



**Syracuse University**  
Department of Psychology

**A Researcher's Guide to SONA and the Department of  
Psychology Research Participation Pool**

Updated 5/18/18

**Important Dates for the 2018-19 Academic Year**

**Fall Semester 2018:**

**Opens: Wednesday September 5, 2018**

**Closes: Thursday December 7, 2018 at 5:00pm**

**Spring Semester 2019:**

**Opens: Wednesday January 23, 2019**

**Closes: Tuesday April 30, 2019 at 5:00pm**

## **General Information**

### **About the Psychology Research participation pool**

The research participation pool is an essential and valuable component of the department's teaching and research effort. The pool exists to allow students to gain first-hand experience with how research is conducted and to facilitate research by members of the department. The pool is a shared resource, therefore it is critical that all users of the research participation pool convey to the participants an ethical, professional, and humane image. By using the pool, you agree to read and follow all rules in this document and others sent via email. Failure to do so may result in loss of privileges.

### **Who can use the pool?**

Only Psychology Department researchers may use the human research participation pool (HSP) for data collection. "Researcher" is defined:

1. Faculty members (tenure-track, visiting, adjunct, or affiliated). Graduate students, post docs, and research staff supervised by faculty members.
2. Undergraduates in the Psychology Honors, Allport, PRIDE, and McNair Program, supervised by their Psychology faculty advisor.

All studies must have IRB approval before they can use the HSP. Faculty members are responsible for ensuring that all staff and students working in their lab as well as their experiments are in full compliance with the ethical standards of the IRB, SU, and Department of Psychology guidelines.

### **The Psychology Research Participation System (SONA)**

The online system, SONA, will be used for managing many aspects of the research participation pool. The system functions in accordance with contemporary privacy laws and is in compliance with SU's institutional review board (IRB).

The system efficiently fulfills many needs of participants and researchers alike. For example, it allows potential participants to browse all currently approved experiments, it permits researchers to schedule/manage appointments with participants, and it is equipped to issue e-mail reminders about upcoming experiments and appointments.

Researchers must first obtain an account by contacting the Research Coordinator ([syr.psy.rpp@gmail.com](mailto:syr.psy.rpp@gmail.com)). The SONA system can be found online at <http://syr.sona-systems.com/>.

Please note that you must have a separate account for each role that you play in SONA. For example, a researcher cannot access student information and vice versa. If you are both an instructor and a researcher, you must have two different accounts.

## Prescreening

When a participants sign up with the SONA system, they are asked if they would like to take a prescreening survey. Prescreening serves 2 important goals:

- 1) Allows researchers to screen for participants in such a way that only eligible individuals see your study posting. (e.g., If you only want smokers with diabetes to sign up, you can set three demographic inclusion criteria. If you want only individuals who score below 10 on the Beck Depression Inventory, you can place the BDI in the Prescreen, have SONA sum the scores and then set inclusion criteria based on defined scores.)
- 2) Allows researchers to collect demographic information on the research participation pool (e.g., the number of participants who score below 10 on the BDI)

In both cases, the specific survey questions must be approved in your own individual IRB application prior to inclusion in prescreening. The Prescreening Survey is a collection of IRB-approved questions. The Prescreening Survey is updated once prior to the start of each semester. You may not add new questions mid-semester. Deadlines are distributed each year in early summer.

Importantly, under our IRB approval the Prescreening Survey *may not* be used to collect data from individual participants or for a specific study. In other words, researchers may not see responses to the Prescreening Survey for individuals.

### *Scheduling Participants based on Prescreen Responses*

Select the requirements by clicking on the “Prescreening Restrictions” button when creating or modifying your study. SONA automatically scores items from your measure and then displays your study **ONLY** to those participants who meet your eligibility criteria. You can set eligibility criteria based on responses to single items or based on the sum or average of a set of items. You can choose any range for the score, e.g., people who score < 10 or only people who score between 10 and 15 on your measure.

