Responsibilities of Authorized Departmental IRB Reviewers

The primary responsibility of the Department Chair/Director/Designated Reviewer with regard to applications for IRB approval is to conduct the initial review of research protocols:

- for ethical considerations;
- to determine that the research has scientific merit;
- to determine that the investigators are qualified to conduct the research;
- to ensure that the protocol conforms to any specific requirements that the University or State of Illinois may impose as well as federal copyright laws;
- to assure that the application is complete;
- to make the initial determination of review category (meets definitions of research with human subjects and requires Administrative, Subcommittee, or Full Review).

Because the Department Chair/Director/Designated Reviewer is generally knowledgeable about the discipline(s) within his/her department, it is appropriate that this person be the one responsible for conducting a thorough preliminary review of research protocols before submission to the IRB. This is the primary location for determination of scientific merit of the proposed research and that the design and procedures are appropriate in order for the IRB to adequately evaluate the potential risks and/or benefits to the participants. In addition, Federal regulations prohibit the investigator from making the determination of review category for his/her own project. When the Department Chair/Director/Designee is directly involved with a project in need of review, the review should be conducted by another individual who has no relationship to the project, who has had appropriate reviewer training, and who has the authority to conduct the review (e.g., College Dean).

Because of their key role in the review process, Authorized Departmental Reviewers (i.e., Department Chairs, Directors, or Designated Reviewers) are expected to participate in an orientation session with ORC staff in order to be eligible to review IRB applications submitted from their department. They are also required to document the completion of one additional appropriate educational activity (e.g., attending a conference or workshop, completing a CD-ROM or online tutorial, viewing a videotape, or reading a publication) relevant to IRB review of research per year thereafter for the duration of their term as Authorized Departmental Reviewer.

Departmental Reviewers are expected to maintain a log of applications that have been reviewed at the departmental level. This log should contain dated entries of when applications are received from investigators and forwarded to the ORC, departmental determination of review category, and any other information the departmental reviewer may find to be helpful in the review process. The ORC staff may periodically request to review these documents to assure consistency with NIU and federal policies.

Research investigators and Department Chairs/Directors/Designated Reviewers are responsible for insuring that all applications involving humans as potential subjects (regardless of review category) are submitted to the IRB via the Office of Research Compliance (ORC). No data collection may begin in any project without formal notice of approval or designation that the research does not fit the regulatory definitions of research with human subjects. Screening Forms and applications that have been determined by departmental review to not meet these regulatory definitions shall be kept on file within the department and the Departmental Reviewer shall notify the ORC of this determination by forwarding a copy of the Screening Form to the ORC.
Research investigators and Chairs/Directors/Designated Reviewers are responsible for reporting promptly to the IRB, via the ORC, any serious or continuing noncompliance with federal and/or university regulations. In turn, the University is required to report such noncompliance to the federal Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP).

The Department Chair/Director is responsible for nominating individuals for IRB membership. The procedure for selecting nominees is up to the discretion of the department(s) involved. Departments should use a rank ordering when submitting more than one nomination. Nominations are requested by and should be submitted to the Vice President for Research. Members are selected based upon expertise in a general research area (e.g., education, psychology, kinesiology, physiology, or social science research).