Tufts University, Department of Psychology
POLICY ON HUMAN PARTICIPANTS RESEARCH

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I. WHAT RESEARCH NEEDS HUMAN PARTICIPANTS APPROVAL?

A. RESEARCH REQUIRING APPROVAL

All research conducted by faculty, graduate students, or undergraduates in the Psychology Department that involves human participants must be reviewed and approved by the University IRB prior to conducting the research. This requirement is not limited to research using the Psychology Department's participant pool; it encompasses questionnaires and field studies, any research on or off campus that involves children or adults, and studies conducted as part of undergraduate independent research (see Section II, part B for information on course-related research). The only exception is research conducted at another institution that has received written approval from their review committee.

B. DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY

Principal Investigator (PI) – Individual primarily responsible for research; generally individual who is requesting human participants approval and/or research hours from the participant pool.

Researcher – Any individual involved with administering and carrying out procedures of an experiment.

Participant – Individual participating in an experiment from or about whom data are collected.

Instructor – Individual teaching courses from which students will be drawn for the participant pool.

Credit Participant Pool – Students from PSY 1 and 31 who opt to complete the research requirement of their course by participating in departmental research.

Paid Participant Pool – Students at Tufts not enrolled in Psy 1 or 31 and surrounding community members may opt to become members of the participant pool and participate in departmental research.

Sona Systems – The website through which all participant pool research recordkeeping and sign-ups take place. All research using the participant pool must go through the Sona site. Please note that the definition of PI is different for the Sona Systems.

The Department of Psychology manages two Sona Systems. One system is associated with participants who are required to participate for course credit. A second system manages participants who wish to participate for cash compensation.

Human Participants Committee (HPC) – Committee composed of members of the Psychology Department, faculty and graduate students, who oversee research conducted on human participants.

II. PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

A. GENERAL PROCEDURE

Researchers wishing to conduct research involving human participants must submit for approval from the IRB. All forms can be found on the IRB website (http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/IRB/main.htm). Information about submission deadlines and IRB committee meeting dates can also be found on their website. Note that most Psychology research can be reviewed as expedited. Expedited reviews take place upon submission by a member of the IRB; they do not wait until the IRB committee meeting. Thus, whereas deadlines noted on the IRB website apply to protocols needing full review, expedited protocols may be submitted at any time. Approval forms must be filled out in detail, and must include the consent form and complete debriefing statement (see IRB website for information that should be contained on consent forms). Incomplete forms will be returned to the researcher. All students submitting proposals must obtain an advisor signature on the forms.
B. PROCEDURES FOR MODIFICATIONS OF APPROVED RESEARCH

In some cases a researcher may want to run a modified version of research previously approved. The modification request form asks for information about the previously approved research and about proposed modifications.

C. PROCEDURE FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS AS PART OF A COURSE REQUIREMENT

Studies using human participants that are conducted as part of a course requirement typically are not intended to contribute to the generalizable knowledge of the field. Such investigations are therefore not technically “research” and need not be submitted for review by the IRB. Instead, the instructor may register the course as a research practicum following the procedures established by the University IRB. In doing so, the course instructor(s) must agree to ensure that these research exercises are conducted in line with APA ethical standards. This may include the use of written consent forms, practices intended to maintain confidentiality, efforts to minimize risks posed to participants, full debriefing, and completion of an IRB-style proposal to be reviewed by the instructor. In reviewing such proposals, the instructor’s approval process should be no less stringent than would be for research conducted by members of the Psychology Department. The instructor must have completed IRB training him or herself and must discuss research ethics and the protection of human participants as part of the research practicum. Such investigations should be described to potential participants as “class research projects” and not labeled as “research.” Under no circumstances may data collected in such in-class practica be publicly disseminated for the purpose of furthering generalizable knowledge in the field.

III. FOR CREDIT PARTICIPANT POOL

A. BACKGROUND

The Participant Pool has two primary purposes. First and foremost, it offers a way for undergraduates in psychology courses to gain first-hand experience regarding how psychological research is conducted, and to gain such experiences across a wide range of subfields within the discipline of Psychology. These experiences comprise an invaluable component of the learning goals for courses such as PSY 1 and PSY 31. This is why all studies involving the participant pool should not only include a thorough debriefing sheet, but also a list of keywords and names of researchers conducting related work so that students may conduct further library research on their own if desired. Second, the pool provides faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate honors thesis students with potential participants for their ongoing research. Many undergraduates also serve as research assistants for these projects; as such, this is another way in which the participant pool facilitates the undergraduate teaching priorities of the Department.

