PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCHERS:

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Overview

All individuals who conduct research with human subjects in the Psychology Department are expected to follow the policies and procedures articulated in this document. These guidelines pertain, generally, to all human subject researchers (faculty and students) and also specifically to those who use the Psychology Department Participant Pool (participant pool).

The participant pool allows for data collection from undergraduate students in return for partial fulfillment of course requirements. All 100-level psychology students are required to participate in a set number of research credits dictated by the needs of the researchers and they must do so in two of their 100-level courses. Research credits are earned either by participating in research studies or completing a reading-and-writing alternative. If students do not complete this requirement, their grade in the 100-level course will be lowered by two levels (e.g., from a B to a C+). Thus, researchers’ behaviors **directly affect students’ grades.**

Conducting research has pedagogical implications, as well. Student researchers learn how to develop and run studies, analyze data, and write manuscripts. It also teaches responsibility, critical thinking, and other valuable skills. Student participants learn about how psychological research is conducted and the wide-ranging topics that psychologists study. They also learn about the ethical component to research through reading informed consent forms and debriefing statements. Research participation is a vital component of their introductory psychology experience. For many of these students, this may be their first and only exposure to the research process.

Given the importance of adhering to proper research protocol, all human subjects researchers are expected to read this document thoroughly. Researchers **will be held accountable for all of the contents of this document when they conduct research in the department.**

If you have any questions about these procedures, contact the Academic Technician, Bridgette Rodgers (Kaufman 157 Tech, 717-254-8374, rodgersb@dickinson.edu).

\* Please note that the policies in this document describe how research is typically conducted and, as such, is subject to change. All changes will be e-mailed to faculty supervisors and posted on our website, along with other forms and documents.

Guidelines for those who Conduct Human Subjects Research in Psychology

# Who Conducts Research in the Psychology Department?

Our faculty maintain active programs of scholarship and often enlist help from student research assistants who may work on a voluntary basis, for course credit, or for payment. Students also design and conduct their own studies under faculty supervision in their research methods courses (e.g., PSYC 200-levels and PSYC 300-levels) and in the course of an independent research project (PSYC 550).

# Research Participants

Given the wide variety of sampling needs for psychology researchers, there are no restrictions regarding the populations from which our researchers can sample. That is, researchers can recruit participants from the participant pool, the general student population, the general population outside of the College, and from online pools (e.g., Amazon Mechanical Turk or Craigslist). However, there are restrictions on actually **recruiting** student participants, so as not to create confusion for participant pool functioning.

# Amazon Mechanical Turk Guidelines

A set of guidelines has been established to recruit participants through MTurk for research. Other necessary information and pertinent details can be gathered from the Technician.

* All participants (regardless of whether their data will be used) must be paid. This means that all workers will have their work approved (i.e., no rejections can be given).
* The average wages are ~$0.10/minute of work.
* Within the survey (typically on the first page where workers provide informed consent) the names and contact information of the supervising faculty member and the department chair are present so that workers may contact these individuals in case any problems arise.
* If the data being collected through MTurk will be published or presented outside of Dickinson College, the project must have IRB approval before any HITs are posted.

# Recruiting Participants and Advertising Studies

First and foremost, researchers should not, in any way, actively recruit participants who are currently in the participant pool. This **holds true both for those who use the pool for their research and those who do not**. Participants in the pool are required to participate in research based on the needs of the researchers who plan to use it. As such, if you did not request credits to use the pool you must find participants by other means and **never** recruit or collect data from students in the pool.

Researchers must make a ‘good faith effort’ not to advertise studies to students in the participant pool. If recruiting outside of the pool, you must state, *“This study is also available for PP credit. If you want to receive credit, you must sign up through Sona before completing the study.”* Researchers *may* hang fliers advertising *paid* studies, but may not advertise studies for participant pool credit. To that end, researchers *may* advertise paid studies to students in 300- and 400- level classes via PowerPoint slide announcements before class. However, researchers *should not* advertise to 200- level classes, as they may contain high numbers of students in the PP. Researchers are normally not permitted to advertise their paid studies in 100-level classes to avoid confusion with the participant pool requirement.

