Graduate student research refers to research conducted to fulfill graduate degree requirements, i.e., preparation of master's theses and doctoral dissertations. Graduate student research involving human subjects is subject to the Michigan State University (MSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission and review requirements.

In the case of graduate student research for theses or dissertations, the graduate student’s major advisor or another faculty member should be designated on the IRB application as the principal investigator (PI) and the graduate student should be designated as an additional investigator. Only faculty members and fixed-term faculty employees with the rank of assistant professor or higher may be designated as the PI on the IRB application. The PI accepts responsibility for conducting the proposed research in accordance with the protections of human subjects as specified by the IRB, including the supervision of faculty and student co-investigators and assures that there will be adequate resources and facilities to carry out the research. See the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Manual 4-9 “Designation as Principal Investigator” for a description of PI responsibilities.

Graduate students and their advisor or faculty member serving as PI are jointly responsible for seeking prior review and approval by the IRB of thesis or dissertation research involving human subjects before it is initiated.

See HRPP Manual 9-2 “Noncompliance” for policies and procedures on research conducted without IRB approval. If research was conducted without IRB approval, the MSU Graduate School may choose not to accept a thesis or dissertation containing data from human subjects.

Graduate students and their faculty advisors are always welcome to contact the IRB staff or IRB chair to discuss whether a project requires review or with questions about completing an application.