

Grand Valley State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)	
Title: <i>Modifications to Approved Protocols</i>	
Section: 1010.	This policy and procedure supersedes those previously drafted.
Approved by HRRC: 3/13/2011 Revised by HRRPPC: 11/28/2017 Revised by HRRPPC: 10/23/2018 Revised by IRBPPC: 01/26/2021 Revised by IRBPPC: 03/30/2021 Revised by IRBPPC: 03/29/2022 Revised by IRBPPC: 02/27/2024 Revised by IRBPPC: 09/29/2025 Revised by IRBPPC: 04/17/2026	Approved by RIO/HRPA: 03/15/2012 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 04/16/2018 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 12/19/2018 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 03/01/2021 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 05/06/2021 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 04/12/2022 Revisions approved by AIO/RIO: 05/16/2024
Effective Date: 04/17/2026	
Related documents: <i>750: Recruitment, Selection, and Payment to Research Payments</i> <i>901: IRB Protocol Review: Expedited Protocols</i> <i>902: IRB Protocol Review: Full Board Protocols</i> <i>911: Exemption Determinations and Research Ethics Standards</i> <i>1020: Reportable Events: Protocol Deviations, Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events</i> <i>1030: Research Noncompliance</i> <i>1040: Post-Approval Compliance Review</i> <i>1050: Suspension or Termination of IRB-Covered Research Activities</i> <i>1060: Closure of Approved Research Protocols</i> <i>1070: Responding to Concerns and Complaints About Human Subjects Research Activities</i>	

Policy

1. **Proposed Modifications (Non-exempt studies).** Researcher-initiated modifications to non-exempt research studies may not be initiated without prior written IRB approval except as provided for below. This includes any modifications including those required by other entities (e.g., additional IRBs with oversight responsibility).

Emergency Modification Rule. If a researcher determines that a study modification is necessary in order to minimize emergent and immediate risks of harm to enrolled or future study participants, the modification(s) may be implemented without prior IRB approval. In compliance with *IRB Policy 1020: Reportable Events: Protocol Deviations, Unanticipated Problems, and Adverse Events*, within seven (7) calendar days following implementation of the modification the Principal Investigator (PI) must notify the IRB Chairperson in writing of the nature of the risks, the steps taken to minimize the risks, and any additional proposed modifications to minimize future risks (45 CFR 46.108(a)(3)(iii)). Final acceptance of the proposed modification is subject to IRB approval under normal review procedures.

2. **Proposed Modifications (Exempt studies).**
 - a. With the exception of personnel additions, if a proposed modification to an exempt research protocol does not alter the level of review required (i.e., does not require

upgrading to expedited or full board review), in part or in total with previously made changes, and does not increase the risk-to-benefit ratio, the researcher may implement the change without prior approval from the IRB. Reporting to the IRB is not required. This authorization applies *only* to exempt studies.

- b. Proposed personnel additions to exempt studies may not be initiated without prior written IRB approval. ORCI staff members may administratively process personnel changes—both addition of protocol personnel and removal of protocol personnel—to exempt studies on behalf of the IRB without additional review by the IRB.
3. **Required Modifications.** The IRB may require modifications to any protocol at any time in order to minimize risks to study participants or to enable researchers to comply with changes to federal, state, or local laws/mandates, or institutional policies.

Procedures

1. Submission of Proposed Modifications

- a. All modification requests, with the exception of personnel removal requests, must be submitted by the PI using the appropriate form in the ORCI's electronic database management system.
- b. Requests to remove personnel may be submitted by the PI via either an email to the ORCI or through the ORCI's electronic database management system. ORCI staff members will review email requests to verify that the request meets the eligibility for email submission. If it does not, the PI will be informed that an amendment request form must be submitted through ORCI's electronic database management system.

2. Exempt Studies

- a. If the proposed modification increases the risk-to-benefit ratio, but does not alter the IRB review level required, the researcher must submit a modification request and receive IRB approval prior to implementing the modification.
- b. If the proposed modification alters the IRB review level required, the researcher must submit a new protocol application request and obtain approval from the IRB prior to implementing the change.
- c. If the researchers are unsure if proposed changes to the study increase the risk-to-benefit ratio and/or alter the IRB review level, they should contact the ORCI/IRB for consultation.

3. Non-Exempt Studies

- a. Personnel change requests, with the exception of a request to change the PI, may be reviewed and approved by the IRB Chairperson without additional review by the IRB. The IRB Chairperson may also review and approve, without additional review by the IRB, requested changes to associated protocol documents where the only proposed changes seek to update information as a result of the personnel changes (e.g., recruitment materials and consent forms that are changed solely to update the name(s) and/or contact information of the researchers). This applies to both non-exempt studies determined by the IRB to be greater than minimal risk and non-exempt studies determined by the IRB to be no greater than minimal risk.
- b. Removal of Protocol Personnel
 - i. Non-exempt studies determined to be no greater than minimal risk: With the exception of a change in PI, Office of Research Compliance and Integrity (ORCI) staff members may process personnel removal requests on behalf of the IRB without additional review by the IRB.
 - ii. Non-exempt studies determined to be greater than minimal risk: ORCI staff members may process personnel removal requests of student researchers without additional review by the IRB. Requests to remove all other personnel (i.e., faculty and staff researchers, external researchers, etc.) from protocols must be reviewed by the IRB.
- c. For greater than minimal risk research, minor changes to approved research can be reviewed under expedited procedures. Minor changes are defined as changes that do not significantly increase risk and do not materially affect the risk-to-benefit ratio. Examples of minor changes include adding or revising recruitment methods, adding a minimal risk procedure, or changes in wording in the consent form or other study documents.
- d. When submitting the modification in the electronic IRB submission platform, ensure all documents being added or changed as a result of the modification are attached for IRB review. Examples of revised documents include:
 - i. New or updated recruitment materials
 - ii. Revised informed consent forms
 - iii. New or revised surveys, questionnaires, or assessment tools
- e. All proposed modifications, with the exception of Procedure 3a above, will be reviewed as outlined in *IRB Policy 901: IRB Protocol Review: Expedited Protocols* or *IRB Policy 902: IRB Protocol Review: Full Board Protocols*, depending upon the level of review required. The following criteria are applied when determining if a proposed modification can be approved:
 - i. The IRB verifies that the criteria for IRB approval in *IRB Policy 901* and/or *IRB Policy 902* are still met with the inclusion of the proposed modifications.

- ii. The IRB assesses whether the amendment increases risks to subjects and, if so, that sufficient safeguards are in place to minimize risks.
- iii. The IRB ensures that the informed consent document reflects changes to any required elements of consent or to anything that could affect participants' willingness to participate, and subsequently determines if re-consenting or informing previously enrolled participants is required.

4. Review of Protocol Personnel Removal Requests

- a. Upon processing a protocol personnel removal request, a letter documenting the removal is sent to the PI, the PI's Authorizing Official, and the Office of Sponsored Programs (if applicable).
- b. Non-exempt studies: If a request to remove personnel is combined with another modification request in the same submission, the entire submission will be reviewed by the IRB.

Guidance

- 1. Changes in compensation:
 - a. Exempt studies: Researchers are strongly encouraged to consult with the ORCI prior to making any changes in compensation. Some changes in compensation—such as exceeding the compensation threshold at which the GVSU Business and Finance Office requires collection of social security numbers—would increase the risk-to-benefit ratio and require IRB review. Similarly, large changes in the amount of compensation could increase the potential for undue influence and be viewed as increasing the risk-to-benefit ratio.
 - b. Non-exempt studies: Any change in compensation would require IRB review and approval.