# Instructions for Researchers Using the Psychology Participant Pool

### The Participant Pool website is http://usask.sona-systems.com/
Please read this document in its entirety before beginning your journey through SONA systems.
**There is contact information on the last page if anything is unclear.**

## General Overview

1. Use of the Participant Pool is available to regular faculty members of the Department of Psychology 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 Coordinator.

## Overview of Benefits

The Participant Pool is designed and organized as a mutually beneficial arrangement between students in introductory Psychology courses 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 bonus marks to their course grade (up to maximum of 5% per course in the Fall/Winter Terms; up to a maximum of 3% per course in Spring/Summer Terms). **It is up to researchers to ensure that credit is properly given.** Secondly, the Participant 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 has 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, you can write a clause in the eligibility field of your study to the effect of: "We are primarily interested in testing female participants. Others can participate for course credit but their data may 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. **Direct questions about study restrictions to the Participant Pool Coordinator.**

# How to Use the Participant Pool

1. *Contact the Participant Pool Coordinator to receive a researcher account.* Please include:
   - your full name
   - your NSID
   - your supervisor's name
   - your class standing (e.g. 3rd Year student, Honours student, Graduate student, R.A.)
   - how many participants you need to test

2. *Create your study on the Participant Pool by logging in with your researcher account.* Select **'Studies' > 'Add New Study'**. You will be given four kinds of studies to choose from:

   - Standard Study (if meeting with participants in person **once**)
   - Multi-Part Standard Study (if meeting with participants **two-four times/multiple days**)
   - Online Internal Survey Study (if creating an online study **on the Participant Pool** itself)
   - Online External Study (if you have already created an online study on **another website**)

   To select a type of study, click **'credit'** under the study type and **'continue'**. Now you should be able to fill in the appropriate fields <u>with information directly from your consent form</u> including:
   - Study Title
   - Description (a few sentences; similar to the procedure section of your consent form)
   - Duration (**must** be in 30-minute increments, e.g. 30, 60, 90 minutes)
   - Credits (every 30 minutes is worth 1 credit)
   - Researchers (**must all appear on your consent form**)
     *** *If a researcher on your consent form does not have a researcher account yet, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator to create one for them.*

   Additionally, you will need to fill in the following information:
   - **Eligibility Requirements** (if you are seeking a particular demographic - if not, leave blank)
   *** <u>Studies must be available to all participants. You should enter something like:</u>
   *"We are primarily interested in participants with X. Others may participate for course credit but their data may be discarded prior to analysis."*
   - Study URL (only if creating an **Online External Study**)
   - **REB Approval Code & REB Approval Expiration**

   *Ethics approval is a pre-requisite for using the Participant Pool and must be obtained before your study will be made visible to participants.* 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. A study will not be approved until full ethical approval has been granted.

3. *Once your study is created, e-mail the following forms to the Participant Pool Coordinator:*
   - Ethics Approval (preferably in PDF format)
   - Consent Form (preferably in Word format)
   - Debriefing Form (preferably in Word Format)

   **\*These three forms MUST be sent to the Coordinator before your study can be approved.**

4. *Wait for the Participant Pool Coordinator to approve your study. When your study is approved, you will receive an e-mail notification.* When approving your study, the Participant Pool Coordinator will:
   - Assign your study a SONA Study number on the Participant Pool (e.g. A01)
   - Grant you credit hours which will allow you to post time-slots to test participants

   Credit hours work as follows: **1 credit hour will grant 2 credits on the Participant Pool.**
   If you are running a <u>2-credit study</u>, then each participant will use-up 1 credit hour.
   E.g. If granted 50 credit hours, you would be able to test up to 50 participants.
   If you are running a <u>1-credit study</u>, then each participant will use-up half of 1 credit hour.
   E.g. If granted 50 credit hours, you would be able to test up to 100 participants.

   The amount of credit hours **each** researcher is granted to **a study** depends on their year of study.
   **a)** 3rd year researchers (300-level students) = **10 credit hours**
   **b)** Honours students = **25 credit hours**
   **c)** Research assistants = **50 credit hours**
   **d)** Graduate Students = **75 credit hours**
   **e)** Professors/Instructors = **100 credit hours**

   Researchers may combine their credit hours towards a particular study **as long as each person appears on the consent form of said study**. New credit hours are always granted at the beginning of September, January, May and July. If you are concerned about the number of credit hours you have, or if you run out and need more, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator.

5. *Once your study is approved, you may post time-slots and begin to test participants.* When posting time-slots, please ensure that your time and location is clear and correct so that your participants can find where to go when conducting a Standard Study. If you are **group-testing** or **conducting an online study**, it is highly recommended that you **ask for participant's 6-digit identifier code (SONA participant number)** so you can tell who completed your study and who did not.

   **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 Coordinator by e-mail 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 Coordinator. If a participant is late, **researchers are 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 6-digit identifier code (SONA participant number) so that you can mark them as 'excused' for missing your appointment.

