

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. In addition, the experience of participating in research is an important aspect of the education of psychology students, particularly those in PSYC 1F90. Not only do those students learn about the content and the design of psychological research, but they also learn about the process of collecting data from human research participants. Therefore, it is important for these students to be exposed to researchers who act professionally. Many of the Psychology Subject Pool students will, themselves, go on to use the subject pool as researchers, so it is 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 some special circumstances a researcher might wish to offer a combination of credit and payment (e.g., 1 credit plus \$10 for a 2-hour study), in which case he or she should contact the Research Officer with the request.

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. Please bear in mind that if participants show up to a study which you were unable to cancel in advance, they are 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.

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.