To minimize confusion regarding participant recruitment and advertising, **researchers should contact the Academic Technician before advertising their study.** The Academic Technician will review the advertising plan and make sure that it is in line with the policies in this document.

# CITI Training

All researchers in the Psychology Department must complete the ethics program from the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)](https://www.citiprogram.org/). The CITI training teaches researchers why and how to conduct research in an ethical manner. Students must complete two courses: 1) **Social & Behavioral Research Students**-with two modules named Dickinson College & Students in Research; 2) **Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research** (RCR)-with modules including Dickinson College and 9 others.

These modules are lengthy to complete. Make sure enough time is provided for students to complete all modules—perhaps suggesting to span the modules out over time. Below includes directions to add the required courses after students create an account from the link above:

* + Under Dickinson College Courses, click **"Add a Course"**
  + Check the first two boxes about conducting research for "...**Live Human Beings"**, and **"I want to take the course on RCR".**Click "Next"
  + Check the box for **"Social & Behavioral Research Students"** learner group. Click "Next"
  + Choose the circle for the **"RCR for Social & Behavioral Researchers"** under RCR courses.
  + This should pull up both Courses listed above. Clicking on each will bring students to the required modules and quizzes.

# IRB Approval

Governed by federal ethical guidelines for conducting research using human participants, all human subjects studies conducted in the Psychology Department **must** have IRB approval.

# Scheduling Rooms for Conducting Research

Coordinate with the Academic Technician to use specific rooms to conduct studies. Typically, this will be in our research suite (K157B-L). To use other rooms in the department (such as a lecture room for the administration of questionnaires in a group) contact the Conferences and Events Services (CASE; 717-245-1900). Please be aware that before CASE will accept a reservation from a student, a faculty member must first provide CASE with the names of students who are eligible to schedule rooms on their own. Alternately, faculty members and students may request the Academic Technician to reserve rooms through CASE for research purposes.

# Typical Research Session

1. Proceed through informed consent. A faculty member’s name should be associated with all research projects; during informed consent, the faculty supervisor should be clearly identified so that participants can contact him or her with questions or comments.
2. Proceed through the research session itself, following the researcher’s procedure.
3. Provide a clear debriefing statement (verbally or in writing). The debriefing is an integral educational tool, during which researchers educate students about the research process, topic, question, methodology, and the use of deception (if relevant) and its rationale. Again, the faculty supervisor should be clearly identified.

Additional Guidelines for those using the Participant Pool

# How the pool works

All students in introductory 100-level courses are required to complete a research requirement. To complete this requirement students must either 1) participate in research, or 2) read and answer questions about a research article – this is called the *alternative activity*. By completing research studies or alternative activities students earn credits toward the completion of the research requirement. The number of credits changes each semester as a function of the faculty members’ research needs. If a student fails to complete the research requirement their grade will be lowered by two levels (e.g., from a B to a C+).

## What is a Credit?

One credit of research is equal to 30 minutes of research participation. If your study takes up to 30 minutes for each participant to complete, those who participate will earn one (1) credit; if your study takes between 30 and 60 minutes, those who participate will earn two (2) credits, ad infinitum. All study times are rounded up to the next 30 minute interval. That is, if your study lasts any length of time less than 30 minutes it is treated as a one credit study; if your study lasts any length of time greater than 30 minutes, it is treated as a two credit study, ad infinitum. To the best of your ability, please keep your study’s length well within the 30-minute ranges to avoid situations where a 35-minute study is awarded 2 credits.

## Participants’ Grades Impacted:

The research requirement, which is part of the participants’ grades, varies from semester-to-semester and is determined by credit requests – if all allotted credits are not used by researchers, participants are negatively impacted.

## IRB Approval for Pool Use

For those who wish to use the participant pool, they must specify this request (along with the number of research credits that will be allocated to participants) in the IRB application. The IRB is familiar with the mechanisms of the participant pool, so researchers need only indicate that this is their chosen method of recruitment. If you plan to use the pool you must send the Academic Technician all IRB approval notices before you begin data collection.

