Please note that all Researchers and Faculty are required to read this document prior to requesting an account to login to the Sona experiment management system. Additional detailed instructions on the Sona software can be found in the Sona Information document.

All relevant forms and templates mentioned in this document can be found here:
http://dogsbody.psych.mun.ca/prep/

Introduction

The Head is ultimately responsible for the administration of the research participation pool and shall form a Psychology Research Experience Pool (PREP) Committee to administer the pool. The primary focus is that the PREP exists first and foremost as an educational resource: The experience provides students with first-hand experience of how research is conducted, much like a lab component in a traditional chemistry or biology course. Convenience for researchers is of secondary importance.

It is anticipated that as the pool develops, there will be some changes to its administration. Therefore, the following is a work-in-progress.

How PREP works

PREP regularly includes students in some sections of PSYC 1000 and 1001, PSYC 2920, 2910/2911, and PSCY 3533. Additional courses are often added into the pool on a per-semester basis. This can be done by notifying the PREP committee well in advance of the upcoming semester.

Students in PREP can earn bonus course credits by participating in or observing experiments (a written alternative assignment is also available). Each semester, the PREP Committee will determine the number of hours allocated to faculty based on projected enrollment. The Committee will distribute at least twice as many hours as there are possible students to ensure that there are more experiments available than students and therefore to help ensure there is a choice of which studies the students can participate in. This also means that researchers should not necessarily expect to have all of their timeslots filled.

Students can access a list of departmentally-approved research experiences via the Web. The URL (http://mun.sona-systems.com) clearly indicates that the site is affiliated with the department of psychology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. For each experience, the web site lists the time, date, and location of the experience, as well as the number of credits to-be-earned. The web application also can send students reminders, provide a summary of credits, and handle most administrative aspects of the pool.

Because the primary purpose is educational, no student can be excluded from any study on the basis of any minority status. For example, a researcher cannot limit participation to just native English speakers or to just right handed people. However, researchers may choose to select participants on the basis of any minority status (e.g., students born outside of Canada). The system
does not enforce these pre-requisites, so any student who mistakenly signs up must still be allowed to complete the study and be granted credit (even if the researcher cannot use their data).

In addition, students have the option to choose to participate for credit as a Research Observer. This means that they will experience the full procedure of the experiment (including feedback/debriefing), but their data may not be used for analysis. Data should either not be recorded, or any data automatically recorded as part of the procedure (e.g., questionnaires) should be destroyed after completion of the study session, without examining it. This is to allow students the opportunity to see what experiments are like but without having to provide data if they are not comfortable doing so. This option should be available on the informed consent form.

**Ethics Approval**

Faculty will first obtain ICEHR ethics approval (including the modified Informed Consent Form specific to PREP participants, Sona study description, and a feedback form) and will then obtain separate departmental approval for protocols that will include students from the PREP. Faculty should keep in mind that they may need to submit a revised protocol to ICEHR that addresses the following:

1. The student can withdraw at any time without penalty. Credit will be awarded for time spent (e.g., 0 to 30 minutes = 0.5 credit; 31 to 60 minutes = 1 credit; 61 minutes to 90 minutes = 1.5 credits; 91 to 119 minutes = 2 credits). [Note: we currently round all studies up to the nearest whole credit point value to ensure there are enough studies available for students who are enrolled in multiple PREP courses.]
2. The student can decide at any point to change a “participation” experience into an “observation” experience by having his/her data deleted (see Informed Consent Form Template).
3. A written debriefing is mandatory (see sample and template).
4. A Sona study description should be submitted. This description will be posted on the website listing available studies, and should be essentially the same as, for example, an email recruitment script.

The PREP Committee will decide whether a protocol provides an appropriate educational experience about research in psychology. It is anticipated that some proposals approved by ICEHR will not be approved by the PREP Committee.

We now allow students to earn one credit point (per semester) from participation in online studies. Please keep in mind that the primary goal is for students to have an educational experience by participating in psychological research, and online studies eliminate the one-on-one interaction between participants and researchers. That is, a researcher should be available to answer questions prior to consent and during participation, and to debrief the participant at the end of the experiment (verbally, in addition to providing a written feedback form), including answering any follow-up questions. As such, researchers are asked to encourage participants to complete online studies during regular hours, and to monitor their contact email frequently in case a participant question arises.

Online studies still must have the option for participants to choose to observe the research experience. The Sona system allows direct linking to studies hosted by SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, FluidSurveys, and other survey software systems to allow easy credit granting. An alternative option
for researchers who might otherwise rely on online questionnaires would be to book a computer lab for a group testing session so that the researcher can be present during testing.