The participant pool may not be used for research conducted by undergraduate students for course-related projects, nor by individuals from outside the Tufts University Psychology Department, unless an exception is granted by the HPC.

B. COMPOSITION OF THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT PARTICIPANT POOL

The Psychology Department participant pool is comprised of students in Psychology 1 and Psychology 31. Students in these courses have two options for fulfilling the research requirement in their course: 1) participating in a set number of hours of research studies, 2) completion of a research-based paper of equivalent educational value and time commitment. The exact number of hours of participation required each semester will be determined by the departmental HPC (see section C below). Once again, completion of the research requirement is voluntary for all students, as they may opt instead to further their familiarity with research by completing the alternative paper assignment.
C. DETERMINATION OF REQUIRED HOURS OF PARTICIPATION

Early each semester, the HPC will solicit estimates of participant hours needed for research from each faculty member and graduate student in the Psychology Department. Those planning to conduct research using the Psychology Department participant pool must submit realistic estimates of the number of participant hours required for their research by the specified deadline. Late requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the HPC.

Based on researchers' requests for hours and course enrollments, the HPC will make a determination of the number of hours of research experience that will be required of students in those courses. Most commonly, Psychology 1 students have been required to complete 6 hours of participation, while Psychology 31 students have been required to complete 4 hours. This varies, however, depending upon the level of demand for participants during any given semester and the number of students enrolled in these courses.

D. NEEDS FOR ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANT HOURS

If, as is typically the case, there is an insufficient number of participant hours available to meet all requests, investigators will not receive all the hours that they requested. In the event that demand exceeds supply, investigators will be awarded a percentage of their requested number of research hours. Cuts are often made in a graduated manner, so that those requesting the most research hours receive proportionately greater cuts.

Additionally, research of higher priority (e.g., grant-related, first-year graduate student projects, junior faculty) will frequently be awarded a higher percentage of requested hours. If researchers find that they require additional hours as the term progresses, they may also ask the HPC for additional hours during the course of the semester, requests which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

E. PROCEDURES FOR RECRUITING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participants may not be recruited until IRB approval of the research has been obtained. All recruitment of participants must take place via Sona Systems (for more details regarding these procedures, see “Sona Systems Guidelines” at http://ase.tufts.edu/psychology/forms.htm). Note that researchers are required to allocate credit (or assign a no-show) within 24 hours of the completion of an experimental session. This is the only way to ensure that students have access to an up-to-date accounting of their accumulated credits.

F. AWARDING EXPERIMENTAL CREDIT

Participants are awarded .5 research credit hours for every half-hour of research participation. There is a 5-minute grace period. Thus, for example, 35 minutes of participation earns .5 research credit, while 36 minutes of participation earns 1 research credit.

G. PAYING PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE PARTICIPATING FOR CREDIT

No participant is to be both paid and given course credit for participation in the same experiment unless special approval is obtained from the HPC.

Sign-ups offering pay for participation should only be posted to the tuftspaid.sona-systems.com website. You cannot advertise studies on either Sona site.

H. FAILURE TO APPEAR AT SCHEDULED RESEARCH TIME (CREDIT STUDIES ONLY)

Researchers may cancel a session more than 24 hours ahead of time, but are urged to minimize such cancellations whenever possible and are required to send an email of apology through the Sona site when cancellation is
necessary. Should a researcher fail to appear at the appointed time without notifying participants 24 hours in advance, participants shall be given 1.0 credits for the session (time which does count against the researcher’s allocation). Participants must allow 10 minutes past the start of the experimental session to ensure that the researcher is not there, and at that point they should secure verification of their presence at the study from a member of the Psychology Department (faculty, staff assistant, or graduate student). In the event of equipment failure, room conflicts, etc., participants shall be awarded 1.0 credits (or credit for the amount of time spent in the lab before the session had to be stopped, whichever is greater). This regulation is in place to ensure that participants who have taken the time to sign up and arrive on time for a study are given the credit that they have been promised for doing so. If at any point participants wish to discontinue their participation, they may do so without prejudice, without penalty, and without forfeiting any credit already earned to that point in the session. For example, a participant who has completed 1 hour of a 2-hour experiment should receive 1.0 credits; if a participant elects not to participate upon receiving the consent form, no credit is earned, but, of course, the participants would not be penalized in any way.

Participants who fail to appear at the appointed time without notifying the researcher at least 24 hours in advance are considered “no-shows,” and will be recorded as such on the Sona Systems website. While there is no penalty to students for a no-show, any student who earns two no-shows in a semester will no longer be able to participate in pool studies and will instead need to complete the alternative paper assignment in order to fulfill course requirements. Exceptions to this rule may be considered by the HPC on a case-by-case basis. The Sona website allows researchers to distinguish between excused and unexcused participant no-shows.

