An authorized departmental reviewer (ADR) may be the chair of a department or director of a program, or may be a faculty or staff member designated by the chair or director to serve in this role. The ADR is responsible for conducting a preliminary review of IRB applications before they are submitted to the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety (ORCIS) for review by the IRB. All departments that regularly submit IRB applications must have at least one ADR. A department may have as many ADRs as they deem appropriate.

The ADR’s responsibilities with regard to their review of IRB applications are:

1. to assure that the application is clearly written and complete, including all consent forms, recruitment materials, survey or interview questions, and other materials as applicable.

2. to determine that the researchers are qualified to conduct the research.

3. to review the proposed research for ethical considerations.

4. to determine that the research has sufficient scientific merit to justify the risks to the participants.

5. To make an initial determination of whether the protocol requires exempt, subcommittee, or full board IRB review. (The IRB makes the final determination about the review category).

If an ADR has any concerns about the ethics or scientific merit of a study, or any other aspect of the IRB submission, that they are not able to resolve at the departmental review level, they may not withhold submission of the application to ORCIS, but should instead forward the application to ORCIS along with a written explanation of their concerns. Disapproval of a proposed research study must be made at a convened meeting of the IRB.

Because the ADR is generally knowledgeable about the discipline(s) within his/her department, it is appropriate that this person be responsible for conducting a thorough preliminary review of research protocols before submission to the IRB. Because of their key role in the IRB review process, ADRs are expected to participate in an initial training session with ORCIS staff in order to be eligible to review IRB applications submitted from their department. ADRs are also required to document the completion of one additional appropriate educational activity (e.g. attending a conference or workshop, completing an online tutorial, or reading a publication) each year for the duration of their term as an ADR. If an ADR does not complete the required continuing education requirement, he/she will be removed from the list of active ADRs and may no longer review applications on their department’s behalf.

When an ADR is directly involved with a project in need of review, the review should be conducted by another ADR who has no relationship to the project, who has had appropriate reviewer training, and who has the authority to conduct the review. ORCIS staff may waive the requirement for an ADR review at their discretion when no appropriate ADR is available, such as for departments that
submit very few IRB applications and have no ADR, or where the only ADR is involved in the research.

The faculty mentor for a student research project should not serve as an ADR for their own students’ applications. ORCIS will make exceptions, at their discretion, for departments where the faculty mentor is the only ADR and the department submits very few IRB applications.

Research investigators and ADRs are responsible for insuring that all applications involving humans as potential subjects (regardless of review category) are submitted to the IRB via ORCIS. No data collection may begin in any project without formal notice of IRB approval or notification that the research does not fit the regulatory definitions of research with human subjects.