

An Introduction to the Psychology Research Experience Pool (PREP)

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Outline

- What is PREP?
 - Student/Participant perspective
 - Researcher perspective
- What is Sona?
- How do researchers get access to PREP?

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What is PREP?

- The Psychology Research Experience Pool (PREP) is a system to organize student participation in psychology experiments in exchange for course credit (bonus marks)
- Similar systems (“subject pools”) are in place at most universities in Canada and the US
- Participating in research is a valuable educational experience

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Students as Participants

- Learn about research methods
 - Doing something makes it more memorable than just reading about it!
- Learn about research ethics
 - Rights and responsibilities as a research participant
- Learn more about the research topics in the department
 - Future honours students

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Students as Participants

- Potential coercion
 - Course credit for participation is bonus, not required
 - Alternative written assignment option
 - Research Observation option
- Anonymity
 - Course instructor should not know which studies their students participated in, nor whether credits were earned from participation, observation, or the alternative written assignment

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Students as Participants

- Research Observation vs. Research Participation
 - Participation = the usual
 - Observation = participant gets the same experience, but without providing data (any data automatically recorded as part of the procedure should be deleted/destroyed without examination)
 - Participants have the option to be an Observer without any penalty or loss of experience, and can change from Participant to Observer at any time

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Students as Participants

- Educational Experience
 - Knowledgeable experimenters testing participants
 - Detailed debriefing/feedback form
 - Purpose of study and hypotheses
 - Brief description of task/procedure
 - Expected results
 - Related reference(s)
 - Contact information for PI, Researcher(s), ICEHR

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Researchers using PREP

- Can conduct studies that would otherwise not be feasible for financial reasons (participant payments)
 - More honours students may be able to collect their own data
- Some additional paperwork and responsibilities
 - Informed Consent Form for PREP
 - Debriefing Form
 - Knowledgeable experimenters

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Researchers using PREP

- ICEHR approval first
- No exclusionary studies
 - May not exclude minorities (e.g., ESL) from study participation
 - Include a brief demographics questionnaire and exclude data from analysis if necessary
- No online studies
 - Experimenter must be present to respond to questions or problems prior to consent, during participation, and after participation
 - Can collect data online from participants in computer lab on campus with researcher present

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What is Sona?

- Sona is the online experiment management system software used for administration of PREP
 - Posts available studies for participants to view
 - Posts available timeslots for participants to sign up for: no need to call or email for recruitment!
 - Different account types have access to different information in the system

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What is Sona?

- Researchers post (ICEHR approved) descriptions of their study; studies must be approved by admin prior to being visible to students
 - Also post “timeslots”. Timeslots are available appointments for study participation, and include the date/time and location of the study
- Participants view available timeslots in approved studies, and can choose to sign up
 - Researcher is notified via email that someone has signed up for their timeslot
 - Student is reminded of timeslot via email the day before

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What is Sona?

- Participant shows up for their timeslot
 - Researcher should be present early!
 - Researcher updates the timeslot to “Participated”, or “No-Show” (either excused, if participant contacted researcher in advance of timeslot, or unexcused if they just don’t show up)
- System automatically keeps track of credit points based on updating of timeslots

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What is Sona?

- Account Types
 - Primary Investigator: receives hours; can create studies (at least one researcher required) and post timeslots;
 - Researcher: can create studies and post timeslots; associated PI needed for hours
 - Instructor: can view credit points earned by students in course
 - Participant: can view available studies and timeslots, can sign up to participate and view earned credits
 - (Administrator: approves studies, etc.)

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How do I access PREP?

1. Read the PREP Researcher and PI documentation
2. Request an account for Sona
3. Obtain ICEHR approval to test PREP participants
4. Submit New Study Request to PREP committee
5. Prior to the start of each semester, each PI must request hours for all researchers

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What type of account do I need?

- PI: Faculty ONLY. Individual who is primarily responsible for the study (research supervisor), but is probably not actually testing participants
- Researcher: Anyone who is actually testing participants. May be an RA, Honours student, graduate student, etc.
 - Some researchers may be more involved in the study (i.e., requesting study approval, posting the study description) than others, but are still not considered PIs for Sona account purposes.
- Can request an account at any time (e.g., can add an RA to an existing study during the semester)

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ICEHR Approval

- Ethics application should additionally include:
 - PREP consent form (credit point options; course instructor knowledge statement; research participation vs. observation options; etc.)
 - Sona study description (brief recruitment description of study that will be posted on Sona for participants to view before deciding whether to sign up)
 - Feedback form (describes study purpose, hypotheses, contact info, reference(s))

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PREP New Study Request

- Complete form and email to me
- Form includes full description of study procedure and Sona study description; attach consent form, feedback form, ICEHR approval
- Can submit new study requests at any time

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Requesting Hours

- Why do I need hours?
 - Hours are used when a timeslot is posted
 - Unfilled timeslot hours are returned to pool
 - Earned credits use an hour (one hour per credit point)
 - When hours are used up, no timeslots can be posted
- Why limit hours?
 - Planning
 - Helps balance system for researchers

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Summary

- 1) ICEHR Approval to test PREP participants
- 2) Request PREP account
- 3) Request hours (prior to start of semester)
- 4) Request new PREP study
- 5) Post study description and timeslots
- 6) Test participants who sign up

Questions?

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