## Composition of the Participant Pool

Below is the typical composition of the participant pool (ranges gathered from last 4 semesters). If the population you are interested in studying is not well-represented by the participant pool, please consider recruiting some of your participants from outside the pool (and factor that into your credit request).

* Size: the pool tends to have 170-200 participants
* Gender: the pool tends to be 73-80% female
* Sexuality: the pool tends to be 80-90% heterosexual straight
* Race: the pool tends to be 65-80% White
* Class Year: the pool tends to be 77-90% first years and sophomores

# Requesting Credits

To use the participant pool to collect data, researchers must submit your credit request to the Academic Technician before the start of the data-collection semester (the credit request form is embedded at the bottom of this document as an appendix). The deadline for this request is typically 2 weeks before the semester begins, but researchers should confirm the deadline each semester with the Academic Technician. This holds for faculty members’ personal research, 300-level course projects, and 500-level independent research projects. Faculty members should submit separate requests for each type of study. Note, however, that if a professor wants her/his 300-level course to use the pool, she/he only needs to submit one request for all of the credits and divide them among the groups.

In a given semester the number of available hours is divided among all those who have requested hours. The faculty member will receive notification of the number of hours allocated to her/him by the beginning of the semester. If you do not submit a request to collect from the pool before the due date, then you will not be able to use it until the Open Pool during the last two weeks of the semester (see section: Open Participant Pool).

## Considerations for Credit Requests

### Other Faculty Using the Pool

Please keep in mind that other faculty will be collecting data through the participant pool (and may be planning to publish this work) when making your requests – the pool has finite resources.

### Research Courses

Before requesting credits for classes, consider having students collect some data from the participant pool but also be responsible for recruiting some participants themselves. This will reduce the burden on the pool and prioritize research being conducted by faculty and students in PSYC 500-level courses.

### Eligibility Requirements

If only certain participants can sign up for your project, be prepared to have your project up and running early in the semester – if posted too late, there may not be enough eligible participants needing to complete the requirement late in the semester.

### Start Date

Projects should be available to participants by midterms (at the latest) – beyond this point, the alternative assignment is available to participants and without the option for research, you may lose some prospective participants.

# Credit Use

Sona will prevent researchers from using more hours than they were allocated by limiting the number of time slots that can be advertised. That is, if you are allocated 50 credits for 50 participants in a half-hour study, then your study on Sona will have a 25 hour limit; you will be barred by Sona from creating more than 25 hours’ worth of timeslots. However, if you create 25 hours of timeslots and participants either don’t sign up for them or don’t show up to your study, then you can create more, insofar as you remain within that 25 hour limit.

Faculty members should make every effort to use allocated hours by posting sufficient timeslots for students. The Academic Technician will email faculty around Midterms to assess the progress of their research. If a faculty member will not be able to use the allocated number of hours for any reason, the Academic Technician should be notified. The PPC can either redistribute unused credits to the remaining users of the pool, or, if absolutely necessary, will notify PSYC 100-level students that their requirement has been reduced. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Faculty members may distribute the allocated hours among their own research projects in any way with the understanding that they must use all of the allotted credits within that semester.

## Returning Credits to the Pool

If researchers do not think they will use all the credits they were allotted at the beginning of the semester, these credits can be returned to the pool for other researchers to use – this must be done at least two weeks before the start of the open pool (i.e., by Week 10 of the semester).

# Research Assistant Training

Student researchers are required to undergo a Research Assistant (RA) training that is to be held prior to the start of any data collection (faculty researchers will be asked about their start-date plans around the 3rd week of the semester, and then the Academic Technician will plan the session for all RAs to attend; multiple and/or individual sessions may be required). During this hour-long training, RAs will learn procedures on how to use the participant pool, the ethical obligations associated with conducting research with human participants, the educational role researchers play in teaching 100-level psychology students about the research process, a brief introduction to Sona, and common *what-if* scenarios that they may encounter when conducting research. Any needed training on Qualtrics Survey building, MTurk usage, Sona study setup, etc. can be scheduled for a later time in group sessions (or individual sessions if necessary).

