

GUIDELINGS FOR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

George Mason University Psychology Department

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I. Introduction

Psychology as a science is based upon careful observation of behavior and systematic collection of data relevant to issues in the field. Consistent with one of the major goals proposed by the George Mason University (GMU) Social Sciences Assessment Committee, the GMU Psychology Department believes that it is important for students to have a greater understanding of psychological research and its methods. One valuable method for increasing students' understanding is through direct participation in psychology experimental studies. Such participation will provide students with first-hand knowledge of the basic processes by which psychology, as a science, operates. Additionally, information provided by the researchers who conduct the experiments can facilitate comprehension of material students learn in class by providing concrete examples for the students. The following sections describe the rules, procedures, and responsibilities of researchers, course instructors, and the students themselves regarding the participation of psychology students in research at George Mason University.

Any researchers, course instructors, students, or concerned individuals who have questions about the following guidelines and procedures are invited to contact the Psychology Department Research Coordinator, Ally Patterson, at psychlab@gmu.edu.

II. Researchers' Responsibilities

General Guidelines and Procedures

Institutional Review Board

Researchers must obtain approval for their experiments from GMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) – run by the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA). This panel grants permission to use human subjects in research conducted at GMU. Information regarding the IRB can be found at:

<http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/>

Ethical Guidelines

Researchers must adhere to the ethical guidelines for research with human participants provided by the American Psychological Association and The Belmont Report.

Guidelines regarding the Psychology Department's research participation website (i.e., Sona Systems)

Researchers who wish to recruit GMU undergraduate students as research subjects in exchange for course credit are required to use the Psychology Department's research participation website. Researchers who wish to use any form of monetary compensation for research subjects or require research subjects beyond the demographics of GMU's undergraduate population will need to use other methods of recruiting research subjects. Researchers must receive approval by the GMU psychology department's research coordinator (RC) in order to recruit students through the psychology department's research participation website. Instructions and necessary forms for receiving approval from the RC are contained in Section V of this document.

All researchers (including faculty, graduate research assistants, and undergraduate research assistants) who use the research participation website and/or work with research subjects must follow the subject recruitment procedures and guidelines described in this section. Failure to follow these procedures and guidelines may result in the loss of recruitment privileges through the research participation website.

Note: The terms "research participant" and "research subject" as used in this document are inter-changeable and refer to any individual who provides data for an experiment.

Compliance with the Active Recruitment Policy

Researchers may not “actively” recruit students as research participants when students are to receive psychology course credit for their participation. Active recruitment includes offering money, event tickets, or any other incentives for participation beyond course credit. Active recruitment also includes attending undergraduate courses and soliciting participation from students. Active recruitment activities promote a competitive atmosphere among researchers such that active recruitment activities by one researcher interfere with the ability of other researchers who cannot offer similar incentives to student participants.

Follow appointment etiquette

Researchers should meet all research participants who have scheduled an experiment at the appropriate time and place. Researchers who must cancel appointments should contact students by email as soon as possible before the schedule time. It is not acceptable for researchers to cancel appointments by leaving notes at the designated meeting place. If researchers must cancel an appointment, they must be present or arrange for a representative to be present to meet with the scheduled students to inform them of the situation.

Researchers who cancel an appointment within 24 hours of the scheduled time must give the student credit as if the student participated in the experiment. The researcher may reschedule the student to participate at another time if the student agrees, in which case the student would receive additional credit for completing the rescheduled appointment.

When deciding on days and times to schedule appointments, researchers are urged to consider the needs of students who work full-time by offering some evening and/or weekend sessions.

Note: Researchers who schedule evening sessions should end these by 10 P.M. unless specific circumstances exist and a request for a later completion time has been presented to and approved by the RC. This is simply to promote safety among the students on campus.

Obtain informed consent

Researchers must utilize an approved consent form briefly describing the study and its risks, the voluntary nature of participation, etc. as specified by the GMU IRB. Student participants must read and sign the consent form before participating in an experiment.