I. UNANTICIPATED CANCELLATION OF CLASSES

On occasion, classes at Tufts are canceled on short notice for unanticipated reasons such as inclement weather or power outages. In such instances when classes are canceled, all pool studies will also be considered to be canceled, meaning that no-shows will not be assigned to students who fail to show up (and penalties will not be assessed against researchers who do not show up). Note that this rule does not prevent a student and researcher from mutually agreeing to press on with the study as planned.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THOSE INVOLVED WITH THE PARTICIPANT POOL

A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

1. PIs are responsible for ensuring that no research is conducted until it has been approved by the IRB and that approved research is conducted in the manner in which it was approved.

2. All PIs, graduate student researchers, and undergraduates doing honors theses must have taken an approved course in ethics and experimentation with human participants. Certification that such a course has been completed must be in file with the IRB.

3. PIs are responsible for the proper supervision of any personnel associated with their research. Assistants and technical personnel often conduct research. Such arrangements impose on the investigator the additional ethical responsibility of ensuring that these assistants conduct the research as it was approved. This responsibility requires instructing all personnel involved in the research about departmental procedures as well as ethical issues, and ensuring that they are sensitive to these issues. The PI should also provide all involved personnel with adequate supervision and monitor their performance appropriately.

4. PIs must ensure that they do not exceed their allotted credit hours, as specified by the HPC. PIs exceeding their allocated hours may be excluded from research hour allocations during the subsequent semester.

5. PIs are responsible for ensuring that accurate records of participation are kept on the Sona Systems website. PIs failing to do so in a regular and timely manner may be excluded from research hour allocations during the subsequent semester.
B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS

1. Researchers are responsible for conducting the research as the IRB approved it. They should be aware of any ethical issues involved in the research and should be sensitive to participants' reactions to the research. They should be willing and able to answer participants' questions, and should be well versed in the procedures to be followed if any participants evince distress as a result of their participation (see Appendix A).

2. Researchers should be aware of departmental procedures regarding participant recruitment, as well as those dealing with the awarding of research credit, and should follow those procedures.

3. Researchers should inform the principal investigator of any problems arising with the research. The principal investigator is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the researchers.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTRUCTORS

1. At the beginning of each semester, instructors in Psychology 1 and Psychology 31 will inform students of the rights and responsibilities of research participants (both students and researchers). In particular, instructors will provide all students with a copy of the guidelines for research participation, and will discuss these guidelines with students.

2. Early in the term, after the number of research participation hours required of each student has been determined by the HPC, instructors will announce this required number of research participation hours to their classes. Instructors will also remind students that they may elect to complete a work project of equivalent educational value in lieu of participating in research if they so desire. Instructors should also inform students that failure to complete this assignment will result in a grade of incomplete.

E. RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS COMMITTEE

1. The HPC will solicit, at the beginning of each semester, estimates of the number of research hours required by faculty and graduate students and senior honors thesis students in the psychology department. Based on these estimates, and on course enrollments, the committee will determine the number of research hours in which students will be required to participate. Additionally the HPC will allocate research hours to each investigator.

2. The HPC will notify course instructors of the number of research hours required of students.

3. The HPC will set and publicize deadlines for the use of the participant pool.

4. The HPC will be available to answer any questions about departmental procedures, and to assist with any problems involving human participants that may arise.

5. The HPC will monitor use of the participant pool in order to (a) determine the optimal means of allocating research hours in the future, (b) ensure that investigators do not overrun their allotted hours, (c) identify other abuses and problems and take measures to amend procedures accordingly.

6. There is no limit to hours used on the PAID Sona website.
Appendix A: Contingency Plan for Emergencies

TUFTS UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Protection of Human Participants:
Contingency Plan for Emergency Action

When one conducts research in which humans participate, the researcher must accept a greater level of responsibility for the well being and safety of the participant than is the case for ordinary interpersonal relationships. Remember, people who volunteer to participate in an experiment are doing you a favor - not the other way around - and they deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect. They should not be misled, humiliated, coerced, or placed in jeopardy.

If, in spite of your best efforts, a participant should show signs of physical or psychological injury as a consequence of participating in your research, it is your responsibility to stay with and aid that person until such time as other responsible professionals or agencies relieve you of that responsibility. At Tufts, there are three main sources of help in such situations: the Tufts Police, Health Services, and the Counseling Center. Information about each of these resources is provided on the back of this sheet.

