is available at the USC website:
<https://usc.edu.tt/academics/ori/resources-compliance/>)
 - c. Letters of permission/authorization (if any)
 - d. Certification of completing Research Ethics course
5. The researchers complete the IRB Application form and submit the soft copy via email directly to the Co-Chair of USC IRB or complete and submit the online IRB Application form and upload the supporting documents.
6. The researchers (graduate students) must ensure that their supervisor's signature is endorsed in the application Form and that they have reviewed all the documents prior to the submission.
7. All applications must be submitted on the 30th of every month.
8. The Co-Chair of USC IRB reviews the application for completeness and determines whether the application requires Expedited Review or Full Review by the IRB. Expedited Review will be conducted on applications that involve low, or minimal risk to participants. Full Review will be required for those applications that involve vulnerable populations or high/significant risk to participants.
9. If the application is complete, the Co-Chair of USC IRB invites the members of USC IRB committee to review the applications. The USC IRB members will complete the evaluation report for these applications and email to the Co-Chair of USC IRB. The evaluation report will then be emailed to the applicants for their necessary plan of action.
10. IRB Applications for Expedited Review will be assigned to at least three (3) USC IRB members to review independently while applications for Full Review will be reviewed by all USC IRB members. Decisions on applications for Full Review will be taken in the monthly meeting convened by the Chair of USC IRB. Meetings will be held on the last Thursdays of the month.
11. Expedited Reviews will be completed by the assigned IRB members within two weeks and the evaluation report is submitted via email to the Co-Chair of USC IRB. The Co-Chair of USC IRB will email a detailed report to the researcher.

12. If all requirements for ethical review have been fulfilled and the quality of the proposed research is deemed to be acceptable, a letter of Ethical Approval for Research by the Chair of USC IRB will be emailed to the researcher within two working days.
13. For applications with minor corrections, students will be allowed to re-submit their revised IRB Application form within a week's time.
14. If the application does not meet the ethical requirements, or the quality of the research contains significant flaws, the prospective researcher is informed in writing and requested to resubmit the IRB Application after the recommended changes have been completed.
15. When the prospective researcher successfully submits/resubmits a complete application that is deemed to meet all the ethical standards and receives an official letter of Ethical Approval of Research, the researcher is then allowed to conduct his/her study and collect data while observing all the processes and procedures as outlined in their research proposal.
16. If the researcher decides to make any changes to the research protocol after receiving the IRB approval, he/she can fill out the amendment form for minor changes or adjustments. If major changes to the research protocol is being made, researcher is advised to re-apply for ethical approval by submitting a new IRB application form.
17. IRB approval letter issued by the Chair of USC IRB is valid for one (1) year.
18. Research at USC may be monitored by the IRB to ensure that all ethical guidelines and standards are being adhered to.

NB. Please note that IRB Approval must be sought before the researcher engages in data collection process.