



## *Research Ethics Approval Process* Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

All research conducted involving SEBTS students, faculty, or staff or external researchers on the SEBTS campus must abide by the following procedures.

### **Risk Assessment Process for Research**

The following procedures cover all academic or professional research conducted by faculty, staff, or students involving human subjects, and research conducted by external scholars involving any member of the Southeastern Seminary community.

*The researcher must complete all of the steps outlined below before conducting data gathering involving human subjects. Failure to comply with and abide by these processes can result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Student Handbook and/or Faculty Staff Manual.*

*Students writing a thesis, project, or dissertation that does not include the use of human subjects must still complete the Research Ethics Approval Form and the Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research form and file them with the Research Ethics Committee before collecting data or interacting with human subjects participating in the study.*

*Permission to conduct research by the Research Ethics Committee does not constitute permission to conduct the research in a specific institution or organization. The researcher is responsible for securing institutional approval to conduct research in a specific institution or organization as required by those bodies.*

An application to conduct research is not necessary under the following conditions:

1. The research is being conducted by the seminary internally and/or externally for the purposes of institutional assessment and/or institutional development and not for degree research, such as instructional assessments, services assessments, etc.
2. Consultation with an author of published material is for the sole purpose of clarification of the meaning of the published material.

### **Step One: Create a Research Profile to Request Permission to Conduct Research**

Prepare a brief, clear, concise, and precise Research Profile describing the proposed research with human subjects. If your research does not include human subjects, complete items 1, 2, 3 and 6 only.

1. The *Research Ethics Approval Form* with the top portion completed. This form serves as the cover page.
2. A completed *Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research* form.
3. A copy of the *Title Page* from your study.

4. A copy of the following statements and sections from your study pasted into a single-spaced document:
  - a. The precise *Research Purpose* stated in the introduction of your study (not the longer introduction or rationale for the study). Usually this precise research purpose statement is reflected in the title of your study. Include a copy of stated *Delimitations of the Study*, if any.
  - b. The *Research Questions, Hypotheses, or Goals* from the introduction of your study.
  - c. The *Research Methods* or *Design Overview* from the introduction or methodology section of your study as appropriate.
  - d. The *Population* and *Sample* statements from the methodology section of your study. Include a copy of stated *Delimitations of the Sample* and *Limitations of Generalization*, if any. If your study does not include any or all of these items, skip this section in the *Research Profile*.
5. A copy of instrumentation (surveys, inventories, tests, interview instructions, etc.) and/or a description of proposed instrumentation to be used in conducting the research. Instrumentation **MUST** demonstrate *informed consent* according to the highest level of risk identified by the *Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research* form (see the *Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide* below). Instrumentation completed later in the research process **MUST** be approved by the research supervisor prior to use with human subjects. If no instrumentation is involved in the study, skip this section in the *Research Profile*.
6. A copy of your *Vitae* from your study or similar short statement of your credentials.

### **Step Two: Submit the *Research Profile* for Approval**

Submit the completed *Research Profile* to the Research Supervisor (the appropriate course instructor, project methodology supervisor, thesis supervisor, dissertation supervisor, faculty colleague, department chair, associate dean, or school dean directly overseeing the researcher of the study.) The *Research Profile* must then undergo three (3) levels of approval *prior to conducting the research with human subjects*.

1. *Approval Level 1: Research Supervisor/Major Professor*—the research supervisor/major professor immediately *evaluates* the *Research Profile* upon receipt from the researcher and either:
  - a. Signs the approval form and forwards the *Research Profile* to the Research Ethics Committee for evaluation at Approval Level 2; or
  - b. Returns the *Research Profile* to the researcher for modifications to informed consents, the assessment of the levels of risk to human subjects in the study, and/or further accommodations of the levels of risk.
2. *Approval Level 2: Research Ethics Committee*—the Research Ethics Committee evaluates the *Research Profile* approved by the research supervisor/major professor upon receipt and either:

- a. Signs the approval form and forwards the *Research Profile* to the Dean of Doctoral Studies with or without minor modifications to informed consents, the assessment of the levels of risk to human subjects in the study and/or further accommodations of the levels of risk; or
- b. Returns the *Research Profile* to the research supervisor to forward to the researcher for significant modifications to informed consents, the assessment of the levels of risk to human subjects in the study, and/or further accommodations of the levels of risk.