   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.** 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. *After a participant has participated in your study, it is your duty to award them credit(s) for their time.* In order to receive credit for participating, a participant **MUST** be registered in a time-slot for you study. **It is important to record the 6-digit identifier code (SONA participant number) assigned to each participant while you are testing them to ensure that credit is assigned to the appropriate individual.** If you ever run into a situation where you are unsure of whether a participant should be granted credit, e-mail the Participant Pool Coordinator with the participant's 6-digit identifier code. It is very important you **do not** collect their student numbers or NSIDs.

    For each 1/2 hour of participation in a study, or portion thereof, students will receive 1 credit that may count as 1% towards a final grade. **Please note we are no longer conducting in class mass testing**. If you are interested in testing a large group of participants, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator to book available classroom space.

    All credits can be awarded by logging into the Participant Pool with your research account, and clicking on the study that the participant did. Scroll down to the bottom of the study's page, click **'View/Administer Time Slots'** and click **'Modify'** to the right of the participant's time-slot. Select **'Participated'** next to the participant's ID Code and then click **'Update Sign-Ups'** to finish.

7. *If a participant withdraws, you should still award them credit.* 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**. **Ensure that the Participants keep a copy of the Debrief.** Participants who refuse to participate or withdraw 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. **Participants who withdraw from a 30-minute study will receive 1 credit but participants that withdraw from a 60-minute study will only receive 1 credit instead of 2, providing they spend less than 30 minutes with the researcher. If this situation arises please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator to assign the credits**.

8. *If a participant does not show-up to your study, you can assess if they should be penalized or not.* In **'View/Administer Time Slots'** click **'Modify'** to the right of the participant's time-slot. For no-shows, you can select either **'Unexcused'** or **'Excused'** next to the participant's ID Code and then click **'Update Sign-Ups'** to finish.
    - **Unexcused** – the participant no-showed **and** did <u>not</u> contact you. This option will penalize the participant 1 credit on the Participant Pool.
    - **Excused** – the participant no-showed **but** contacted you to explain why they missed the appointment. This option will <u>not</u> penalize them, but will <u>not</u> grant them credit either. Often, participants will contact you **after** you have marked them as 'Unexcused'. If this happens, change their time-slot from '**Unexcused'** to '**Excused'**. No matter what the participant's reasoning or how long it took them to contact you, you should remove the penalty.
    - **You may also reschedule with a participant, so that they have an opportunity to earn the credit(s) that they missed.** If this happens, and the participant does participate, change their original time-slot from **'Excused'** to **'Participated'**.

    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 any of penalties to the Participant Pool Coordinator.

9. *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 in advance your study's requirements, procedure, time and location.
   ▪ Keeping all appointments made with participants (contact the Coordinator in emergencies).
   ▪ Making accurate records of research participation.
   ▪ Providing clear debriefing and answering participants' questions as best as possible.
   ▪ **Granting credits promptly, 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 U of S, and the CPA.

**Failure to meet these responsibilities can and will result in a deactivation of your account.**

10. *Things to Remember*
    ▪ Ensure that the following words appear in the **withdraw section** of your consent form:
       ○ **"You may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without penalty of any sort, and without loss of research credit**. If you decide to withdraw, your data will be destroyed beyond recovery."

    ▪ If your study is worth **2-credits**, you must add in the withdraw section:
       ○ "If you withdraw prior to 30-minutes into the study you will receive 1 credit. If you withdraw after 30-minutes, you will receive 2 credits. 1 credit is assigned for every half an hour or portion thereof."

    ▪ 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. **Ensure that the Participants keep a copy of the Debrief (i.e. give a printed copy or indicate to screenshot the screen).**

    ▪ On the consent form, **online studies** must:
       ○ **Remove** the signature of consent line
       ○ **Replace** it with the phrase, **"By clicking the consent button at the bottom of the page, YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study."**
       ○ **Add a 'yes/no' button to consent.**
          1. If a participant clicks 'yes', they should be taken to your study.
          2. If a participant clicks 'no', they should be directed out of your study.

    ▪ On the consent & debriefing forms**, online studies** must:
       ○ **Remove** the line: "A copy of this form has been given to me for my records"
       ○ **Replace** it with: **"Please hit print screen to obtain a copy of this form for your records. Alternatively, you may contact the researcher at the contact information provided above and one will be sent to you."**

- COVID-19 RULES: Although the Participant Pool has mainly shifted to Online Research Studies, in-person testing (i.e. Standard Studies) can still be accommodated only if the Researchers have obtained REB Approval to conduct them. Requests for in-person data collection involving human participants will require either a Certificate of Approval or Certificate of Approval Amendment with "COVID-19 Safety Plan" listed as an approved document, along with the approved safety plan itself. Contact the Ethics Board for more information regarding this new protocol. The University's rules may change as developments occur, so please contact the Ethics Board and Participant Pool Coordinator for the most up to date information regarding in-person testing.

- If you are booking rooms, make sure you book the room **first, before** posting time-slots to ensure availability. If you are interested in booking **Arts 31 to test groups of participants**, you **MUST** contact the Participant Pool Coordinator **at least 2 weeks in advance.** You **CANNOT** login to multiple computers at one time with your PAWS account, so the Coordinator and IT need to grant you special access to the room.

# **Contact Information for the Participant Pool Coordinator:**

**Lisa Poon**
**research.admin@usask.ca**
**Arts 46**
**Monday – Friday**
**9 am – 5 pm**