Faculty may not provide their own training in lieu of the required training.

Student researchers must complete this training for **every semester** that they collect data. Our policies are regularly updated, and student researchers must have the most recent information. Additionally, minute details about running studies are difficult to remember, and the training each semester will reinforce all aspects of a researcher’s responsibilities.

# Advertising to Students in the Pool (Also see: “Recruiting Participants and Advertising Studies”)

Students in the pool will be notified via email each time a new study is made available. This email notification can be tailored to any specific groups based on study criteria and pre-screen responses. Researchers ***may not*** contact individual students in the PP. Each researcher may request that the Academic Technician send out one additional email reminder to the pool per study later in the semester.

If a researcher will be recruiting participants both from the pool and from the general student population, then their advertising ***must not*** reach students in the pool at all. As a reminder, researchers must make a ‘good faith effort’ not to advertise studies to students in the participant pool. They *may* hang fliers advertising *paid* studies, but may not advertise studies for participant pool credit. Researchers must disclose their plan to advertise and recruit for their study to the Academic Technician to identify and avoid any potential problems.

# Open Participant Pool

The last two weeks of the participant pool will operate as a “free for all.” During the Open Pool there are no limits placed on the number of credits that can be offered. All researchers are free to use the Open Pool – assuming that they have IRB approval. That is, both researchers who were preapproved to collect data from the pool and researchers who were not preapproved to collect data from the pool can post timeslots on Sona to offer credits to students during this time. The Open Pool is meant to accommodate researchers who needed to collect more data on top of what they had during the Regular Pool and/or researchers whose studies were not ready in time to submit a request for credits. Researchers who were not allocated credits may post their study with timeslots on Sona the Wednesday before the Open Pool begins. This time typically occurs during the last two weeks of classes. It ends on the last day of the pool, that is, the last Monday of classes.

# Submit Abstract at End of Semester

It is required that researchers submit an abstract describing the study to the Academic Technician to send to all students in the pool at the end of the semester. The abstract should include: (1) minimal background information, (2) research questions/hypotheses, (3) method (including a description of the participants), (4) main findings, (5) implications, (6) potential future directions, and, (7) contact information for the professor supervising the project. If data collection is not yet complete, abstracts may include “preliminary” results. However, abstracts must still be submitted for distribution to the participants.

# Revoke Ability to Use the Pool

Use of the participant pool to collect data is a privilege, not a right. Researchers must treat participants with respect. An example of not using the pool responsibly would be an RA failing to grant credit or no-show within 48 hours of the study, or missing scheduled research sessions. To encourage students in 300-level classes to use this resource responsibly, faculty should consider deducting points from a student’s research project for misuse of the pool. A researcher may have the right to use the PP revoked if several violations occur (whether committed by the faculty or the respective RAs).

If problems occur, the Academic Technician will inform the student researcher and associated faculty mentor and request that the faculty address these issues with the RA. Consequences will be determined based on the nature of the violation and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The decision to revoke the right of an RA or a faculty member to use the PP can be appealed to the Provost of the College.

The Sona System

All pool related scheduling and credit granting happens through the [Sona Systems participant management program](https://dickinson.sona-systems.com). This is a web-based program that Dickinson users can access by using their Dickinson email address. There are **several types of user accounts** in the Sona System: Participant, Researcher, Principal Investigator, and Instructor. Each type of account grants different rights as a user. That is, **Participants** can only sign up to participate in studies, **Researchers** can only offer timeslots and grant credits. Only Participants can create their own accounts; the Academic Technician must create accounts for all other user types, and additional roles can be added to existing accounts by the Technician as well. Each different type of account requires a different login, but all accounts are managed through your Dickinson email. See section below on how to use the Sona System.