Student participants who are under 18 years old must provide a signed copy of the Parental Consent Form (which can be obtained from the RC) when they arrive to participate.

Experiments which allow students under the age of 18 to participate should notify students they will need to have this form at the time of the appointment or else they will be unable to

participate. This will ensure that students have ample opportunity to obtain the necessary signatures before arriving to scheduled appointments.

Allow participants to withdraw from the experiment

Student participants are allowed to withdraw from an experiment at any time without penalty. If a participant chooses to withdraw, they should receive participation credit for the time they spent in the experiment (minimum of 0.5 hour worth of credit).

Debrief student participants

Researchers must provide thorough debriefing following student participation as specified by the GMU IRB. One reason for debriefing is it enhance the student participants' educational experience and allows them to put their participation into a larger context of psychology research. Also, in experiments involving deceptive procedures, investigators are ethically bound to explain the nature and purpose of any such deception and attempt to correct misconceptions students may have generated during the study.

Debriefings should cover the following:

- a) Describe the specific purpose of the study and the research question(s) being investigated
- b) Explain the study design and methods as well as the rationale for the selection of those methods
- c) Describe the potential significance of the study results, particularly as they might relate to some larger body of literature that the students may have covered in their psychology course work
- d) Invite the student participant to ask questions and discuss the study
- e) Provide an opportunity for student participants to receive a written summary of the study's results when the study is completed
- f) Provide the name and phone number of the researcher(s) to contact should the student have future questions

Alternative to research participation

The intent of the research participation requirement is to provide students first-hand experience with human psychological research. The goal is to provide a better understanding of several current areas of research, the methods the researchers, and the potential contribution of each particular study to our understanding of psychology. However, some of these goals are achievable by reading reports of human research projects in psychological journals. As an alternative to serving in studies, students may review research articles as listed in the guidelines for Alternative Written Assignments.

Researchers may also provide a lecture alternative to students, but this is not required unless the department deems necessary.

Award credit to students for participation in experiments

Researchers will credit students for participation in experiments through the Psychology Department's research participation website. For every 30 minutes that a student participates in an experiment, students will receive 0.5 research credits. For example, an experiment that takes one and a half hours to complete should issue students a total of 1.5 credits for completing the experiment.

Note: In accordance with the Active Recruitment Policy, researchers should not advertise on the research participation website that students will receive more credit for less time. This gives some experiments an unfair advantage over others that require students to participate for full hour time spans.

Researchers MUST award students their earned credit within 1 week after completion of the appointment. During the last week of classes during the semester, researchers should award students credit as soon as possible in order for the credit to be reflected in the students' course grades.

Researchers should award credit in accordance with the following possible appointment scenarios.

- a) *Student withdrawal from an experiment:* The student declines participation or withdraws from an experiment at any time after arriving to the appointment. In this case, the student is credited with at least 0.5 credit or the amount of time they actually participated (if it is greater).
- b) *Student cancellation of a multi-session experiment:* The student signs-up for all sessions of a multiple-session study and completes one or more sessions of the experiment but chooses to not complete the remaining sessions and notifies the researcher or contact person at least 24 hours in advance. In this case, the student receives credit for the hours completed. In the case where the student does not notify the researcher or contact person

at least 24 hours in advance, the student will receive credit for the sessions completed, but will receive an “Unexcused No-Show” for breaking the commitment for the remaining sessions.

- c) *Cancellation by the researcher within 24 hours of an appointment:* The researcher cancels or does not show-up for the scheduled appointment. In this case, the amount of credit awarded is equal to the maximum credit given to students who would complete the same session.

III. Course Instructors' Responsibilities

Psychology 100 courses

All students in Psychology 100 courses are required to participate in 7 hours of research. Research participation includes acting as a research subject in psychology experiments or completing alternative written assignments. Psychology 100 students who complete the 7-hour requirement will receive a course grade according to the grading policy established by the course instructor. Students who do NOT complete the 7-hour requirement will be penalized according to the grading policy established by the instructor. It is recommended that the penalty not exceed 10% of the final grade.

