

Sona Systems

Researcher Procedures – Fall 2011

This is intended as a quick-reference guide to our on-line sign-up procedures for the human participants pool. It is not an all-inclusive list of everything a researcher must do before running human participants—you must still submit a departmental allocation request form to Keith Maddox before the appropriate deadline. Once you have an allocation, follow these next steps in running participants using the PSY 1/9/31 pool.

1. Email Sam Sommers (sam.sommers@tufts.edu) to obtain a log-in and password.

Log-in occurs on a per-researcher basis, not a per-study basis. If you are a graduate student or faculty PI without an account, email Sam in order to obtain log-in information. If your previous account has been deactivated (as we do with all accounts after each semester), email Sam to have it reactivated. Once the semester starts, you should send Sam a list of undergraduate RA email addresses to be added to the site or reactivated; please list each RA by tufts.edu email address to make it find them in the system.

2. Go to the Sona Systems website and log-in (<http://tufts.sona-systems.com/>). The first time you log-in (and every 6 months thereafter) you will be required to review and agree to our departmental Human Participants Research guidelines. Under “Edit Profile” you will be able to change your password and add a secondary email address. You **must** add your contact information to your profile, including office and phone number. There are other options you can change here; for example, you can have the system send you an email reminder of all study sessions you have scheduled for the next calendar day.

3. “Add Study” to list a study on the site.

- “Study Name” is the brief name visible to participants. Simply put a temporary name here and you will be randomly assigned a code name for your study when you submit it to the system administrator for approval.

- “Eligibility Requirements” are made visible to participants as well; these do not include eligibility requirements determined based on pre-screening, which are specified after you have successfully added a study to the system.

- “Preparation” should be left blank unless you have specific, IRB-approved instructions for participants, such as “do not eat for 4 hours before study.”

- A PI and at least one researcher must be listed for each study. The person whose allocation is being used for the study is the person who must be listed as the PI (except in the case of a senior honors thesis, when the faculty supervisor is listed as PI).

- Near the bottom of the page, you may choose the cut-off point after which students may no longer sign up for your study; the default is 24 hours, and you should set it no less than 1 hour.

4. Under “Study Information,” click the link to “Send a Request” to make your study visible to participants. Each study must be approved by the system administrator before it can be made visible. If you plan to specify eligibility criteria based on the pre-screening questionnaire, you must use the comments field to explain what these proposed criteria will be and why they are necessary to the study.

5. Set up sessions of your study using “View/Administer Time Slots.” If you have multiple researchers for a project, you are encouraged to link them to their respective time slots for organizational purposes. Also, you may either type in your study location or select a location from the drop-down menu. If you would like to have study locations added to the drop-down menu to prevent double-booking, email Sam to that effect.

6. If you choose to (and have approval to do so), you may set eligibility criteria based on pre-screening by going to “My Studies.” Under “View,” choose “Study Info.” and then “Pre-Testing: View/Modify Restrictions.” Participants who are ineligible for your study will not see it listed as available for sign-up. Selecting multiple questionnaire items requires participants to meet each criterion in order to be eligible; after specifying the items on which you want to pre-test, you will be asked to specify the values that render a participant eligible. In order to do this, you may also conduct pre-test results analysis of any item from the questionnaire. Keep in mind that if you change the eligibility for your study mid-semester, the system will **not** disqualify participants who have already signed up but are no longer eligible according to the new criteria.

7. To check on sign-ups for a session, go to “My Studies.” Select the study and timeslot in question and then click “Modify.” Note that as researchers will not be able to see the names of participants. Participants will only be identifiable through a randomly assigned ID# that they must bring with them to the session. You will need to know this number in order to properly assess credit/no-shows, to manually add a participant to a session, or to find a participant’s pre-screening response to a question after s/he has been in your study—this number is the only way in which your participants will be identifiable to you. If you need to contact participants before the study—for example, to apologetically cancel a session more than 24 hours ahead of time for good reason—you may make use of the “Email Participants” option.

8. Assign credits and no-shows as soon as possible after the session ends. Prompt assignment of credit (within 24 hours of the study) is the only way for the system administrators, instructors, and students themselves to stay updated on the credit situation. This is done using the same “Modify” procedure described above in #7. Accurate record keeping (and storage of consent forms) is essential as a back up. **Please note that per OHRP guidelines, we do not assign penalties for no-shows.** Instead, you should assign a “no-show (unexcused)” to students who fail to show up; students have been warned that if they accumulate two such no-shows, the system will lock them out. This means that if you have a student for whom you are going to “excuse” a no-show, you need to make sure to assign a “no-show (excused)” so that the system does not count this as one of their two unexcused absences.

9. Avoid experimenter no-shows at all costs. If you do fail to show up for a scheduled study, full credit should be assigned to each participant immediately. Note that we do not give “double credit” for such no-shows as used to be departmental policy. Multiple experimenter no-shows constitutes grounds for loss of participant pool privileges.