

## **Guidelines for Researchers Using the Psychology Subject Pool**

The Psychology Subject Pool is an important resource for researchers in the Brock Psychology Department, including faculty members, graduate, and undergraduate students.

The Department considers it very important that researchers be respectful and considerate toward the psychology students who participate in the subject pool. As a matter of basic research ethics, all research participants are entitled to decent treatment. The experience of participating in research is an important aspect of the education of psychology students at all levels. Research participation provides a valuable opportunity to learn about the content and the design of psychological research, as well as the process of collecting data from human research participants. Therefore, it is important for these students to be exposed to researchers who act professionally and take the time to explain to purpose of the study and answer any questions. Many students in the Psychology Research Participant Pool will, themselves, go on to use the subject pool as researchers, making it especially important that researchers set a good example for these students.

### **Guidelines for Posting Studies**

**Access to SONA** for researchers is limited to Psychology faculty (including cross-appointments), Psychology graduate students, and Psychology undergraduate majors and combined majors.

**Credits given** must be equal to the duration of the study (i.e., 30 minutes = .5 credits, 60 minutes = 1 credit, etc.). Duration of studies must be in increments of .5 hours.

**Credit or payment.** In the field “credit/pay” you must choose one or the other. In cases where participants are compensated for their participation in the study, you may set it up as a paid study and specify the compensation amount. The payment field is text, so you do not need to type in an exact amount, but can type in anything like “Amazon Gift Card”, or even indicate a variable payment based on performance. If participants are compensated *and* they receive credit, you should set it up as a credit study and indicate additional compensation in the study’s information section.

**Studies involving >2 hours of participation.** SONA is not equipped to split credits across multiple courses. Researchers conducting a study worth > 2 hours should contact the Graduate Administrative Assistant prior to posting so that students can receive the credit earned and designate credits across multiple courses.

**On-line studies.** Upon receiving a request to post an on-line study, the Graduate Administrative Assistant will submit the request to the Psychology IT support staff to ensure that the study is linked to SONA. This will ensure prompt awarding of research participation credit upon completion. Research participation credits can be pro-rated for students who withdraw prior to completion. Researchers should post times for on-line studies (e.g., in 1-week blocks) so that credit is given in a suitable time frame.

## Guidelines for Course Instructors

1. **Researchers must minimize any perceived coercion to participate in research.** Students within subject pools may be considered vulnerable because they are in a subordinate position to their instructors who require or promote research participation. Further, it is important to be sensitive to the power imbalance inherent in the instructor–student relationship and the existence of possible conflicts of interest related to the dual roles of instructors who are also researchers. Thus, instructors should avoid being able to identify in which study any particular student participated.

2. **All course instructors offering research participation credit provide students with equivalent alternatives to research participation.** Such alternative activities should be comparable to research participation in time commitment, effort, accessibility, difficulty, and attractiveness. These non-research options should allow the student to meet course requirements or earn extra credit to the same extent as research involvement. Further, students should not be penalized (e.g., lose marks) for not participating in research or withdrawing from a study.

3. **Course instructors should notify the Graduate Administrative Assistant** if they plan to offer research participation credit and upload their class list to SONA. This will allow students to determine for which course they would like to receive credit after completing each study.

4. **For all courses offering research participation credit, no more than 50% of the credits can be earned via participation in on-line studies.** This is in keeping with the department’s decision to apply this rule for students in PSYC 1F90. SONA does not allow this amount to vary across courses and so we must apply this across the board. We can re-visit this at the end of the academic year, but this restriction should be noted on your course outline.

## Guidelines for Running Studies

Listed below are guidelines to follow when conducting research with human subjects, in general, and with Psychology Subject Pool participants, in particular.

**Arrive on time for your data collection session.** If you must cancel a session, use SONA to notify students of cancellation at least 24 hours ahead. For rare last-minute emergencies, ask a colleague or an administrative assistant to put a brief note of explanation on the door of the room in which the session was to be held, and then use SONA to make alternate arrangements. If you are unable to cancel in advance and a participant(s) shows up, that student is entitled to receive credit for having participated in that study session.

**Be polite toward all participants.**

**Explain consent procedures carefully.** Written explanations are useful, but be alert to any questions that students might have, and answer those questions clearly.

**Ensure that your consent form indicates clearly and prominently the “credit value” of your study,** and that the description of the estimated duration is consistent with that value. Credits can be awarded in increments of 0.5, and durations must be indicated as being up to the corresponding number of half-hours. For example, a 1-credit study requires “up to 1 hour” of participation time; it must not require more time and it must not be advertised as requiring less time.

**Provide the participant with a signed copy of the consent form.** Photocopied signatures are not acceptable.

**Help participants, as needed, with instructions or procedures of the research study.**

**Respect the confidentiality of participants' responses and performance.** Do not look at participants' individual responses, and do not allow participants to see each others' responses. Avoid situations in which participants might be embarrassed by the appearance of poor performance on some task, unless this is itself an REB-approved part of the experimental procedure.

**If participants appear to be stressed by the procedures, remind him/her of the right to withdraw from the study without penalty.** This step is generally not necessary in studies that are specifically designed to induce stress, and in which students have consented to the relevant procedures, unless the participant is experiencing greater stress than is anticipated for those procedures. Be sure to report any unanticipated negative events to the REB.

**Debrief participants.** Hand the debriefing sheet directly to each participant, and remind her/him that she/he will need this information for future reference. Give participants time to look it over and let them know that you will be happy to answer any questions they might have. Consider taking the time to provide an oral explanation as you hand out the debriefing sheet so as to enhance the educational value of participation.

**Enter participants' credit on SONA within 24 hours of participation.**

Use SONA to record which students have participated in the study and to grant research credit, where applicable.

**Record "no-shows" within 24 hours of the missed appointment.** In the event that someone signed up for a study, but did not show up *and* did not contact you (either directly or through SONA) to cancel the session, record this non-participation of the student on SONA.

Note that participants can cancel their session up to 12 hours before the timeslot. If a participant does contact you to cancel within that 12-hour period with a valid excuse for not showing up, you have the option of granting the participant an excused no-show.

The Department expects that researchers will behave professionally and will generally find it easy to follow these guidelines. For this reason, the Department will not provide intensive oversight of researchers. However, to ensure that subject pool participants are treated properly, there is a mechanism for participants to complain about any perceived instances of mistreatment by researchers, including absenteeism, lateness, rudeness, or ethically questionable actions. Specifically, students will first mention concerns to their teaching assistants, who will then direct serious complaints to the Chair of the Department, who will then discuss the concerns with the researchers. Normally, such concerns can be addressed without further formal action by the Department. However, in the case of serious and/or repeated instances of unprofessional conduct, a researcher's access to the subject pool may be suspended or terminated.