If you have an OR criteria, then you must set up a study for each threshold.

- For example if you need 50 female and 50 males, then set up two identical studies and set the restriction to male for one and female for the other.
- For example, if you want participants who score less than 10 or greater than 50, then set up two identical studies and set the restrictions accordingly.

## Requesting Research participation pool Hours

### Allocated Hours

Research hours will be distributed 3 times during the semester (approximately every 4 weeks). These hours will be divided among researchers interested in using the pool during that allocation period. **You must apply for each allocation period separately by completing a survey sent by email to the PSY faculty and grad student listservs.** Everyone who applies will share the allocated hours. There is no fixed number of hours given to each researcher.

To receive hours during an allocation period, you must apply by the deadline. If you apply after the deadline, you must wait for the next allocation period to receive additional hours. As a once per semester courtesy, we will deposit 25 research hours into your account if you begin a study between allocation periods.

**Any hours not used during an allocation period will be returned to the pool and reallocated during the following allocation period.** Therefore you should only apply for hours if you plan to use them during that allocation period. Hours may not be saved for later in the semester.

It is critical that researchers post hours throughout the semester so that students have sufficient opportunities to fulfill their course requirements. The allocation system is tiered to encourage use of the pool early in the semester. The number of hours distributed among applications during allocation period 1 > allocation period 2 > allocation period 3.

### Ratio

The ratio for assigning hours is 1x:2x:4x for Distinguished Undergraduates or Affiliated Faculty : PSY Graduate Students : PSY Faculty, respectively.

### Sharing Hours

Researchers may not share hours, you may not give hours to a friend or colleague. Only the researchers listed together on the IRB application are permitted to 'share' hours when they are working on a collaborative project.

### Open Season

The last week of classes is open season; researchers may post unlimited hours. Open season may begin earlier if necessary.

### *Important Notes about Requesting Hours*

1. We encourage labs to share a SONA username when possible. This is of special concern when a lab has multiple undergraduate research assistants. For maximum efficiency, it is best to have a single username to which hours are allocated. Faculty may then instruct each individual research assistant how many hours to use and what study to run. (Helpful hint: under this strategy you may not know which undergraduate posted which timeslot. I ask my students to include their initial in the location, e.g., 455 Huntington Hall (AC) so that I can track who posted what session in the event of a problem.)

2. 30 minutes of participation = ½ credit (31-60 minutes = 1 credit, etc), see "How to Assign Credit" below

## A Researcher's Guide to Posting Studies on SONA

IRB must be obtained prior to posting a study on SONA. Note that it takes an average of 4 weeks to obtain approval for a typical application.

### The 5 Steps

1. If you are a new researcher (or if you have forgotten your SONA username and password), request a username from the Research Coordinator (RC).

### If your study is new:

2. Log onto SONA (<http://syr.sona-systems.com/>) using your SONA username and password.
3. Click **Add a New Study** and fill in the blanks. See the section of this document labeled 'Specific Instructions for Entering Study Information' for more information.
4. Once you've added the study (you will see: System Message: Study added.) you must click the **Send a Request** button which sends a message to RC to activate the study. If you do not click this button, the RC will not know that you are waiting for your study to be activated.
5. Submit Form A and IRB Certificate of Approval to the RC. SONA has a feature allowing you to upload files when you request approval for your study. Please use this feature to submit the Certificate of Approval from the IRB and Form A. Form A is available here: <http://psychology.syr.edu/resources/ResearchParticipationPool.html>
6. Your study will not be activated by the RC until the paperwork listed in #5 is submitted.

### If you are reactivating a study:

2. Log onto SONA (<http://syr.sona-systems.com/>) using your SONA username and password.
3. Click **My Studies**. Find the name of the study you wish to reactivate and click Study Info. Update the consent form information if necessary (by clicking Change Study Information). Be sure to click Save Changes to save the information.
4. Once you've updated the study (you will see: System Message: Study updated.) you must click the **Send a Request** button which sends a message to RC to activate the study. If you do not click this button, the RC will not know that you are waiting for your study to be activated.
5. Submit Form A and IRB Certificate of Approval to the RC. SONA has a feature allowing you to upload files when you request approval for your study. Please use this feature to submit the Certificate of Approval from the IRB and Form A. Form A is available here: <http://psychology.syr.edu/resources/ResearchParticipationPool.html>
6. Your study will not be activated by the RC until the paperwork listed in #5 is submitted.

*Upon receiving complete paperwork and a request for activation, the RC will check all paperwork and confirm that the SONA information is correct. Only then can your study be activated. Typically studies will not be approved over the weekend.*

### **Important Notes about Posting Studies**

- When any change is made to the study information, the study automatically becomes inactive (i.e., participants cannot see it or sign up). There is no warning, email, or any other notice about this. If you make a change to your study, be sure to email the Research Coordinator and request reactivation.

- Studies are automatically inactive when the IRB approval expires. To avoid disruption of data collection, be sure to contact the Research Coordinator and submit updated paperwork as soon as your IRB is renewed
- Your study description may not contain any information intended to coerce students to sign up (e.g., only 10 minutes! or receive research credit in your PJs)
- The study description may not contain information about timing or credits because that information is part of the scheduling system and including it in the study description leads to confusion.
- Do not assume that students will abide by requirements you include in the study description (they often do not). If your study requires specific qualities, use prescreening to ensure that you have appropriate participants. If you must communicate specific information to participants prior to their appointment, use email (e.g., no perfume, no alcohol for 24 hr prior to study, etc)
- If you have a study that is complicated, please see the Director of the pool before posting the study. It is best to set up the study to eliminate any potential problems before participants are involved.
- Likewise, use the Director as a resource when submitting your protocol to the IRB. Sometimes the particular IRB reviewer is unfamiliar with the research participation pool IRB and will require you to adopt a protocol that is simply not possible via the pool. See the Director in advance to help you set up a protocol that is consistent with the research participation pool and the IRB.

## Specific Instructions for Entering Study Information on SONA

### Select Study Type

**Standard Study** This is a one-session, in-lab experiment.

**Two-Part Study** - Select this if the participant must return for more than one session.

**Online Survey Study** - You must be prepared to enter your survey questions (instructions are provided in the manual provided by SONA). This is not done by the research coordinator.

**Online External Study** - Only select this option if you have IRB approval for an online external study.

### Basic Information

**Study Name** - This is the name participants will see.

**Brief Abstract** - Leave this blank. Anything entered here will be deleted before your study is posted.

**Detailed Description** - This is visible to participants. It must be exactly as per protocol. For consistency and to avoid confusion, please do not put any indicators of the amount of time your participants will spend in the study here. This information is recorded below under Duration and Credits. If you include this information here, it will be deleted before your study is posted. Your description must not be coercive.

**Eligibility Requirements** - Information entered here is visible to participants but not enforced through prescreening. Prescreening requirements are set later.

**Duration** - Must be in increments of 30 minutes (should be total duration for a two-part study). For example, if your study is 80 minutes, you must list the duration as 1.5 hours.

**Credits** - Based on duration, 30 mins = 1/2 credit. For example, if your study is 80 minutes, you must give 1.5 credits.

**Preparation** - Do not enter anything here.

**Researcher** - This will be automatically filled in based on your login information.

**IRB Approval Code** - Find this information on your Certificate of Approval issued by the SU IRB. It will look something like this: 07-218

**IRB Approval Expiration** - Find this information on your Certificate of Approval issued by the SU IRB.

**Active Study** - select yes if you want participants to see your study

### Advanced Settings

**Pre-Requisites** - at your discretion per your IRB approval

**Disqualifiers** - at your discretion per your IRB approval

**Course Restrictions** - none

**Invitation Code** - leave blank

**Is this a web-based study?** - automatically completed based on your response to Select Study Type

**Should survey participants be identified only by a random, unique ID code?** - This only appears for online surveys, respond at your discretion per your IRB approval

**Study URL** – only use this line if you have an external online study

**Participant Sign-Up Deadline** - at your discretion

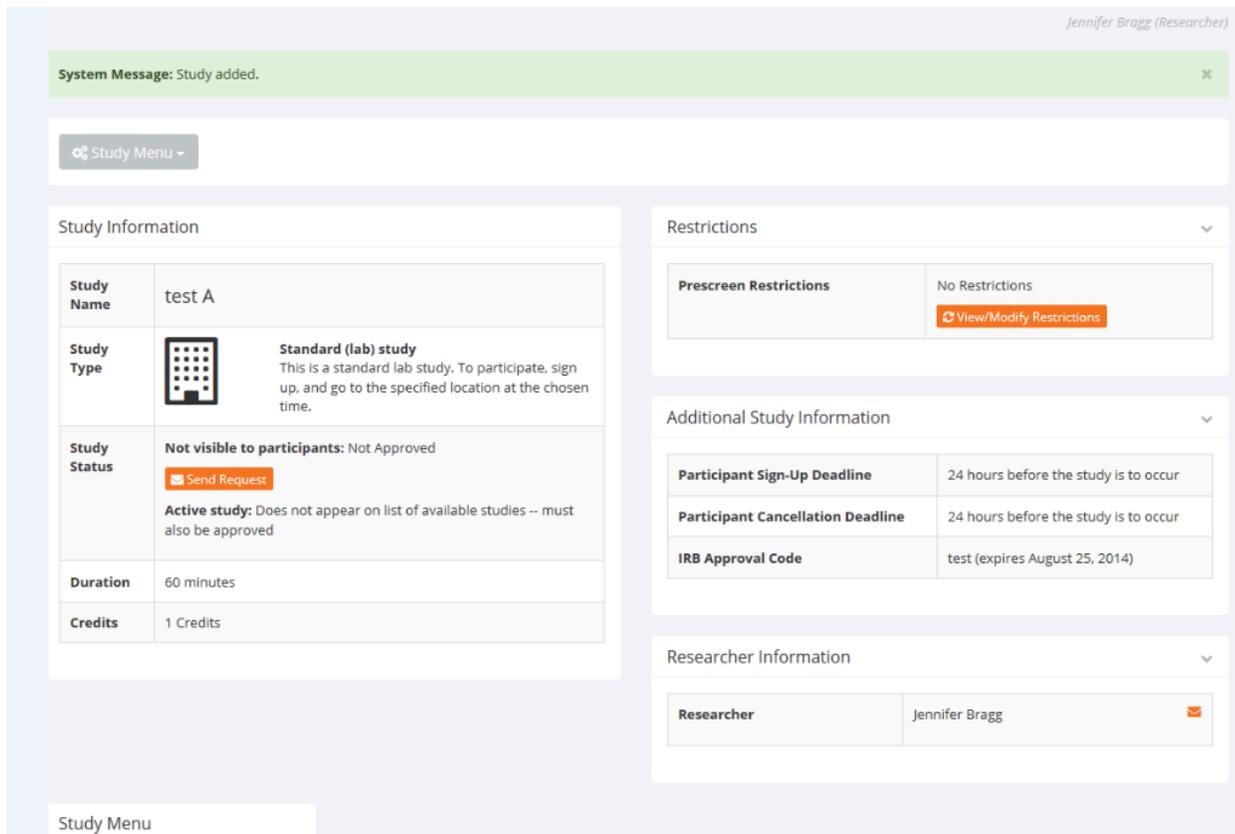
**Participant Cancellation Deadline** - at your discretion, PSY 205 policy states 24 hr notice should be given to receive an Excused Absence

**Should the Researcher receive an email notification when a participant signs up or cancels** - at your discretion

**Private Comments** - do not use this section, anything left here disappears into the great electronic abyss  
**Research Alternative** – no

### When you are finished filling in the Study Information:

- Click **Add This Study** at the bottom of the page.
- After clicking Add This Study, a new screen summarizing your study will appear along with a System Message. If the System Message says anything other than Study Added, contact the RC, something went wrong.
- **Important final step:** Click  to have this study approved by the RC. If you do not click this button, the RC will not know that you are waiting for your study to be activated.



