Preamble

Research is at the heart of the Department of Psychology's mission. The Psychology Participant Pool is an essential and valuable component of the Department’s teaching and research. The advancement of psychology depends on the participation of investigators, research assistants, and human participants. We invite undergraduates to become involved in Departmental research in one or more of these roles: by volunteering to be a research participant, working in a research laboratory as a paid or volunteer research assistant, or enrolling in an independent research course. By volunteering, undergraduate students can make a contribution to fundamental knowledge in psychology and human nature, learn more about Departmental research and how it is conducted, as well as earn extra credits in their courses.

Overview

Starting in 2017-2018, the Psychology Participant Pool will allow students in the Department of Psychology’s 2nd year courses to receive academic credit towards an eligible course (or courses if they are enrolled in more than one) in return for participating in studies conducted by researchers in the Department. Instructors will decide on an individual basis whether or not to include their course.

To make the compensation consistent with university participant pools across Canada, students will receive 0.5% toward their final course mark in one eligible course for every 30 minutes of research completed. Individual instructors can decide the amount of credit allowed for their course from a minimum of 2% up to a maximum of 5%. Research credit cannot be used to improve a failing mark to a passing mark. If students are enrolled in more than one 200-level course, they can complete studies toward each course. However, the same hours of research participation cannot be applied to more than one course. When students sign up for a study, they will designate the course toward which their participation is to be credited.

Researchers must have ethics approval for all studies that use the participant pool including prescreening questionnaires, and study debriefings must conform to the pedagogical guidelines for participant pool use. Researchers must request participants by completing a Department of Psychology Participant Pool application form and submitting it to the participant pool officer. Researchers cannot compensate participants more than 2% credit for a given study, but the 2% course credit can be combined with other means of compensation (e.g., $5 per half hour) for studies that require more than 2 hours of participation. In the application, researchers will designate if they will be recruiting from PSYC 100 only, PSYC 200-level only, or both. Researchers who do not use deception in their experiments are particularly encouraged to recruit students PSYC 200-level courses.

Using SONA

If you do not already have an account, you will be emailed one by the SONA administrator when your study is approved by the subject pool officer. Then to log onto SONA, follow the instructions at 1:09 of the SONA instructional video available at https://youtu.be/ec8S3xfO-a8. To learn how to add a study, go to 3:51 of the instructional video (specifies about online studies start at 4:32 and also see 12:17). From the list provided on SONA, researchers must select the courses for which students can get credit for their study (for more details, go to 11:20 of the video or https://youtu.be/ec8S3xfO-a8?t=11m20s). So if recruiting only PSYC 100 students, the researcher would choose only PSYC 100 from the list. If recruiting PSYC 200-level students, the researcher would select all the PSYC 200-level courses on the list. Note: If a researcher restricts to PSYC 100 only, but a student is retaking PSYC 100 while also enrolled in a participating PSYC 200-level course, he or she still will be deemed eligible for the study. Students have to be enrolled in only one of the eligible courses to participate in a study.

SONA Prescreening. In addition to the regular prescreening, four prescreening items have been added to SONA that researchers can use to recruit participants or to restrict access to their studies. For 2017-2018, these items assess gender, ethnicity, corrected vision, and native language. To learn more about how to use SONA prescreening, go to 15:57 of the video or https://youtu.be/ec8S3xfO-a8?t=15m57s.
Alternative Assignment

For the 2017-2018 school year, only studies involving participants from the PSYC 200-level courses must provide an alternative assignment. (In 2018-2019, all studies will have this requirement). That is, students in eligible PSYC 200-level courses have the option of completing an alternative assignment instead of participating in research for course credit. Researchers (not the course instructors nor the participant pool officer) are responsible for administering an alternative version of their study and provided credit for the assignment on SONA as part of their experiment credits. Researchers have two options for the alternative assignment: a paper option or a walk through. In either case, the assignment must be completed by the students to the researcher’s satisfaction. The alternate exercise should take 20 minutes minimum but no more than 30 minutes because students will receive only 0.5 credit per alternative assignment regardless of the length of the actual study. For more details and example assignments, please see the alternative assignment link in the Researchers section of the Psychology Participant Pool webpage.

Students can get credit for doing the alternative assignment for a particular study only one time. Researchers should credit the alternative assignment within their study account on SONA. Just give 0.5 credit instead of the usual study credit value, and you can add a comment that the student completed the alternative assignment (see 25:02 of the video at https://youtu.be/ec8S3xfO-a8?t=25m2s). Do NOT select the alternative assignment option available on SONA discussed at 15:23 of the video; we are not using that approach to the alternative assignment. By giving credit for alternative assignments using your study account, students cannot sign up for a given study’s alternative assignment more than once or do both the study and its alternative. Furthermore, starting this year, SONA records will automatically be retained for 4-5 years, so those students will not be able to do the study or its alternative if they are part of the pool as PSYC 200-level students in subsequent years.

Students will need to contact the researcher in advance to set up an appointment to complete the assignment. The researcher may either schedule one student at a time or wait until several students have requested the alternative assignment to then schedule as a group. However, these appointments must be completed before the end of each semester that researchers run their study because students in PSYC 200-level courses need to be credited before the end of the term. We suggest offering at least 1 alternative assignment session each month. In the unlikely event that the student demand for studies exceeds the supply of available experiments, researchers must either continue collecting data beyond their planned sample sizes or offer more times for students to complete the alternative assignment.