The University of Alabama values student research participation and fosters students’ awareness of the importance of research in society and their rights and responsibilities as research participants. This page provides a general guide to help you understand your role and rights in research. Also, the IRB website provides full access to IRB policies for faculty, investigators, and students; forms for use by investigators or IRB; and guidance on such topics as IRB applications and ensuring true informed consent.

RESEARCH Q’s And A’s

Why should I participate in research?

As a university student you are part of an organization with a mission to create and increase knowledge. Research is the best strategy for obtaining complete, unbiased answers to all sorts of important questions. You are also likely to have many opportunities in your life after UA to participate in research or to make decisions about research participation for your family members. Therefore, the faculty hope that you will take advantage of participation in university research to contribute to new knowledge, gain some basic understanding of how research is done, and learn how research participants should be treated.

What is a Student Research Subject Pool?

A student research subject pool is a group of undergraduate students enrolled in certain courses that require participation in research studies as a learning experience. Course instructors will acquaint you with how it works in a particular department. The IRB provides oversight of research using student subject pools.

All student research participation must be completely voluntary. You cannot be forced to participate in research. If you do not wish to participate in research, your instructor must offer you an equivalent alternative, such as completion of a short paper.

Do I have to participate in my professor’s research (inside or outside of a subject pool)?
No. Again, all research participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to assist your professor. If you feel that an invitation to participate is coercive (you feel pressured to take part), please notify the IRB at 348-8461.

How do I find out about my rights as a research participant?

Go to the IRB Outreach site and click for our booklet “Research and You: Know Your Rights.

How can I ask questions, make suggestions, or raise complaints or concerns about my treatment in a research study?

You are always welcome to call Research Compliance at 348-8461, to e-mail the Director of Research Compliance at cmyles@fa.ua.edu, or to stop by the Research Compliance Office in Rose 358. Or, you can visit the Research Compliance Outreach website and submit questions, suggestions, complaints, or concerns online. The IRB will investigate complaints and concerns.

How can I help IRB to improve the education and treatment of research participants at UA?

Submitting questions, suggestions, complaints, and concerns as just described is very helpful to IRB in improving our program of education and protection for research participants. Also, on the outreach site you will find a Survey for Research Participants to complete. This short survey asks whether or not key elements of human research participant protection were carried out in UA research studies. This survey is anonymous. You are asked only to identify yourself as an undergraduate or a graduate student. IRB uses the survey results for quality improvement and appreciates your response.

Did You Know. . .

IRB has speakers who are happy to come to courses or other student meetings and talk about research, research participation, and protection of human research participants. Call us at 348-8461.