

SONA Research Participant Pool

Policies and Procedures for Researchers

rev: 25-26

1. Preamble

The Western University Psychology Department operates a research participant pool that allows researchers to recruit university students to participate in research and allows Psychology students to gain experience with different aspects of psychological research. This document outlines policies for obtaining access, recruitment, and credits. SONA is the name of the software that runs the system.

Staff

- Colleen Keech, SONA coordinator (psysona@uwo.ca)
- Anthony Dobravec, Technical manager (adobrave@uwo.ca)
- Dr. Debra Jared, SONA Chair (djjared@uwo.ca)

2. Who can use the pool to recruit participants?

The participant pool is available to the following researchers:

- Psychology students (postdocs, graduate, undergraduate)
- Students in other departments or faculties whose primary supervisor is a Psychology faculty member (Full time or with a Joint Appointment)
- Full-time or Jointly Appointed Psychology faculty members (for their own projects not involving students)

All researchers must have completed the Tri Agency's TCPS2 Core training. The training only needs to be taken once. The certificate of completion needs to be sent to Karen Gopaul (karen.gopaul@uwo.ca) at the Research Ethics Office.

3. Participants

The pool is made up primarily of students enrolled in Psychology 1002 and 1003. Students are expected to complete up to six, half-hour experiment credits per course as part of their course components. A minimum of 2 of these 6 credits must be from in person experiments. Students from other courses may also be included in the pool at the request of the Instructor.

4. Research

Participants may be recruited for psychological research that has been approved by the Western REB as ethical research for human participants. REB approval can be from either the NMREB or the HSREB. Typical research pool research includes, but is not limited to, behavioural testing, surveys, assessments, interventions, EEG/ERP research. Participants may be recruited for online or in person studies.

5. Pool Opening and Closing

The research pool typically opens each term approximately one week after the add/drop deadline for courses (once the final class list for Psyc 1002 or 1003 is available and uploaded into SONA) and closes on noon of the last day of classes for the term.

6. Research Credits

Participants are compensated with research credits. One research credit is equivalent to 30 minutes of participation time. No half credits are to be awarded. Round up to the nearest half hour. For example, a participant in a 20-30-minute study should receive one credit. A participant in a 45-60-minute study should receive two credits.

Compensation may not exceed the rate of one credit per 30 minutes of participation (e.g., bonus credits may not be given for completing both parts of a two-session study). Very short studies (e.g., 10 minutes) will not be permitted.

Compensation for Introductory Psychology students must be experimental credits and not other forms of compensation, such as money or an entry into a draw. The study listing in SONA should mention research credits only.

A person is considered to be a participant as soon as they have indicated that they consent to participate in a study (e.g., signed the consent form). Participants must be given the research credit promised for the session if they choose to withdraw from the study.

Researchers are expected to credit participants promptly, and preferably as soon as the experiment/study is complete.

Allotment of credits

- **Faculty, postdocs, graduate students**
 - 600 credits per project (for the entire year) if requested in the Fall term (300 hours)
 - 400 credits per project if requested in the Winter term (200 hours)
- **Undergraduate students** – 100 credits for the entire year (50 hours)

If researchers have used their allotment of credits for a study, in the last 10 days of each term they may request as many additional credits as they would like for the study.

7. Using the Pool

Including SONA recruitment in an REB application

To include SONA recruitment in an ethics application, researchers should prepare a recruitment document and submit it in the recruitment section of the REB application. See p. 6 of the following document for guidance:

[https://uwo.ca/research/docs/ethics/Guidelines for Participant Recruitment 28Jun2022.pdf](https://uwo.ca/research/docs/ethics/Guidelines%20for%20Participant%20Recruitment%2028Jun2022.pdf)

Requesting a SONA account

Researchers should contact Anthony Dobravec (adobrave@uwo.ca) to be entered as a researcher in the system. Please indicate whether you are an undergraduate student, graduate student, postdoc or PI in your email. Undergraduate accounts will be deleted after the SONA pool closes at the end of each Winter term.

Requesting to recruit from the SONA pool

To request permission to recruit participants for a study, the researcher should submit a completed SONA request form, available at: https://uwopsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8IFAeJN5ltYQ8le. Requestors shall include the Western REB approval letter for each study. They will also have to indicate that their study includes a Debriefing form. A Debriefing form is required for each study because participation is intended to be a learning experience.

Posting a study

The researcher will log into the SONA system and enter the information for their study. The technical manual can be accessed from the SONA homepage (<https://psychology.uwo.ca/deptaccess/sona/researcherdocs.pdf>) for guidance.

The specific wording of the Description and Eligibility Requirements in SONA should come from the recruitment document approved by the REB. The Principal Investigator for the study must appear on the list of researchers.

