

## NUS-IRB'S AMENDED EXEMPTION CATEGORIES FOR SOCIAL, BEHAVIOURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (SBER)

With effect from 25 August 2020, the amended Exemption Categories would be as follows (amendments are highlighted in yellow):

- 1A) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. **This includes studies of intervention procedures such as pre- and post-tests or surveys conducted before and after an educational intervention. No analysis of academic grades will be involved.**
- 1B) Educational research (with grades analysis) that fulfils all 5 criteria below:
  - i) The proposed usage complies with either para (h) or (l) of the NUS Student Data Protection Policy;
  - ii) The academic staff are using personal/ academic-related data of students who are reading their modules;
  - iii) The aim of their research project is to provide an assessment of class/program effectiveness and/or to help students to learn better. **This may include studies of intervention procedures such as pre- and post-tests or surveys conducted before and after an educational intervention;**
  - iv) The PI is not sharing the data with external parties (*publications are not considered as "sharing with external parties"*) or sharing it with external parties in an anonymous/ aggregate manner; **and**
  - v) Prospective consent will be obtained from all students for the use of their grades/data for the research.
- 1C) **Research involving the use of anonymous or de-identified students' feedback/ evaluation of instructional methods or courses.**  
**(Note: PIs would still need to apply for a waiver of informed consent if students' consent were not obtained for their feedback/ evaluation to be used for research purposes.)**
2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behaviour, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that research participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the research participants; **and** (ii) any disclosure of the research participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the research participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the research participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
3. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behaviour that is not exempted under paragraph (2) of this section, if: (i) the research participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
- 4A) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that research participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the research participants.**

4B) Observational research (i.e., no interaction with research participants) involving the analysis of non-sensitive data collected **anonymously** from the internet or social media sites, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc. Data that is published should not identify individuals.

(Note: Cat 4B does not include groups, sites or “virtual communities” with membership categories where permission is required to participate in such groups as contents of the site will not be considered “publicly available”. Researchers should not collect any personal identifiers to qualify for this category. PIs would need to apply for a waiver of informed consent.)

5. Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or Agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:  
(i) Public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the relevant agencies in Singapore or overseas.

The food item being tasted must be edible, and you should only recruit research participants who are not allergic to said food item.

7A) Use of anonymous experiments or/and behavioural tasks that are already published in the literature.

7B) Research involving benign behavioural interventions where disclosure of subjects’ responses outside research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk.

(Note: Benign behavioural interventions are brief in duration, harmless, painless, not physically invasive and not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on subjects, and the investigator has no reason to think that subjects will find the intervention offensive or embarrassing. Provided all such criteria are met, examples of such benign behavioural interventions would include having the subjects play an online game, having them solve puzzles under various noise conditions, or having them decide how to allocate a nominal amount of received cash between themselves and someone else, consumer behaviour experiments where participants evaluate a product or service.)

8. Research intending to study effects of intervention on behaviours related to environment sustainability such as water conservation studies, green buildings, energy consumption, etc, in households and businesses where the disclosure of subjects’ responses outside research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk.