

Sona Systems

Experimenter Procedures – Fall 2009

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

1. Email Sam Sommers (sam.sommers@tufts.edu) to obtain a log-in and password. Log-in to the Sona site occurs on a per-researcher basis, not a per-study basis. If you are a graduate student or faculty member PI, simply email Sam in order to obtain log-in information. Once the semester starts, the PI should also send a list of undergraduate RA email addresses to Sam so that they can be added to 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 if you use another account besides your tufts.edu one. 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 your IRB approval number 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 PI must be a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Tufts.

- IRB approval code refers to the S09 or F09 number. If your study is approved by the Departmental IRB, your approval letter will state this number; if you receive approval from the University IRB, give a copy of your approval letter, consent, and debriefing form to Holly Taylor so she can assign you a Departmental IRB number.

- Expiration date should be the date listed on your University IRB approval letter. If your approval came directly from the Departmental IRB, use 12/31/09 as the expiration for a S09 number and 5/31/09 for a F09 number.

- 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.” Note that the multiple-location and variable-researcher problems that existed with Experimentrix are no longer problems with Sona Systems. 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, send an email to that effect to Sam Sommers.

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 of this semester, 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-show penalties, 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 on the website. If you need to contact participants before the study—for example, to 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-show penalties 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, PSY 1/31 instructors, and students themselves to stay updated on the credit situation. This is done using the same “Modify” procedure described above in #7. Note that we no longer use the yellow/pink signature cards, so accurate record keeping (and storage of consent forms) is essential.