Note: Instructors may arrange, on a case-by-case basis, alternatives to meet this requirement for students with special needs. Psychology 100 instructors should review the guidelines for student research participation with their class.

Psychology 300 and 301 courses

Students in these courses are required to participate in 3 hours of research as part of their final grade. The above guidelines for PSYC 100 courses also apply to PSYC 300 and 301 courses.

Extra credit option for psychology courses other than Psychology 100, 300, and 301

Research participation is NOT required in courses other than Psychology 100, 300, and 301. However, instructors may award extra-credit to encourage student involvement in research. Instructors and students are expected to follow the research guidelines established in this document.

It is recommended that students who are given an extra-credit option will receive 1% credit for each hour of research participation, up to a maximum set by the course instructor. The total extra credit for research participation should not exceed 5% of students' final grades. Grade cut-offs will be established independently of extra-credit such that final-grade ranges will be determined on the bases of the required course work. Extra-credit points should be added after the final- grade ranges have been established.

Instructors who intend to award extra credit for research participation must notify the Research Coordinator (RC) by email in order to add their course to the research participation website.

Research Participation Reaction Forms

Instructors are encouraged to utilize the Research Participation Reaction Form. This form asks

students to reflect on their research participation experiences. Students will describe the research questions being investigated and the methodology of the experiments in which they participated. Review of this form will be valuable for students in integrating their research participation with their course information. The form can be found in the main guidelines document posted to the Sona homepage.

Tracking students' research participation

Course instructors will have access to the research participation credits of their students through the GMU research participation website at <http://gmu.sona-systems.com/> under the “Course Reports” section of the website. A website login is required in order to access student credit reports. Instructors will be assigned a website login after they notify the RC of their intention to offer research participation credit to students in their course. Instructors should notify the RC at psychlab@gmu.edu and should include the following information:

- a) The course instructor's name
- b) The course number (i.e., PSYC 300-001)
- c) The course title

In cases in which a student's research credit is not recorded on the website, course instructors may accept a Research Participation Reaction Form as proof a student participated in a particular experiment.

IV. Students' Responsibilities

Familiarity with research guidelines

All students participating in research for course credit are to be familiar with the research participation requirements and guidelines contained in this document and as described by their course instructor.

Using the research participation website

Student research participation is coordinated through the GMU Psychology Research Participation website – Sona Systems – at <http://gmu.sona-systems.com/>.

Student accounts are deleted at the end of each semester. Therefore, each semester, students will need to register with the website in order to receive new login information. Accounts ARE NOT automatically created for students. Students who register for an account will be able to schedule appointments for research experiments, track participation credits, and assign which credits they want to allot to the courses in which they are enrolled.

NOTE: It is important for students to check the research participation website regularly, beginning early in the semester. Most experiments are conducted for only part of the semester. Students are strongly encouraged NOT to wait until the end of the semester as opportunities may not be available at that time.

Research alternatives

Students who do not wish to participate in experiments or are under the age of 18 can earn research credit by participating in the Alternative Written Assignment. Guidelines for this assignment are posted to the homepage of the Sona website. Students may combine participation in experiments and written alternatives to meet the research participation requirements.

Attending research appointments and canceling appointments

Students are required to attend the experiments for which they schedule on the website. Students are responsible for keeping their own record of the title, contact person, date, time, and location of the appointment. This information will be posted prior to the day of the appointment.

Researchers who cancel an appointment within 24 hours of the scheduled time will give the student credit as if the student participated in the experiment. The researcher may reschedule the student to participate at another time if the student agrees, in which case the student would receive additional credit for completing the rescheduled appointment.

Unexcused No-Shows

Students who fail to attend experiment appointments and do not contact the researcher will receive an unexcused no-show on their record. If a student accumulates multiple unexcused no-shows, the Research Coordinator may lock that student's account. If your account is locked, you must contact the Research Coordinator (psychlab@gmu.edu) to verify you understand the guidelines of participation.