REMEMBER:

1. Stay calm and think clearly.
2. Don't leave the participant in an emergency until it is clear that someone else is on the scene and is capable of assuming your responsibility.
3. If the research participant involved is a Tufts student, notify the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled, and describe the events that took place.

Tufts University Police (Dowling Hall)

AVAILABLE: 24 hours/day, every day

CALL: From outside lines: Police 627-3030. From inside lines: ext. 7-3030 or ext. 66911 for emergencies.

SERVICE: Officers treat problems themselves, or make referrals (to Health Service, Counseling Center, and Lawrence Memorial Hospital). They are trained in first aid, and some also know CPR; a few are Emergency Medical Technicians.

Health Services (124 Professors Row)

AVAILABLE: At all times (although staffed at lower levels on weekends, evenings, and school breaks).

CALL: From outside lines: 627-3350. From inside lines: ext. 73350

SERVICE: All types of medical services. Specialists are on call. Patients must be able to get to the infirmary themselves; otherwise, call Campus Police for transportation.

Counseling Center (120 Curtis Avenue)

AVAILABLE: During business hours; at other times, call Health Services.

CALL: Routine calls during business hours

From outside lines: 627-3360 From inside lines: ext. 73360 (For emergencies or crises, or during evenings, weekends, or breaks, call the Campus Police or Health Services]

SERVICE: Counselors are available to discuss all personal and academic concerns. Crises and emergencies can be handled by Psychiatrists and Psychological Counselors who are on call.
Appendix B: Guidelines for Research Participants

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES (FOR CREDIT PARTICIPANTS)

1. What is the research experience requirement, and how can it be fulfilled?

In order to undergraduates in psychology courses first-hand experience with how psychological research is conducted, students in PSY 1, and PSY 31 have a research experience requirement. The vast majority of students choose to complete this requirement by participating in a number of research studies conducted in the Department. Participation in these studies comprises an invaluable component of the learning goals for courses such as PSY 1, and PSY 31. This “participant pool” also provides faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students with potential participants for their ongoing research. Participation in such studies is entirely voluntary; students may also fulfill the research experience requirement by completing a written, research-based assignment of equivalent educational value and time commitment, to be provided by the course instructor upon request.

2. How can I find studies in which to participate?

All studies to fulfill this requirement have been approved with respect to the treatment of human participants by the Tufts University IRB and Psychology Department’s Research Committee. Sign-up for experiments take place on-line using the Sona Systems website (http://tufts.sona-systems.com). For detailed instructions on using this site, see the documentation provided by your course instructor.

3. What happens when I participate in a study?

When you appear for an experiment, you will be given an explanation of what the study involves and the procedures that will be followed. You will receive full information about what will happen during the study, although you may not always be told all relevant details about the purpose of the research. At this point you will be given a consent form to read carefully and sign before the study begins. Even after signing this form, however, you may ask for clarifications and further information about the study at any time. If after learning about the procedure or at any time during the procedure you wish to discontinue your participation you may do so without any negative repercussion and you will nevertheless receive credit for the research participation you completed. It is important to remember your participation in any study is entirely voluntary and discontinuing your participation will not lead affect your present or future interactions with the Psychology Department. After each study, the researcher will explain more about the purpose of the research, and will answer any additional questions that you have. The researcher will also provide you with a written summary of the study and references you can look up for additional information. The confidentiality of your responses and performance during the studies you are in will protected in accordance with the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org/ethics).

4. What happens if I miss a study I signed up for?

If you sign up to participate in an experiment, but do not appear at the appointed time and place without having given notice 24 hours in advance, you will not receive credit but will instead be assigned a “no-show” on the Sona site. If you earn two no-shows in a semester, you will no longer be able to participate in pool studies and will instead need to complete the alternative paper assignment in order to fulfill course requirements. Exceptions to the assignment of a no-show are usually only granted in the case of serious illness or emergencies corroborated by a note from a medical professional or Dean. Keep in mind that you may cancel your appointment for a study without earning a no-show if you do so more than 24 hours before it is scheduled to begin.

5. What happens if I show up for a study but the researcher doesn't?

If you sign up and appear at the appointed time and place for an experiment, and the researcher is not present 10 minutes after the designated start time (and has not given you notice 24 hours in advance that he or she cannot attend) you will receive 1.0 credits for your time. Once you have allowed 10 minutes past the start of the experimental session to ensure that the researcher is not there, you should secure verification of your presence from a member of the Psychology Department (faculty, staff assistant, or graduate student) and then contact the researcher to ensure that you receive the proper credit.

6. What happens if I am late for a study?

If you are late for a study, it is up to the researcher to decide whether to allow you to participate in the study and whether you will be considered to have missed your research appointment.