

Research Involving Longwood Student-Athletes

Background and Ethical Considerations

As the challenges and issues encountered by Student-Athletes become more visible and newsworthy, researchers have become more interested in contributing to generalizable knowledge in many areas of interest including but not limited to mental health, eligibility, recovery, injury, and coping strategies by recruiting NCAA Student-Athletes as participants in human subjects research. Additionally, the NCAA undertakes extensive assessment and monitoring of the Student-Athlete experience that places added burdens on Student-Athletes. The IRB takes the stance that Student-Athletes are a vulnerable population that warrant additional protections.

Researchers should consider the following questions when developing studies involving Longwood student-athletes:

- Are Longwood Student-Athletes required for you to be able to answer your research question? Can the question be answered with a different subject population?
- Is the research question and the knowledge gained from the research of such import that it justifies the burden on these participants?
- For student-led class research projects:
 - Do the students have the knowledge and experience to interpret the responses in this complex subject population?
 - If the purpose of the project is to teach research methods, does this warrant the use of a vulnerable population?
- The risks for Student-Athletes include financial, reputational, academic, and athletic harms. Have these risks been minimized in the methodology and/or the research question?
- Are there any direct benefits for the Student-Athletes?
- Are the indirect benefits realizable?

Faculty can consult with the FAR and IAC prior to submitting their IRB proposal.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The Longwood Student-Athlete population is small and when considered with the challenges inherent in subject recruitment and response rate the Longwood IRB takes the view that HSR

with Longwood Student-Athletes is difficult to anonymize. Individuals may be identified using only a few demographic responses. The use of demographic questions that could easily identify a Student-Athlete (e.g. sport, age, major, injury history etc.) should be carefully considered. Investigators should clearly describe how they intend to protect the privacy of Student-Athletes in their proposal.

IRB Review and Research Requirements

The following guidance applies to faculty-led independent research and student-led research conducted both in and outside the classroom.

1. Researchers should submit their IRB proposal materials to the IRB, which will consult with the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) and IAC for feedback during the review process.
2. Recruitment procedures should detail how they will mitigate influence of coaches, athletic staff, and teammates in subject recruitment, including blinding procedures. Research data cannot be shared with athletic staff without the explicit consent of the Student-Athlete participant.
3. Researcher must provide contact information for the FAR in the consent information. In studies with repeated measures, consent should be verbally confirmed at each study visit.

Research Projects Aimed at NCAA Student-Athletes Generally

IAC feedback is not required for research projects that do not specifically target Longwood Student-Athletes. These projects should have a subject recruitment protocol that is clearly widespread and generalized. All recruitment, consent, and study materials should be marked with **“This study is not designed or administered by Longwood University Athletics or the NCAA.”** The IRB will send a courtesy notification of approval to the FAR upon request.

Document Attributes

Last approved by IRB: 12/24