Note: If a student is unable to make an appointment, (s)he must notify the researcher or contact person at least 24 hours in advance to avoid the penalty except in the case of documented emergencies. The student must ALWAYS contact the researcher if (s)he misses an appointment.

Arriving on time to appointments

Research participation for students arriving late for their appointment is up to the discretion of the researcher. Researchers may choose to continue with the appointment or cancel the appointment. Researchers are not obligated to reschedule the appointment or grant credit if a student is late.

Voluntary participation

Participation in a given research experiment is completely voluntary. If after arriving for an experiment, or after beginning the experiment, a student decides that (s)he does not wish to continue (s)he may withdraw without penalty. The student is entitled to a minimum of .5 credits or the number of actual participation hours prior to discontinuation.

Completing Research Participation Reaction Forms

Instructors may require students to complete a Research Participation Reaction Form for each experiment in which they participate. Students may contact the Research Coordinator (RC) for a copy.

Receiving Research Participation Credit

Research participation credit will be awarded by the individual researchers after students complete their appointments. The research credits will usually be posted on the research participation website within 1 week after a completed appointment.

If credit is not awarded, students should contact the researcher directly about the credit(s). If the matter is not resolved after contacting their researcher, the student should then contact the

RC at psychlab@gmu.edu.

Research participation credit will be awarded only for participation by the student himself/herself. Volunteering and participation of family members without direct involvement of the student is not appropriate for course credit.

Students Under the Age of 18

Students under the age of 18 have two options:

- (1) You may participate in research if they allow students under the age of 18 to sign up. In this case, you must obtain written permission from a parent/guardian before participating in any research experiments. You can obtain a parental consent form from by emailing the RC at psychlab@gmu. Experiments allowing students under 18 to participate will require a copy of the signed parental consent form at the time of participation.
- (2) Students under the age of 18 may participate in the Alternative Written Assignment without parent/guardian permission.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may discuss their situation with their instructor and/or with the RC to assess their options regarding the best way to meet the research participation requirement.

Comments, Complaints, Questions

Students will be treated with all due consideration and courtesy by the researchers and the RC. Any comments, complaints, or questions that arise in the course of participating in research should be directed to the RC at psychlab@gmu.edu.

V. Research Alternative Guidelines

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT SUBJECT POOL ALTERNATIVE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

The intent of the research participation requirement is to provide you with first-hand experience with human psychological research. From this, we hope you will get a better understanding of several current areas of research, the methods the researchers select (and the reasons why), as well as the potential contribution of each particular study to our understanding of psychology. However, you can achieve some of these goals by reading reports of human research projects in psychological journals. As an alternative to serving in studies, you may read one article on **human research and write a summary as detailed below** for each hour of your subject pool requirement.

The research article should be from journals published by the American Psychological Association (*this list can be narrowed or expanded by the instructor*):

Behavioral Neuroscience
Journal of Abnormal Psychology
Journal of Applied Psychology
Journal of Comparative Psychology
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology
Journal of Counseling Psychology
Developmental Psychology
Journal of Educational Psychology
Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory & Cognition
Journal of Experimental Psychology: Perception and Performance
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
Professional Psychology: Research and Practice
Psychology and Aging
Human Factors
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

NOTE: Your instructor also has the option of assigning articles.

These journals are all available online through the GMU library (<http://library.gmu.edu/phpzone/ej.php>).

Find an article **published in the last 6 months** that looks interesting; the abstract at the beginning of each article will help you make a choice. This is the first publication date, not the necessarily the online date. **Be sure it is a research article:** it must report new data collected on some issue (if it does not have a section headed "Methods," it probably is not a research article).

Read the article and pay special attention to: the introductory section, which describes the issue and surveys previous studies, the section headed "Methods," which describes how this particular study was carried out, "Results" and "Discussion/Limitations".

