

Instructions for Researchers using the Psychology Participant Pool

****Please read this form in its entirety before beginning your journey through SONA systems. Most questions will be answered and there is contact information on the bottom if any part of this is unclear.**

General Overview

1. Use of the Participant Pool is normally available to regular faculty members of the Department of Psychology, adjunct and affiliated faculty and those who work directly under their supervision. Consideration may be given to those from outside the department, subject to availability.
2. Approval to use the Participant Pool may be granted to anyone meeting the above criteria, provided that their research has passed the ethical review process of the University of Saskatchewan. If total demand exceeds resources, some restrictions may be imposed.
3. Approval is granted by submitting electronic consent and debriefing forms along with evidence indicating the research has already passed ethics review to the Participant Pool Administrator.

Overview of Benefits

The participant pool is designed and organized as a mutually beneficial arrangement between students in the introductory course and researchers in the Department of Psychology. The benefits to the researchers are clear and simple: they gain easy access to a sizeable set of willing participants for research.

The benefits for the students are also significant, but researchers must take care to ensure that they are realized. First, students may earn extra points on their course grade (up to a total of 6, 3 in PSY 120 and 3 in PSY 121). It is up to researchers to ensure that credit is properly given. Secondly, the pool provides opportunities for students to experience first-hand a variety of research areas and techniques. This is educationally the more important objective, but the extent to which it occurs depends a great deal on the behaviour of researchers. It is very important for the researcher to tell participants as much as is reasonable about the research, before they participate to ensure informed consent. Further, once the experiment is completed, it is essential that students are debriefed carefully and have their questions answered.

Restrictions

Given that the participant pool is used primarily as a means for students to increase course grades, it is only fair that everyone have equal access to the same number of studies. For this reason, we generally do not allow researchers to disqualify or restrict people based on demographic characteristics (i.e., “only women may participate in this study”). Instead, what we would prefer is that you write a clause in the description part of your study to the effect of: “For this study we are primarily interested in testing female participants. Males can participate for credit but their data will be discarded before analysis.” This way, everyone technically has equal access. In this particular scenario, you may still have males participating in your study and while this may seem inconvenient, it is necessary to ensure everyone has equal access. For example, there was a disproportionate amount of studies in 2010/2011 which were directed at female participants. Any questions beyond this can be directed to the participant pool administrator.

Procedures for Using the Pool:

1. First, contact the participant pool administrator to receive an account. The administrator will need to know your first and last name, your NSID, a contact number, your supervisor's name, how many participants you are requesting and your class standing (i.e. whether you are an honours student, 3rd year lab student, graduate student, RA, etc).
2. Ethics approval is a prerequisite for using the participant pool and an electronic copy (PDF) of the approval must be provided to the Participant Pool Administrator before your study will be made visible. Ordinarily, ethics will be obtained from the Behavioural REB (although some experiments may require approval from the Biomedical REB or both). If your research is low risk, then ethical approval will be obtained from the departmental REC. Electronic or paper versions of the approval may be submitted to the Participant Pool Administrator. You are welcome to create your study on SONA before you have received ethical approval, however it will not be approved until the aforementioned forms are received.
3. Copies of the consent and debriefing forms must be provided to the Participant Pool Administrator with the study number written behind the study name before your study will be made visible. The Participant Pool Administrator will assign a study number at this point. Students receive 1 credit for every 1/2 hr that they participate in research. Electronic copies of the consent and debriefing forms may be submitted. Please don't submit these until you have ethics approval.

Credit hours are a little confusing and they work as such: 1 credit for every 1/2 hour or less that people participate and 2 credits for anywhere over 1/2 hour and less than or equal to 60 minutes. What is confusing is that they are allocated as credit hours which means 1 credit HOUR = 2 credits. An example is provided for 300 level researchers below. Unless otherwise noted, standard credit allocation is as follows: 1 credit hour = 2 credits.

a) 3rd year researchers (3xx level students) = **10 credit hours**. Note: each student can get up to 10 credit hours (20 participants if the study is 30 minutes or less, 10 participants if it is more than 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes). If two researchers are collaborating in their 300 level class, which is often the case, they are welcome to combine their credits for a total of 20 credit hours.