Once all information is entered, the researcher should click on "Send an approval request". The SONA co-ordinator will confirm that an Ethics approval letter and a SONA Request form have been submitted before approving the study. Once a study has been approved, it will be visible to potential participants until the REB approval expires. Researchers then need to post timeslots for participant sign-ups. Note that online studies need to have at least one timeslot posted to be visible to participants.

Screening Questions

The SONA prescreen questions can be used to select the participants who will be able to see your study (e.g., left handed individuals; see Appendix). Prior to the start of the academic year, the list of questions to be used in the prescreen will be finalized. The SONA Chair typically sends out the current list of questions to faculty PIs during the summer asking for additions and revisions and setting a due date for requests (usually the first week of September). Further screening questions cannot be added during the year.

Prescreen responses from the Fall term are carried over into the Winter term so that students who take both Psych 1002 and 1003 do not have to fill out the prescreen twice.

Studies are not to have their own prescreen questions. There may be a Part 1 and a Part 2 to a study, but the Part 1 must be substantial enough to warrant the awarding of a credit (at least 20 minutes of participation). Brief prescreeners waste credits and do not provide students with a learning opportunity.

Active and Inactive Studies

In the Study Information there is a place under “Basic Study Information” to indicate whether the study is active. Researchers should select YES when the study is ready to begin recruiting (the study must be approved for it to be seen by participants). Researchers should select NO once data collection is complete. That way, the study will not appear on the list of studies that are currently recruiting participants. If further data collection is needed, the study can be changed back to Active.

8. In-Person Studies

Participants should be treated with courtesy and respect. All information pertaining to their participation should be kept strictly confidential. The purpose of the experiment should be verbally explained to the participant after they finish the study, and a Debriefing form given.

The location of the study should be clear on the SONA page for the study. Researcher contact information must also be provided.

If a participant takes more than 10 minutes longer than the advertised time to complete an in-person study, an additional research credit should be awarded.

When a participant fails to show up

If a participant fails to attend a scheduled, in person study without a prior notification, they should be assigned an “unexcused absence”. They will be required to complete additional credits in the amount they failed to show up for as a penalty (e.g., 7 credits instead of 6 if they miss a 1 credit study).

If a participant notifies the researcher prior to the start of the study that they are unable to attend for personal reasons, they should be given an “excused absence”. They do not get credit for doing the study, but they do not get a penalty either.

When a researcher fails to show up

Researchers should show up to their study at least 5 minutes before the scheduled start time. If a researcher fails to show up and has not notified the participant in advance, the participant should notify the participant pool coordinator (psysona@uwo.ca). The participant shall be given credit for the study. A researcher failing to make a scheduled appointment is a serious matter. *Researchers who have repeated violations may lose access to the participant pool.*

9. Continuing Studies

At the end of August, any studies in the SONA system with expired REB approval will be deleted unless notice is given that the researcher has applied for an extension and plans to continue running the study (adobrave@uwo.ca). Inactive studies will also be deleted unless a request is made to keep the study.

All participants from the previous year are removed from the system. This means that if you have a study running from the previous year, there is no way to prevent a participant from doing

the study twice (they would get a different SONA ID each year). The Introductory Psychology students should be different from year to year, although a few students might take Psyc 1002 one year and Psyc 1003 the next year. Students in the SONA Pool from upper year courses may also have taken an Introductory Psychology course in the previous year. You can prevent students in upper year courses from seeing your study by not selecting those courses on the Study Information page (Advanced Settings, Course Restrictions box).

At the start of the Winter term, the class list will change from that for Psyc 1002 to that for Psyc 1003. The information for students who are continuing in the second term is kept. This includes their SONA ID, the studies they have participated in, and their answers to the prescreen questions.

Appendix: Prescreening Questions for 2025-6

1. Age

- ☐ 17-22
- ☐ 23-30
- ☐ 31-50
- ☐ over 50

2. What is your field of study or intended field of study in undergrad?

- ☐ Arts
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Health or Medical Sciences
- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM)

3. What is the first language that you learned at home with your family?

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ Mandarin Chinese
- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Hindi
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Another language
- ☐ I learned two or more languages simultaneously from birth

4. Are you bilingual?

- ☐ I consider myself to be monolingual. I have no more than a little knowledge of another language.
- ☐ I primarily speak one language but I can manage a conversation and/or read in another language(s).
- ☐ I speak two or more languages fluently.

5. Knowledge of English

- ☐ some
- ☐ quite good
- ☐ fluent

6. Knowledge of languages other than English and French. Please pick one of the following. If you know more than one of these languages, pick the one that you know best.

- ☐ I don't know any language other than English or French
- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Mandarin Chinese
- ☐ Hindi, Gujarati, or Punjabi
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ I know a language other than English or French that is not on this list

7. Below are the most commonly self-reported ethnic or racial identities in the Canadian census. Please indicate which label best describes your ethnic or racial identity. If you belong to more than one group, please choose "Multiple ethnic or racial groups".