# Studies in the Sona System

Study names, which are often opaque and arbitrary, could cause major confusion, especially to introductory-level students. To avoid confusion, all studies in the Sona System will be assigned the name of a state (e.g., OHIO, TEXAS) that is easier for the students to encode and remember. The researcher **must ask the participant for the state name at the beginning of the study** in order to ensure that the participant is at the correct study. The studies are broken down into two major types – Standard Lab Studies and External Online Studies – which are elaborated below.

## Standard Lab Studies

The most traditional, popular, and likely way that you will conduct your study will be as a *Standard Lab Study* in which participants physically show up to a location to complete a study. In this type of study, you will create timeslots that specify when and where participants are to come to complete your task. Participants are granted credit for coming into the lab with the intention of completing your study. Any positive progress toward completing your study, including reading and deciding not to participate, is worthy of credit. **Credit must be granted within 48 hours** of the timeslot. Alternatively, if a participant does not show up to the timeslot they are given a no-show (see No-Show Participants below), which also must be granted within 48 hours.

## External Online Studies

The other option is to collect data **entirely online** via an external link to Qualtrics that students can access from Sona. As such, you would only create one single timeslot for all of the participants for which your study was approved. Students are prompted to take the study immediately upon signing up and have 7 days to complete it. If they do not complete it in 7 days they are to be marked as an unexcused no-show. Automatic crediting should be set up so that students are given credit for completing the study immediately upon finishing it. A detailed tutorial for creating an online study with automatic crediting is in Appendix C.

# Verifying Participation

Researchers should verify that each participant (1) has a Sona ID and (2) has come to the correct study (by asking about the state name). These policies are to ensure that the students are participating in the right study and will be correctly awarded credit. It also ensures confidentiality, as Sona IDs ensure that participants’ names and email addresses are not made available to researchers.

## Procedures for awarding credit:

Log in to dickinson.sona-systems.com:

* 1. Go to the ‘Timeslots’ tab of your study
  2. Next to the time slot that you wish to update, click ‘modify’
  3. Beneath each student participant’s identification number, check either “Credit” or “No-Show” (either excused or unexcused).
  4. All students should be awarded a credit or no-show within 48 hours of the completed timeslot. After two days without credit or penalty being given to participants who signed up, the system automatically notifies the Academic Technician. At this time, your ability to continue using the Participant Pool will be formally questioned. (See Section titled “Revoke Ability to Use the Pool”.)

## Late Participants

Faculty and student researchers should discuss in advance how to handle the situation in which a student, who had already signed up for the study, shows up late for a session. It is a good idea to make clear in the study description the importance of being on time. Here are the options for handling late participants: (1) If there is enough time, the researcher may mark the participant as ‘present’ and allow him/her to complete the study; (2) If the participant would not have time to complete the study, or if admitting the participant into the room may be distracting to other participants, the participant may be marked as an ‘Unexcused no-show’. Again, it is imperative that all researchers working on a given study decide, in advance, which method will be followed so that all participants are treated the same. Additionally, if a participant displays a pattern of not showing up to a particular study, they may be barred from participating in that particular study, limiting their options for completing the requirement.

Additional note: If a student shows up to a study who has not signed up and the researcher wishes to allow the student to participate, the researcher may log in and sign the student up for the current timeslot if it is prior to the start time for the study. If the start time for the current timeslot is passed, the researcher may create a new timeslot for the student. Alternatively, the researcher could email the Academic Technician with the participant’s Sona ID so that the Tech can manually grant credit.

## No-Show Participants

Not all participants will show up to their designated timeslot. When participants fail to show up, they are to be marked as **Excused** or **Unexcused no-shows** in Sona. An Excused no-show may be marked if the participant cancels her/his timeslot or contacts the researchers in advance of the cancellation deadline (i.e., typically 24 hours before a timeslot). An Unexcused no-show may be marked if a participant tries to cancel her/his timeslot within 24 hours or fails to show up for a study without notice. Excused no-shows do not carry the consequences that unexcused no-shows do. If a participant accrues two (2) unexcused no-shows for any particular study, then that participant will no longer be able to sign up for future timeslots for the study that she/he accrued the two unexcused no-shows. That is, unexcused no-shows penalize the students and limit their ability to earn credits, but only for the study that they failed to show up to.