The evaluation of the *Research Profile* at Approval Level 2 is conducted by the Research Ethics Committee. This evaluation consists of an assessment of the risk to human subjects in the study and the accommodation of risk only—*any other assessment of the study is beyond the purview of the Research Ethics Committee review process*. For example, the evaluator is not empowered to critique the research title, the research topic, the level of research, the choice of research design (humanities or social science research models), etc. The only evaluation conducted is that of an assessment of the level of risk to human subject in the study and the subsequent accommodation of that risk.

The research supervisor of Approval Level 1 cannot also serve as the evaluator of the *Research Profile* at Approval Level 2 and/or Approval Level 3.

The Research Ethics Committee will meet to accept, modify, or reject the *Research Profile* based on the concurrence of the assessment of informed consents, the assessment of the levels of risk to human subjects in the study, and/or further accommodations of the levels of risk at Approval Levels 1 and 2.

3. *Approval Level 3: Dean of Doctoral Studies or Provost*—the Dean of Doctoral Studies or Provost evaluates the *Research Profile* approved by the research supervisor and Research Ethics Committee upon receipt and either:
  - a. Signs the approval form and forwards the *Research Profile* to the degrees Program Director for final processing; or
  - b. Returns the *Research Profile* to the Research Ethics Committee to forward to the major professor and researcher for modification to informed consents, the assessment of the levels of risk to human subjects in the study, and/or further accommodations of the levels of risk.

### **Step Three: Await Notification Approval before Conducting Research**

The researcher is free to conduct data gathering with human subjects only upon receipt of the *Research Ethics Approval Form* signed as approved at the three levels. One of two decisions will be noted on the form:

1. *Approved* – the researcher is free to conduct his or her research in accordance with the documentation submitted in the application process, with required modifications, if any, as noted on the *Research Ethics Approval Form*; or

2. *Not Approved* – the researcher must redesign the research and resubmit the application in full with appropriate modifications.

The following stipulations apply to conducting research with human subjects upon approval at all three levels:

1. Any instrumentation (surveys, interview questions, etc.), informed consents, debriefings, and/or institutional permissions to conduct research developed or obtained after the approval to conduct the research is received must be submitted to the Research Supervisor for approval prior to gathering data with the instrumentation.
2. Raw data and processed data must be kept for seven years and treated with the level of confidentiality indicated to the subject at the time of data gatherings.



# Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

## Definitions

The following definitions and categories are used in regard to human subjects in research.

1. **Risk** – the measure of discomfort and/or harm to which a human subject is exposed and/or may experience as a result of participation in research.
2. **Risk Areas with Human Subjects** – *psychological* (mental stress and/or emotional distress), *sociological* (relational stress and/or positional distress), *physiological* (bodily harm to self and/or bodily harm to others), and/or *spiritual* (individual stress and/or religious community distress).
3. **Minors** – any person under the age of 18 regardless of academic standing. Research involving minors automatically requires parent/guardian approval to participate in the research in addition to the informed consent for the level of risk to the minor.
4. **Members of a Vulnerable Population** – any person unable to make his/her own decisions, regardless of age. Research involving members of a vulnerable population automatically requires parent/guardian approval to participate in the research in addition to the informed consent for the level of risk to the vulnerable population member.

## Instructions

1. Complete the *Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research* and calculate the level of risk to human subjects in your study. Then, include the appropriate *Informed Consent Statement* for the calculated level of risk on instrumentation, permission forms, verbal instructions, etc. as appropriate to the means of gathering data with human subjects.

## Informed Consent Statements

### 1. Low Risk Informed Consent

For cover letters, permission forms, paper-based surveys, electronic-based survey, internet-based surveys, etc., add the following to the beginning of the instrument or instructions to participants. Include the “Agreement to Participate” title and the informed consent statements without modification, except as necessary for grammatical purposes. Replace the [bracketed] material with the content indicated. *Italicize content as indicated.*

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to [describe the research purpose in the language of the participant]. This research is being conducted by [insert researcher’s name] for purposes of [describe the reason for the research, such as project research or dissertation research]. In this research, you will [describe in simple terms what participants will be asked to do]. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time

will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this [describe the type of instrument or activity being completed, such as survey or interview], you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

## **2. Medium Risk Informed Consent**

For cover letters, permission forms, paper-based surveys, electronic-based survey, internet-based surveys, etc., add the following to the beginning of the instrument or instructions to participants. Include the “Agreement to Participate” title and the informed consent statements without modification, except as necessary for grammatical purposes. Replace the [bracketed] material with the content indicated. *Italicize content as indicated.*