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Latin American
- ☐ South Asian
- ☐ Southeast Asian
- ☐ West Asian
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other ethnic or racial group not specified
- ☐ Multiple ethnic or racial groups

8. What is your status in Canada?

- ☐ Canadian citizen, born in Canada
- ☐ Canadian citizen, born outside of Canada
- ☐ Permanent resident of Canada
- ☐ International student

9. If you were not born in Canada, how long have you been in Canada?

- ☐ less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years
- ☐ not applicable- born in Canada

10. Which best describes your current gender identity?

- ☐ woman
- ☐ man
- ☐ non-binary
- ☐ another gender minority identity from Indigenous or other cultures (e.g., two-spirit)
- ☐ something else (e.g., gender fluid, intersex)

11. Handedness

- ☐ right
- ☐ left
- ☐ ambidextrous

12. Which of the following characterizes your vision:

- ☐ normal: do not need glasses or contacts
- ☐ corrected: wear glasses and do not have contact lenses
- ☐ corrected: wear contact lenses
- ☐ colour blind, but otherwise normal or corrected to normal vision
- ☐ other problem with vision that is not fully corrected with glasses or contact lenses

13. Which of the following characterizes your hearing:

- ☐ normal: no diagnosed hearing loss or abnormality
- ☐ corrected: wear hearing aid(s)
- ☐ corrected: have cochlear implant(s)
- ☐ uncorrected, diagnosed hearing loss (Deaf, partial loss, monaurally deaf)
- ☐ other problem not corrected by aid/implant (tinnitus, auditory processing disorder, etc.)

14. How many years of formal music training (in high school, university, or lessons outside of school) do you have?

- ☐ less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years

15. How many years of formal dance training (in high school, university, or lessons outside of school) do you have?

- ☐ less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years

16. Have you held a part-time or full-time job in the past two years?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes: part-time
- ☐ Yes: full time

17. Have you held a formal leadership role in the past two years?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (at work (full or part-time)
- ☐ Yes another context (e.g., sport, student organization)

18. Which political party of Canada do you most identify or affiliate with?

- ☐ Liberal Party
- ☐ Conservative Party
- ☐ Block Québécois
- ☐ New Democratic Party
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Another Canadian political party

19. What is your political ideology?

- ☐ Very liberal
- ☐ Moderately liberal
- ☐ Weakly liberal
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Weakly conservative
- ☐ Moderately conservative
- ☐ Very conservative

20. Do you enjoy being in social situations?

- ☐ very rarely
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ occasionally

- ☐ somewhat often
- ☐ often
- ☐ very often

21. How often do you feel restless or fidgety?

- ☐ never
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ often
- ☐ very often

22. What is your preferred configuration for a romantic relationship?

- ☐ Monogamous (i.e., sexually and emotionally exclusive)
- ☐ Consensually non-monogamous (i.e., sexually and/or emotionally open)
- ☐ Neither—I'm not interested in romantic relationships
- ☐ Not sure

23. During the academic school year, how often do you nap during the day?

- ☐ Frequently (3x or more per week)
- ☐ Regularly (1-2x per week)
- ☐ Occasionally (1-4x per month)
- ☐ Rarely (less than once a month)

24. Do you practice meditation?

- ☐ no, never or almost never
- ☐ yes, but not regularly, less than once a week
- ☐ yes, regularly, at least once a week
- ☐ yes, very regularly, daily or almost daily

25. Do you use virtual reality?

- ☐ no, never or almost never
- ☐ yes, but not regularly, less than once a week
- ☐ yes, regularly, at least once a week
- ☐ yes, very regularly, daily or almost daily

26. How often do you go on a diet to lose weight?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Always

27. How often do you exercise?

- ☐ no, never or almost never
- ☐ yes, but not regularly, less than once a week
- ☐ yes, regularly, at least once a week
- ☐ yes, very regularly, daily or almost daily

28. Do you ever wear a head covering for religious or cultural reasons (e.g. hijab, turban, kippah, burqa, veil, other)?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No
☐ Sometimes

29. Do you have a lifelong absence of mental imagery? Mental imagery is the ability to create and experience images, sounds, or other sensory-like experiences in the mind without actual sensory input.

☐ Yes
☐ No

30. Are there specific sounds that you are extremely bothered by and cause significant emotional distress, even if they are not loud? Examples include: chewing, slurping, crunching, throat clearing, finger tapping, foot shuffling, keyboard tapping, rustling, nasal sounds, pen clicking, appliance humming, clock ticking, animal sounds, or other sounds.

☐ Yes
☐ No

31. Have you ever had an 'out of body' experience, in which you felt detached or separated from your body, for example, feeling like you are looking down on yourself from above, or like you are an outside observer of your own body?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Each question also has a "I prefer not to answer" option.