b) Honours students = **25 credit hours**

c) Graduate Students = **75 credit hours**

d) Professors/Instructors = **100 credit hours**

4. Accessing SONA systems to post your study. You may request to obtain a research account on SONA systems prior to ethical approval. This will allow you to obtain an experiment number, which must be included on your consent and debriefing forms following the experiment title and should be used in all communications with the Participant Pool Administrator. The Participant Pool Administrator will issue you an ID and password for the online system (<http://usask.sona-systems.com/>). At this time you can post your study online but it will not become visible to participants until the Administrator has approved your consent and debriefing forms and received confirmation of ethics approval. The Participant Pool Administrator will then approve your study and make it visible, allowing you to create timeslots for testing. Instruction in how to use the pool can also be obtained by emailing the research administrator at cmcl88@usask.ca

5. Running the study. A certain level of defaults on appointment times is inevitable. Many legitimate emergencies may arise to cause participants to miss their times; others may be unable to find the location or otherwise become confused. As discussed above, researchers can help themselves by choosing a memorable name and ensuring that time and locations are clearly indicated.

If for any reason the researcher cannot appear at the scheduled time, he or she must notify the participants as well as the Participant Pool Administrator by email as much in advance as possible. Students are also responsible for notifying the experimenters if they need to cancel. Cases where participants violate this rule (i.e. participants routinely cancel appointments) should be reported to the Participant Pool Administrator. Our system also allows for automatic reminders to be sent to the participants about scheduled appointments. If participants are scheduled individually and no-shows are costly, it may be useful for experimenters to send additional reminders the evening before appointments.

Research procedures vary so much that it is not possible to give any exhaustive or definitive rules for interacting with participants. However, researchers must at all times follow the general ethical principles for research, **including a verbal statement regarding their right to refuse to participate or terminate their participation in the study without loss of research credit.** If a participant is late, Researchers are also required to **wait 15 minutes** before leaving the testing area. If you are group testing and are unable to wait please place a sign on the door and ask participants to write down their participant number or their NSID so they do not get penalized.

Participants are strangers who are giving their time to assist the researcher: **participants MUST be treated with respect, and nothing should be done to them that would demean or insult them or diminish their dignity.** When in doubt, err on the side of the participant. Debriefing and discussion are significant parts of the educational experience for participants. A clear explanation of the research purposes and methods should be given and all questions answered.

6. Recording and reporting participation. It is important to record the SONA number assigned to each participant or collect their NSID to ensure that credit is assigned to the appropriate individual. It is very important you **do not** collect their student numbers. For each 1/2 hour, or portion thereof, of participation in a study, students will receive 1 credit that may count as 1% of their final grades in either Psychology 120 or 121. **Please note we are no longer conducting in class mass testing.** In order to receive credit participant must sign up on SONA systems prior to the study. If you are interested in testing a large group of participants please contact the Participant Pool Administrator to book arts 153. You can test up to 50 people in that room.

Each researcher will use the on-line booking system (<http://usask.sona-systems.com/>) to set appointments for students to sign into, cancel appointments and assign credits to the student for participation. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that credits are processed in a timely fashion, **within 48 hours of the student's appointment.** This has been a problem in 2010/2011. We have had a few researchers setting end dates well into the future and not granting credits for online participation for weeks. To minimize unnecessary stress and confusion please grant credits promptly.

7. Non-participation. Students have the right to decline to participate in any study, or to withdraw at any time. If they decide not to take part, they still have the right to receive credit. However, to receive credit they must go observe a demonstration of the experiment and go through the debriefing. Participants who refuse to participate or withdrawal from the study should be treated

with the same dignity and respect as those who participate fully, and the researcher should answer their questions as thoroughly and readily as any others. Please note, participants who withdraw from a 30 minute study will receive one credit but students that withdraw from a one hour study will only receive one credit instead of two, providing they spend less than 30 minutes with the researcher. If this situation arises please contact the Participant Pool Administrator to assign the credits. Students can be assessed the following categories of credits/penalties:

- 1 credit
- 2 credits
- no show, no penalty
- no show, -1 mark penalty

A student may cancel their appointment without any penalty, if they do so before the time of the appointment. If a student does not come at the appointed time, no credit will be given and a penalty may be assessed. Typically, students who fail to show up for an appointment are assessed a penalty of -1 mark, regardless of the value of the experiment. However, upon missing an appointment, students may contact the researcher and reschedule the appointment. If they turn up for the rescheduled appointment, then they are given the credit for participation and the penalty is removed. Moreover, if students contact the researcher after the scheduled time for the study, then the researcher should not assess a penalty. That is, regardless of what the participant says, if they contact the researcher, they should not be given a penalty – the content of the email (or phone call) has no bearing on whether or not the penalty will be rescinded. Again, it is impossible to anticipate all possible scenarios, but give the participant the benefit of the doubt. Students may appeal penalties to the Participant Pool Administrator.

8. Suspension of privileges. Use of the participant pool is a privilege. When researchers are given permission to take advantage of it, they assume the following responsibilities:
 - Informing participants clearly in advance of what will be required of them in the study, and where and when they must go to participate
 - Keeping all appointments made with participants (or contacting the Participant Pool Administrator so the Administrator can meet their participants when emergencies force cancellations)
 - Making accurate records of research participation
 - Providing clear debriefing and answering participants' questions as best as possible
 - Providing credits to students in a timely fashion, preferably within 48 hours of participant participation;
 - Treating all participants in a respectful, polite, and professional manner, and in accordance with the Ethical principles of research endorsed by the Tricouncil, the University of Saskatchewan, and by the CPA.

9. Obtaining Access to the Participant Pool: Tips and Timeline
 - Apply for ethics approval as early as possible
 - Obtain a researcher account from the Participant Pool Administrator. Email cmc188@mail.usask.ca with the following information:
 - your full name
 - NSID
 - contact phone number
 - your class standing (3rd year, honours, grad, researcher assistant, etc)

- your supervisor's name
 - how many participants you are requesting
- The Participant Pool Administrator will assign you a study number. Please make sure the study number appears behind the study name at the top of both your consent form and debriefing form and behind your study name on your online posting. Please also use this number when communicating with the participants and the Administrator.
- Once you have your ethics approval send a copy of your consent form, debriefing form and ethics approval letters to the Participant Pool Administrator. Important points to speed up the approval process
 - Make sure your study number is behind the study name on the consent and debriefing forms
 - The words “without loss of research credit” must appear in the withdraw section
 - If your study is one hour long you must add in the withdraw section “If you withdraw prior to half an hour into the study you will receive one credit. If you withdraw after thirty minutes you will receive two credits. One credit is assigned for every half an hour or portion thereof.”
 - The statement “If you decide to withdraw, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed beyond recovery” must appear on the withdraw section
 - Your debriefing form must be close to one page in length and must adequately explain your study in detail as well as the benefits to research or the population as a whole (e.g. why is your research important). Keep in mind that you are writing this for introductory students so it should be in plain and easy to understand language and not use sophisticated and technical terms.
 - Online studies must remove the line “A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records” and replace it with “Please hit print screen to obtain a copy for your records. Alternatively you may contact the researcher at the contact information provided above and one will be sent to you.” These lines must also appear on the debriefing form.
- Once the Participant Pool Administrator has received the 3 forms and approved them your study will be made visible and credits will be assigned. You can then sign out a room from the Psychology Office and post time slots for your study.
 - It is very important to make sure you sign out a room prior to posting your timeslots. If you do not include a room number on your online post participants will not know where to go. Second, you may not be able to obtain a room during the time you want.

If you are using the arts and science computers in Arts 31:

Please note: researchers are not allowed to sign into more than one computer at a time. This will result in suspension of your account. If you are planning on using the computers in Arts 31 please inform the Participant Pool Administrator. The Arts and Science IT personal have agreed to provide us with IT support to insure all our participants can log on. They will provide this technology support from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and then from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm. Please email the Participant Pool Administrator at least one week before your scheduled testing time so he/she can set up the IT support for you.

Failure to meet these responsibilities may result in suspension or cancellation of access to the participant pool.

For 2015 the Participant Pool Administrator is Colleen Cochran and she can be reached via email cmc188@mail.usask.ca