

ORARC Tip Sheet: DEPARTMENT SELECTION ON AN IRB APPLICATION

Instructions:

All initial IRB applications in ESTR require the submitter to indicate which department the Principal Investigator (PI) belongs to. [Click this link](#) for detailed instructions on completing this section of the ESTR application (see #10). Once a study is approved, the department cannot be changed in the ESTR record. As such, the PI must ensure the correct department is selected at the outset for three reasons:

1. To ensure IRB applications are routed for review to the correct IRB: either the [Harvard Longwood Campus \(HLC\) IRB](#) or [Harvard University Area \(HUA\) IRB](#).
2. To ensure IRB applications are routed for review to the appropriate [HLC department-assigned IRB Review Specialist](#).
3. To ensure, if required, that the accurate Department Chair provides clearance for the study based on their familiarity with the specific PI who is responsible for the design, conduct, oversight, and reporting of the study.

Guidance:

There are several common scenarios that may raise questions about which department to select:

1. When the PI is unsure of what department to select:

- [A complete list of all Harvard Longwood Campus \(HLC\) departments can be found here.](#)
- HLC PIs should select the department where they hold their primary appointment.
- Do not select the 'IRB Office' department unless instructed to do so by IRB staff.
- If your department is not on this list, email irb@hsph.harvard.edu.

2. When the PI has a dual affiliation between a Harvard Longwood Campus (HLC) School and a Harvard University Area (HUA) School:

In order to determine which IRB a dual affiliate should submit to, review the [Dual Affiliation Tip Sheet](#) and the [Agent of Harvard Tip Sheet](#).

3. For student PIs:

- If a student lists themselves as the PI of a research project, they should select the department they are primarily affiliated with.
- If a student lists their faculty mentor as the PI of a research project, they should select the department their faculty mentor is primarily affiliated with.*
 - *For students who are affiliated with specific departments based on their degree (Scholars in Medicine, Global Health and Social Medicine, and Medical Education), they should list this department in ESTR, even if their faculty member is serving as PI and is not affiliated with the department. These departments are carved out for students enrolled in their program and are set up to have the appropriate Department Chair provide oversight, if necessary.

4. When the PI is conducting research on a topic that relates to another department:

Department selection must follow appointment, not research topic.

- For example, if a PI has an appointment in the Genetics Department but is conducting research on women's reproductive health, they should select the Genetics Department on their IRB application, not the OBGYN/Reproductive Biology Department.