**Obtaining Access to PREP as a Researcher**

Only faculty (including honorary research professors and professors emeriti) with a primary appointment in psychology are eligible to be allocated hours. Graduate and undergraduate students must get hours from a faculty supervisor. Faculty are ultimately responsible for how their graduate and undergraduate students behave. Problems caused by undergraduate or graduate students working for a faculty member or problems caused by the faculty member him/herself can result in sanctions ranging from decreased priority for hours to suspension from using the pool for one or more semesters. Access to the pool is not a right; rather, it is a privilege.

Faculty will request hours prior to the beginning of each semester. Once the deadline for submitting requests has past, the PREP Committee will determine how to allocate the hours. Hours will be allocated on the basis of the number of participants in PREP, the number of credit points they may earn, and the numbers of hours requested by all other researchers. Hours are allocated to faculty and it is up to the faculty member to determine how to divide hours among lab members.

At any time during the semester, faculty members or researchers can request to post a new study in Sona. To do so, researchers submit a brief form that includes: the title and reference number of their ICEHR-approved protocol; a written description of what the experiment entails; a separate title and description that will be displayed on the Sona web site; a consent form that includes the PREP-specific wording; and a debriefing/feedback form.

It is important to have experimental sessions available to students every week of the semester. If the PREP Committee deems there are too few studies posted and available, it may offer additional hours to researchers who have experiments ready to be tested.

**PREP Researcher Responsibilities**

- Be available for all of the timeslots you post, and show up early
  - Ideally, the researcher should be **present at the study location 10 minutes prior** to the start time.
  - If you have a participant scheduled and you cannot make it to the study session, see if another researcher in your lab can cover for you. If this is not possible, email the participant to let them know you cannot make it and ask to reschedule if it’s more than 24 hours before the timeslot.
  - If it is less than 24 hours before a timeslot, you can still ask the participant to reschedule (so you can get the data), but **you should still grant credit** for the original timeslot. You can do a manual signup for the re-scheduled time to participate to override any repeat-signup restrictions. (See Sona Documentation for more details.) You should also ask someone else in your lab (or departmental staff) to leave a note for the participant in the study location, in the event that they do not receive your email prior to the session.
  - It is possible that sometimes a student cannot participate in a scheduled experiment due to reasons beyond everyone’s control (i.e., a loss of power in the building, internet failure, a blizzard). Under these conditions, the student will not be penalized. If the student arrived in good faith, the student will be awarded the credit he/she would have obtained if the experience had not been cancelled. (You can still
try to reschedule the study session, but the student would earn additional credit for participating.)

- Update student participation status as soon as possible
  - Ideally, update the status to “participated” immediately after the end of the study session. If this is not possible, then you should minimally update each day’s timeslots at the end of the day.
  - It is important for students who have participated to be able to view their updated credit point status as soon as possible. Additionally, it is important that students who do not show up for a timeslot do not get awarded credit in error (by the system’s automatic crediting function). Students who do not show up for their session (and do not contact the researcher) should be updated as “No Show-Unexcused”. Students who contact you in advance of the timeslot to notify you they will not be attending (e.g., due to illness) should be updated as “No Show-Excused”. See the Sona Documentation for more details on updating timeslots.

What do I need to do next?

1) Obtain approval from ICEHR to test PREP participants in your experiment(s). This application or amendment should include:
   a. PREP Informed Consent Form
   b. Sona Study Description
   c. Feedback Sheet

2) Request a researcher account for the Sona website. This should be done by faculty members and any researchers in their labs who will be testing PREP participants, including graduate and undergraduate students and research assistants. Note that faculty are responsible for all researchers in their labs. To do this:
   a. Read the PREP Researcher and PI Documentation
   b. Fill out and submit the Researcher Account Request Form and submit to the current PREP administrator listed on the department website

3) Request PREP Hours for the upcoming semester by the current deadline. Only faculty in the Psychology Department may request PREP hours, and hours will only be allocated to faculty members. It is the responsibility of each faculty member to request enough hours for everyone (students, RAs, etc.) in his/her lab. Please note that you may not receive the number of hours requested, depending on the number of students and researchers involved in PREP in a given semester.

4) Request a PREP New Study (fill out and submit the form) for any ICEHR approved studies you wish to post in the PREP. Match the description to your submitted document, including the ICEHR approval statement, and make sure you round the duration to match the credit points (e.g., if your 1 credit experiment takes 45 minutes, the duration should be listed as 60 minutes).

5) Create your study in Sona, following the instructions in the Sona Information document (available at: http://dogsbody.psych.mun.ca/prep/). Use the link in the system to request visibility.