The screenshot shows a user interface for a study named 'test A'. At the top right, it identifies the user as 'Jennifer Bragg (Researcher)'. A green system message bar at the top left says 'System Message: Study added.' Below this is a 'Study Menu' dropdown. The main content is divided into several sections:

- Study Information:** A table with fields: Study Name (test A), Study Type (Standard (lab) study), Study Status (Not visible to participants: Not Approved), Duration (60 minutes), and Credits (1 Credits). A 'Send Request' button is visible next to the status.
- Restrictions:** A section with 'Prescreen Restrictions' set to 'No Restrictions' and a 'View/Modify Restrictions' button.
- Additional Study Information:** A section with 'Participant Sign-Up Deadline' (24 hours before the study is to occur), 'Participant Cancellation Deadline' (24 hours before the study is to occur), and 'IRB Approval Code' (test (expires August 25, 2014)).
- Researcher Information:** A section showing the researcher's name as 'Jennifer Bragg'.

A 'Study Menu' dropdown is also visible at the bottom left of the page.

### If you have IRB approved Prescreening Requirements:

After you've clicked Add This Study, you will be able to add Prescreen Restrictions.

- Click  next to **Prescreen Restrictions**
- Select your IRB approved questions.
- Click **Set Restrictions** at the bottom of the screen.
- Identify the groups you wish to include and click **Save Changes**

## How to Assign Credit

Participants are assigned either credit, Unexcused No Show, or Excused No Show for each experiment. If the participant arrives on time and all goes as planned, assign full credit. If there is any problem that prevents the student from participating through no fault of their own (e.g., fire drill, equipment failure, overbooking, etc), assign full credit. If the participant arrives and declines to participate after reading the consent form, allow them to leave and assign an Excused Absence (no credit). If the participant withdraws mid-experiment, assign credit for the time they participated in the experiment. Credit should be given for the amount of time spent in the experiment where 0.5 credits = 30 minutes of participation.

### *Excused vs. Unexcused Absences*

Each lab should develop a clear and consistent policy for Unexcused vs. Excused Absences.

#### *Example Policy for Absences/No-shows*

*Assign an Excused Absence* when a participant gives 24 or more hours' notice or when they give reasonable notice with a reasonable excuse (e.g., they contact you the night before stating that they are sick and cannot attend a study the following day).

*Assign an Unexcused Absence* when a participant fails to give notice prior to the experiment or gives notice immediately prior to their scheduled appointment. Remember that students receive reminder emails within 24 hours of the study.

#### *If the participant is late:*

Run the participant at your discretion. Before starting the study, make sure that the student is aware of the time and what the ending time will be. Time that counts toward research credit begins when participant actually begins (not the time when they should have begun had they arrived on time). If you cannot run a late participant due to scheduling constraints, assign an Excused on Unexcused No Show at your discretion.

#### *If the researcher is late:*

Students are expected to wait only 10 minutes for an experimenter. After 10 minutes, student must be awarded credit for the experiment. If the experimenter starts a session late, she should apologize to the student and discuss the experiment ending time **before** doing the informed consent. Make sure the student is able to stay for the whole study before embarking on the study. Let the student know that s/he will be awarded additional credit if the study runs over time **and awarded credit for the amount of time they waited for the experimenter**. If the student needs to leave on time, and thus there is not enough time to run the study, award the student full credit.

#### *Cancellations*

Researchers should give 24 hour notice when canceling a session. If the researcher cancels less than 24 hours prior to the study, participants must receive credit for the study.

Participants should give 24 hour notice when canceling a session. If the participant cancels less than 24 hours prior to the study, participants may receive an Unexcused No Show.