FACT SHEET
The Kaplan University IRB At-A-Glance

What is an IRB?
IRB is the acronym for Institutional Review Board, a review body established or designated to protect the welfare of human subjects recruited to participate in biomedical or behavioral research. Plainly stated, the IRB is a group of dedicated human beings from a range of backgrounds, whose mission it is to protect human research subjects. Often, this reality is forgotten or worse, replaced with the stereotype that IRB members are unapproachable, self-righteous, or distant. On the contrary, many IRB members see themselves as partners in the research process, fulfilling ethical and federally mandated responsibilities but also inviting investigators to bring to their attention issues of general policy regarding human subjects in research.

Why is an IRB important?
The value of scientific research is that it ultimately contributes to human knowledge and produces substantial social and institutional benefits. However, research also creates serious ethical questions. An IRB is important because it ensures that the pursuit of scientific knowledge does not violate the rights of persons being researched.

What is the OHRP?
OHRP is the acronym for the Office for Human Research Protections, an arm of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The OHRP supports, strengthens, and provides leadership to the nation’s system for protecting volunteers in research. To carry out their research mission, nearly 10,000 universities, hospitals, and other research institutions in the U.S. and abroad have formal agreements (“assurances”) with OHRP to comply with the regulations pertaining to human subject protections.

Does Kaplan University’s IRB have a formal agreement with the OHRP?
Yes. Kaplan University has a formal agreement with the OHRP, also known as a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA). The Kaplan University IRB’s FWA number is 00010056.

What is the specific purpose of the Kaplan University IRB?
In the conduct of research, investigators are responsible for the integrity, quality, validity, reliability, and merit of their own work, and also for safeguarding the rights, privacy and well-being of their research subjects. The Kaplan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has been created to support, guide and oversee research at, or in coordination with, the University in order to help researchers ensure that they meet these responsibilities. Stated differently, the Kaplan University IRB is in place to guarantee, as much as possible, that all research conducted on or by, Kaplan University (KU) stakeholders, meets OHRP guidelines, minimum levels of research quality, and the highest ethical standards. As such, the IRB ensures that the University’s resources are well used and its population is protected.

Must an investigator obtain letters from cooperating institutions prior to submitting an application to the Kaplan University IRB?
Not necessarily, but final approval to collect data at a specific site will not be granted until a letter is received. At the very least, investigators are strongly encouraged to speak with the appropriate person at the cooperating institution(s) to determine if the project would be allowable.
When reviewing a protocol, will the Kaplan University IRB consider the soundness of the research methodology?

Yes. Although the primary focus of the IRB is on the ethical aspects of the research, the IRB is required by regulations to determine that the research design is scientifically sound and does not expose subjects to unnecessary risk. In addition, in order to approve a proposal, the IRB must also determine that the benefits of the research outweigh any risks to participants. Thus, the IRB must be able to make a determination that the research design will yield beneficial information. If the research design is so inappropriate that it will not yield useful information and there is more than minimal risk of harm to subjects, then the benefits do not outweigh the risks and the research may not be approved.

How often does the Kaplan University IRB meet?

On an as needed basis, the IRB meets via teleconference on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 pm CST.

Where can I find the forms and information needed to apply for IRB review?

The forms and information needed to get started on the IRB process are available from multiple sources, including the Document Sharing folder within thesis and/or action research course homepages; the IRB site, and the by contacting the IRB via email at kuirb@kaplan.edu.

Where do I send my research materials for review?

All research applications for IRB approval should be sent via e-mail to kuirb@kaplan.edu. The preferred method of submission is via e-mail. However, postal mailed and faxed applications will also be accepted. Please send postal submissions to Kaplan University, care of, Sarah Belcarz, 550 W. Van Buren, 7th Floor, Chicago, IL 60607. Faxed submissions should be sent to 312-777-6700 and clearly marked “Attn: Sarah Belcarz.”

How long will it take to receive feedback from the IRB?

Claim of exemption submissions (i.e., protocols posing minimal risk of harm to subjects) from KU administrators, faculty, or students will be channeled through an expedited process. Under this process, two IRB members will be assigned to review the submission. It’s anticipated that the two IRB members will review the submission and make a determination within five business days of receipt. Upon receipt of the IRB members’ determination, individual letters will be drafted and sent via e-mail to investigators, so it may take another 2-5 business days for feedback to reach investigators.

If a protocol is submitted for full/expedited review (i.e., protocols that do not qualify for a claim of exemption), it will take at least 5-7 business days past the IRB meeting to compile the minutes of that meeting and draft individual letters to investigators. Typically, letters are sent via e-mail, ensuring prompt feedback to investigators.

Who do I contact if I have questions or need additional information?

Please contact Domarina Oshana via e-mail at doshana@kaplan.edu or telephone at 312-777-6406.