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to [describe the research purpose in the language of the participant]. This research is being conducted by [insert researcher’s name] for purposes of [describe the reason for the research, such as project research or dissertation research]. In this research, you will [describe in simple terms what participants will be asked to do]. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this [describe the type of instrument or activity being completed, such as survey or interview], and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

## **3. High Risk Informed Consent**

For cover letters, permission forms, paper-based surveys, electronic-based survey, internet-based surveys, etc., add the following to the beginning of the instrument or instructions to participants. Include the “Agreement to Participate” title and the informed consent statements without modification, except as necessary for grammatical purposes. Replace the [bracketed] material with the content indicated. *Italicize content as indicated.*

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to [describe the research purpose in the language of the participant]. This research is being conducted by [insert researcher’s name] for purposes of [describe the reason for the research, such as project research or dissertation research]. In this research, you will [describe in simple terms what participants will be asked to do]. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this [describe the type of instrument or activity being completed, such as survey or interview], you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

For electronic-based surveys, Internet-based surveys, etc., replace the last paragraph of the agreement to participate statement and the signature line with a request for the e-mail address of the participant as follows:

By your completion of this [describe the type of instrument or activity being completed, such as survey or interview], and entering your e-mail address below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Informed consent with Minors or Member of a Vulnerable Population**

Research involving minors or members of a vulnerable population automatically requires parent/guardian approval to participate in the research in addition to the informed consent for the level of risk to the minor or vulnerable population.

For hardcopy permission forms, use the following statement. Require a separate form for each participant, even if there are multiple minors or members of a vulnerable population in the study under the supervision of the same parent or guardian. Include the “Agreement to Participate” title and the informed consent statement without modification, except as necessary for grammatical purposes. Replace the [bracketed] material with the content indicated. *Italicize content as indicated.*

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to [describe the research purpose in the language of the participant]. This research is being conducted by [insert researcher’s name] for purposes of [describe the reason for the research, such as project research or dissertation research]. In this research, you will [describe in simple terms what participants will be asked to do]. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

For electronic-based or Internet-based permission forms, replace the last paragraph of the Agreement to Participate statement and the signature line with a request for the email address of the parents/legal guardian as follows:

By entering your email address below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_





**Research Ethics Approval Form**  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

**Researcher** \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Research Type**     Student         Faculty         Institutional  
**Degree Program**     Master's         D.Min.         Ed.D.         Ph.D.  
**Human Subjects**     None             Minors         Adults

**Research Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please initial each of the following statements as affirmation of your compliance to the protocol, then sign with your full signature and enter the date signed on the lines provided.

\_\_\_ I have accurately described the informed consents and levels of risk to human subjects in my study to the best of my ability, and will implement the research protocols as documented, incorporating modification as required.

\_\_\_ I understand that if I make changes and/or additions to these protocols, I must seek the approval of my Research Supervisor prior to the gathering of data with these protocols.

\_\_\_ I understand that instrumentation developed and/or revised for the use with human subjects in the study must be approved by my Research Supervisor prior to use with human subjects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher/Team Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Date

SECTION BELOW FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

The documentation of the research protocols submitted by the researcher/research team appropriately informs, acquires consents, and provides accommodations for the project's level/s of risk to human subjects participating in the study...

without required modification.                       with required modification as attached.

_____ Research Supervisor/Faculty Colleague	_____ Date	Research Ethics Committee Assessment  <input type="checkbox"/> Low Risk  <input type="checkbox"/> Medium Risk  <input type="checkbox"/> High Risk
_____ Research Ethics Committee	_____ Date	
_____ Dean of Doctoral Studies or Provost	_____ Date	



## Assessments of Risk to Human Subjects in Research

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Instructions

Read each statement carefully, then mark with an “X” either the non-shaded or not applicable (NA) risk level response for each item. Do not use “Y” or “N” as your response options.

