

Memorial University of Newfoundland Psychology Research Experience Pool (PREP): Researcher and Faculty Documentation

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 many courses in Psychology. 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.

Selecting Participants

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, left-handers, etc.). The system now includes a prescreen questionnaire that can be used to set these selections in place; studies with prescreen restrictions will only appear on the list of available studies for participants who have selected the relevant responses on the prescreen. The prescreen questionnaire is optional for participants, and they may also decline to respond to any individual questions. (See the PREP Sona Information Document for more details.) Prescreen restrictions will be monitored by administrators; if a study is found to have prescreen restrictions set that exclude (rather than include) minority individuals, then the study will be immediately un-approved in the system, and the study's faculty supervisor will be notified. Further violations will result in the researcher losing access to the Sona website for three semesters.

The prescreen will include only basic demographic questions, and its specific contents are expected to change from year to year. Prior to the fall semester of each year, faculty will be asked to respond to an online questionnaire if they anticipate requiring any specific prescreen questions for their research in the upcoming year. Only questions that have been specifically requested by faculty will be included that year. This questionnaire will also give faculty the opportunity to request new questions, which may be included if appropriate and approved by the PREP committee and ICEHR.

Researchers may optionally use the system to anonymously email study participation invitations to qualified participants, with administrator approval. Study participation invitations must be ICEHR approved and included with your PREP new study request (or amended to already-approved studies). The number and frequency of invitation emails will be determined by the administrator on a case by case basis. (See the PREP Sona Information Document for more details.) Researchers sending emails in excess of their limit or without administrator approval will be warned, and further violations will result in removal of the study from PREP.

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, a feedback form, and a study participation invitation email if applicable) 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.

PREP Online study requirements

We now allow students to earn limited credit points from participation in online studies, and also offer PREP for selected sections of distance courses. 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. As such, there are some specific requirements for online studies to consider when planning their study:

- Downloadable/printer friendly consent form
- Downloadable/printer-friendly feedback form
- Quick response to questions

Consent: Online studies should begin with a consent form that follows the PREP Informed Consent form template, except for the signature lines (which should be modified appropriately for the online interface). There should be an obvious link on this initial consent page where participants can download a copy of the consent form before beginning the study; near the “continue” box at the bottom of the page is a good location. Alternatively, a printer-friendly version of the page could be made available, again with an obvious button to encourage participants to print or save a .pdf of the consent form.

Feedback: Online studies should end with a feedback form that follows the PREP Feedback form template. There should again be an obvious link to either download the form or to generate a printer-friendly version of the page.

Researchers are also reminded to update credit points on a daily basis in Sona. Although there is technically a feature in Sona to allow for automatic credit point updating from external studies, this feature rarely works properly. Researchers should check their study responses for the participant completion codes and use this to update participation in Sona (see the Sona Online Studies documentation for more details).

Respond to Questions: In general, researchers running online studies with PREP should be very responsive to participant questions. They should be prepared to answer potential questions about the informed consent, study content, or questions that arise after study completion. Researchers should respond to questions received from participants via email within 24 hours (excluding weekends). In addition, a phone number should be provided in the contact information on the consent page.

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 the 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
 - d. Study participation invitation email (if applicable)

- 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 (i.e., this document)
 - b. Fill out and submit the Researcher Account Request Form and submit to the current PREP administrator listed on the department website. Submitting this request form means that you have read and agree to abide by the guidelines in this document.

- 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.

- 5) **Create your study in Sona**, following the instructions in the Sona Information document (available at: <http://dogsbody.psych.mun.ca/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). This is to ensure that participants actually read each study description, rather than seeking the shortest duration study available for a given point value. **Use the link in the system to request visibility** when you are satisfied with the study appearance. Some parts of the study configuration (mainly course restrictions) will be set by the administrator upon approval.