Type a summary of the article. It should include:

1. Your name, student ID number, course and section number, and “Research Alternative Written Assignment” for your heading.
2. The title of the article you read followed by the authors' names and a full reference to the journal (this usually appears at the top left of the first page of the article). Include journal title, year, volume number, issue number, and pages.
3. Describe the issue being studied and the reasons. What was the authors’ hypothesis?
4. Summarize the methods used to conduct the research.
 - a. What subjects were used, how many, how were they selected.
 - b. What is the study design? (e.g., correlational, cross-sectional, longitudinal)
 - c. What apparatus or materials were used, and procedures (describe how the research was conducted).
 - d. How could the chosen methods test the issues being studied?
5. Summarize the results.
6. Discuss Implications.
 - a. Research limitations (What limited the research findings? Ex: time constraints, sample number, resources, etc.)
 - b. Are the conclusions justified by the results?
 - c. Suggestions for future research

An adequate summary should be 400-500 words of **content**, double-spaced, 12pt, Times New Roman, one-inch margins.

Turn in your written assignments by email to your instructor. Do not send your assignment to the Research Coordinator.

Your instructor will then send you an email that serves as a receipt verifying that he or she has received your assignments. Please keep these emails until you have seen your grade posted correctly on Patriot Web

VI. Research Participation Website (Sona Systems) Forms

The following forms are required in order to obtain access to the GMU Psychology Department's research participation website (i.e., Sona Systems at <http://gmu.sona-systems.com/>). When the forms of the posting packet are completely filled out, place them together in the Research Coordinator (RC) mailbox in David King Hall (next to the Psychology Graduate Office), or send them by email to psychlab@gmu.edu.

Once all of the forms are reviewed and approved by the RC, you will be given research participation website accounts in order to post your experiment information.

Be sure to include a copy of your GMU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter. Make sure that your IRB approval does not expire after your experiment has been posted. Experiments that do not have current IRB approval will be removed from the research participation website.

You may use the following checklist to make sure you have completed all of the required forms before turning them in to the RC.

- ☐ **Copy of current IRB Approval**
- ☐ **Researcher's Acknowledgments of Guidelines and Procedures**
- ☐ **Experiment Information Form**

**RESEARCHERS' ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT
RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

I have read and understand the Department's Procedures and Rules for Student Research Participation, and I have obtained the necessary approval from the University's Institutional Review Board. I also agree to schedule alternative lecture sessions, if deemed necessary by the department, as indicated in the official guidelines each semester I use the subject pool to recruit participants.

Researcher's Name (please print): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's Name (please print): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor's Name: _____

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

EXPERIMENT INFORMATION FORM

Semester/Year: _____/_____

1) Title of experiment: _____

2) Short description of experiment: _____

3) GMU Institutional Review Board Approval:

a) Project Title #: _____ b) Expiration Date: _____

4) Duration of experiment: _____

5) Type of Research (mark all that apply):

☐ General Research	☐ Ph.D. Dissertation
☐ Sponsored Faculty	☐ Master's Thesis
☐ Non-sponsored Faculty	☐ Undergraduate Senior Thesis

6) Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor (print name):

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

7) Additional Researcher (if any): _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Additional Researcher (if any): _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION REACTION FORM

PART A – TO BE GIVEN TO YOUR COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Name: _____ G#: _____

Name of Study: _____

Date: _____ Credits: _____

1. Briefly describe what you did in the experiment:

2. How does this experience reflect what you have learned about research in Psychology?

PART B – TO BE RETURNED TO THE BROWN BOX NEXT TO THE UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY OFFICE (ROOM 2086) IN DAVID KING HALL

Title of Experiment: _____

Name of Researcher: _____

1. Did your course instructor distribute information at the beginning of the semester explaining research participation guidelines and written alternatives?

Yes

No (If no, please explain)

2. Did the researcher follow the research participation guidelines?

Yes

No (If no, please explain)

3. Did the researcher provide you with a clear description of the research project and its purposes following your participation?

Yes

No (If no, please explain)

4. Were you treated with respect and courtesy?

Yes

No (If no, please explain)

(Please use the back of this form for additional comments)