RISK LEVELS				RISK AREAS
High	Med	Low	NA	
				<b>Psychological Risk – mental stress and/or emotional distress</b>
				Subjects are to reflect upon their own behavior, values, relationships, or person in such a way that they are likely to be significantly affected emotionally or psychologically over the short and/or long term.
				Subjects will reveal highly personal information in areas such as significant relationships, trauma, sexuality, potentially immoral, unethical, or illegal behavior.
				Subjects will give opinions or viewpoints on highly charged issues including but not limited to political, emotional, cultural, spiritual, or psychological matters.
				Subjects are to reflect upon their own behavior, values, relationships, or person in such a way that might result in anxiety, regrets, concerns, afterthoughts, or reactions after the procedure is completed.
				Subjects will reveal generally accepted personal information regarding individual viewpoints, background, behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs.
				Subjects will give opinions or viewpoints on sensitive matters including but not limited to political, emotional, cultural, spiritual, or psychological matters.
				Subjects are to give basic identifying information such as age, gender, ethnicity, and other general questions regarding non-personal information.
				Subjects will give opinions or viewpoints on common-place matters such as locality, general trends, or other benign topics.
				<i>Total the number of responses in each column for this area and enter here.</i>
				<b>Sociological Risk – relational stress and/or positional distress</b>
				Subjects may experience immediate and or long-term employment, political, legal, economic, and/or social consequences as a result of participating in the study.
				Subjects are required to reflect upon their own behavior, values, relationships, or person in such a way that might result in anxiety or concern regarding themselves in relationship to other persons and/or social groups.
				Subjects are to give opinions or viewpoints on common-place social relationships such as community characteristics, census-type data, general trends, or other benign topics.
				<i>Total the number of responses in each column for this area and enter here.</i>
				<b>Physiological Risk – bodily harm to self and/or bodily harm to others.</b>
				Subjects may experience or be exposed to bodily harm as a result of the research and/or research methodology.
				Subjects may or be exposed to bodily harm as a result of participating in the gathering of data, such as entering high risk environments.
				Subjects may become tired or weakened physically or mentally in the completion of the research and/or research methodology.
				Subjects may become impatient as a result of the time involved in the completion of the research and/or research methodology.
				Subjects may become impatient as a result of environmental conditions endured in the completion of the research and/or research methodology.
				<i>Total the number of responses in each column for this area and enter here.</i>

## Instructions

Read each statement carefully, then mark with an “X” either the non-shaded or not applicable (NA) risk level response for each item. Do not use “Y” or “N” as your response options.

RISK LEVELS				RISK AREAS
High	Med	Low	NA	
				<b>Spiritual Risk – individual stress and/or religious community distress</b>
				Subjects may experience immediate and/or long-term negative consequences in their relationship to a religious community as a result of participating in the study.
				Subjects are required to reflect upon their own behavior, values, or relationships in such a way that might result in anxiety, regrets, concerns, and/or afterthoughts regarding their spirituality, or relationship with God.
				Subjects are required to reflect upon their own behavior, values, or relationships in such a way that might result in anxiety, regrets, concerns, and/or afterthoughts regarding their relationship with a religious community, and/or other spiritual matters.
				Subjects are to give opinions or viewpoints on common-place spiritual issues such as religious community belief systems and practices, religious community census-type characteristics, general religious community trends, or other benign topics.
				<i>Total the number of responses in each column for this area and enter here.</i>
<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Vulnerability Risk – subjects under age 18 or in a vulnerable population</b>
				Subjects will be under the age of 18 regardless of academic standing.
				Subjects will be members of a vulnerable population and thus unable to make their own decisions regardless of their age.
				<i>Total the number of responses in each column for this area and enter here.</i>
<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Scoring – levels of risk by area</b>
				Psychological Risk totals from previous page
				Sociological Risk totals from previous page
				Physiological Risk totals from previous page
				Spiritual Risk totals from this page
				Vulnerability Risk totals from this page
				<b>Total – summary of levels of risk (see Interpretation of Total below)</b>

## Interpretation of Total

**1 or more as High:** If you scored one or more items as “High”, you must follow the *High-Risk Informed Consent* protocols from the *Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide*.

**0 High, 1 or more as Medium:** If you scored no items as “High”, but one or more items as “Medium,” you must follow the *Medium Risk Informed Consent* protocols from the *Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide*.

**0 High, 0 Medium, 1 or more as Low:** If you scored no items as “High” or “Medium”, but one or more items as “Low”, you must follow the *Low-Risk Informed Consent* protocols from the *Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide*.

**0 High, 0 Medium, 0 Low, 1 or more as Not Applicable:** If you scored no items as “High”, “Medium”, or “Low”, but one or more items as “Not Applicable”, you are encouraged to follow the *Low-Risk Informed Consent Protocols* from the *Risk Assessment and Informed Consent Guide*.

END