## Researcher Cancellation

If a researcher is unable to run a scheduled study session due to exceptional and unavoidable circumstances (e.g., weather, health, crisis, technological problems, etc.), the researcher must notify participants through Sona with at least 24 hours’ notice. If researcher must cancel timeslots within a 24-hours period, credit must be given to those individuals who were scheduled to participate in the cancelled study session; the researcher will lose those credits from the set allocated to for that semester.

# Creating a Study in Sona

Log in to Sona, click on “Add a study.” Select the type of study you are conducting (i.e., standard, two-part standard, and online external survey). **Be sure to select the correct study type, as it cannot be changed once a study has been created.** You are required to fill in the following general information about your study: Study Name, Brief Abstract (initial description that participants will see), Detailed Description (more specific information that participants will see before signing up), Duration (rounded to 30 minute increments), Credits (30 minutes = 1 credit), Researcher (select RA[s]), Principal Investigator (supporting faculty member), and Active Study (check yes). An IRB code is not required, but before a study can be approved a final IRB approval must be sent to the Academic Technician. Additionally, if the study is an online external survey, you are required to put the link to the survey in Survey URL. You may also adjust the participant sign-up and cancellation deadlines to whatever best fits your schedule. Pre-requisites, disqualifiers, and course restrictions are solely at the discretion of the researcher on a study-by-study basis. Please consider carefully which options will be appropriate for your study. See Appendices B and C for more detailed tutorials on creating studies.

If you are using the research suite to collect data, you will also schedule those spaces through Sona. You do this when you add timeslots. When adding a new timeslot, you can choose from the list of rooms in the research suite after viewing the “schedule” of rooms currently in use. It is important to always check the schedule to avoid double booking.

## Prescreen

The student participants are required to complete the Prescreen questionnaire before they can participate in any studies. It is a survey that asks students for their basic demographics and any other questions that meet researchers’ needs. This questionnaire is administered on the Sona System and can be used to select which participants are eligible to participate in studies. Sona allows for researchers to create restrictions to sample from only certain participants. Prescreen restrictions are created after studies have been added on Sona. To create a prescreen restriction, click “View/Modify Restrictions,” choose the question(s) and response(s) related to your restriction.

## Requesting study approval

When you are creating your study be sure to select “Yes” for “Email Approval Notice.” This will generate an automatic email that is sent to the Academic Technician to review your study. The Academic Technician will review the information you have posted and inform you (within two business days) that you have been approved to start offering time slots for student participation. The Academic Technician will also add a Study Code (i.e., state name) at the beginning of your study’s name.

No researcher should post study time slots until they are completely ready to begin data collection. Thus, the faculty researcher and RAs should consult carefully with one another to determine that (1) the IRB project has full approval, and (2) the procedures for the research study are fully complete prior to allowing sign-ups. In the case of a study using computers or other technical equipment, researchers should test this equipment prior to posting time slots to fully ensure that their procedure can progress as planned.

## Study Checklist

Each study should have a completed study checklist associated with it. It is required for studies to be approved. Researchers should complete it before sending a request for their study to be approved. It requires that both the CITI training certificate and IRB approval notice be attached, that a request for a room to conduct research and recruitment plan for the study be written, that the question “What is your Sona ID?” be added to your study, and that your study and timeslots be created on Sona. The Academic Technician will review the materials of your study, follow up as necessary, and then approve it when everything has been properly submitted.

Appendix A: Credit Request Form

Below is a form that is an embedded document. Double click on the form and it will open up a new document. Make all of your changes in that document and ‘Save As’ to send it to the Academic Technician.



Appendix B: How to Create a Standard Lab Study

Below is a tutorial for creating a standard in-person lab study in Sona. Double click on it and it will open up as a pdf.



Appendix C: How to Create an Online-External Study

Below is a tutorial for creating an online-external study in Sona. Double click on it and it will open up as a pdf.

