

Supplemental Sona Researcher Instructions

This document is intended to supplement the Sona Systems Researcher documentation. Instructions and policies contained herein conform to the use of this system within the Shepherd University Department of Psychology. Much of this is intended for students collecting data for PSYC 485 Senior Thesis, but will also apply to non-capstone researchers as well. Specific questions not answered here should be addressed to the Research Exposure Coordinator, who serves as administrator on the Sona system.

This document, and additional information, may be found on the Psychology Researcher Resources web page:

<http://www.shepherd.edu/psychology-researcher-resources/>

Sona Researcher Account

Only those with a Researcher account on the Sona system may use the system to collect data. These accounts are issued to all PSYC 485 Senior Thesis students and to PSYC 484 Directed Readings students who want to get an early start on putting together their study. Student research assistants working with faculty should have their faculty advisor contact the Research Exposure Coordinator with their name and Shepherd e-mail address to request a Researcher account.

IRB Approval

No study will be made available to Participants before the Sona Administrator has documentation that the study has been approved by the Shepherd University IRB. You may send an electronic copy of your IRB approval letter during the Approval request process (see Approval, below). You may begin setting up your study in Sona before you have approval, but see IRB Approval Code & Expiration below for instructions.

Study Creation

A Researcher may begin creating a study at any time. No study will be allowed to be visible to participants until documentation of IRB approval for that study is reviewed by the Research Exposure Coordinator. If you have not yet received IRB approval, you can still begin to set up your study (but see IRB, below).

Study Name

The name of your study should be unique (different from all other current studies) and descriptive enough to give a potential participant some idea what your study is about (or at least what sorts of data you'll be collecting from them). This may or may not be the same as the title you submitted to the IRB. If possible, make these the same, but take care not to include jargon in your title (it should be

readable by any Shepherd student) and don't give any unwanted clues that could alter a participant's responses (avoid "demand characteristics").

Brief Abstract

This is entirely optional and will be visible in the list of studies along with the name. If your name is a little vague, you could enter some brief descriptive text here.

Detailed Description

This text is required and is intended to give the participant some idea of what your study is about. After reading this, a potential participant will know whether they want to proceed to the informed consent stage. This text does not replace informed consent; it should be informative but much more general. See the document "Researcher Study Description Examples.docx" for information about creating your Detailed Description (available from your PSYC 485 instructor, the Research Exposure Coordinator, or the website noted above).

Eligibility Requirements

Here is where you list any characteristics a person must possess to participate in your study. If your participants must be at least 18 years old, you should indicate that here.

Duration

This is the approximate maximum amount of time it should take a participant to complete your study. Determine this by going through the study yourself, carefully reading the informed consent text, reading and answering all questions, and then carefully reading the debriefing text.

Credits

If the Duration (above) is equal to or less than about 30 minutes, then set this to 0.5. If the Duration is between about 40 and 60 minutes, this should be 1.0 (and so on). If you are doing an in-person study, add an extra 0.5 credits to account for the participant's travel time to and from the study.

Note: In some semesters (usually Spring), studies will also be credited based on 15-minute intervals rather than 30 minutes. This means that participants should receive at .25 credits for 15 minutes or less, and .75 credits for studies between 30 minutes and 45 minutes.

Principal Investigator

If you are doing this study for your Senior Thesis, this is your PSYC 485 instructor (or your PSYC 484 instructor, if you're not yet in PSYC 485). If you are doing research with a faculty member, then they are your P.I.

IRB Approval Code & Expiration

When your study is approved by the Shepherd University IRB, you will receive an electronic (PDF) letter with an approval code and expiration date. While creating your study, enter the IRB "permit number" (a 10-digit number) for IRB

Approval Code and the date your approval expires for IRB Approval Expiration. (Note, the expiration date is the date that follows “extends beyond” at the end of the first paragraph in your letter.)

When creating a new study in Sona, if you do not yet have IRB approval, then just enter 000 for IRB Approval Code and a date sometime in the future for IRB Approval Expiration. Once your study is created, you cannot change these values, however the Administrator can change them once they receive your IRB approval letter (see Approval, below).

Approval

Study approval can only be given by the Administrator. This will only be done after all of your study information is correct and they have verified that you have received IRB approval. Just click the “Send Request” button once you’re ready. If you haven’t already sent the Administrator your IRB approval letter, you’ll be able to attach the PDF letter you got from the IRB chair to your approval-request message in the form that appears after you click the button.

Active Study?

You may change this setting yourself. After your study is approved, you must set this to “Yes” to make the study available to participants. (Note: you must also have at least one active timeslot before participants will see your study.)

Pre-Requisites and Disqualifiers

See below for special instructions regarding these settings.

Should survey participants be identified only by a random, unique ID code?

For all online studies, this should be set to “Yes” (per IRB chair, fall 2015). This will prevent Researchers from having access to participants’ names when this is not needed. (The Administrator will still be able to match up the ID numbers from your survey with their names, if needed.)

Participant Sign-up Deadline

Participants will not be able to sign up for your study within this many hours of your timeslot. This is useful for in-person studies; you usually don’t want someone signing up 5 minutes beforehand. For online studies, set this to zero.

Not-often-used Settings

Pre-Requisites

This setting is used when one study is tied to another study in the Sona system. A participant may only sign up for this study if they’ve already completed each of the selected Pre-Requisite studies. You might do this if you have a multi-part study where people must do each one in order. You could set each up as a separate Sona study and use pre-requisites to ensure they do them in the correct order.

Disqualifiers

This setting is used where you do not want participants to participate in this study and the studies you select here. This is most often used for studies that have multiple groups (experimental conditions) in which participants for each condition are recruited using a separate Sona study. Since you don't want people participating in multiple conditions, you would set up each 'study' having the other studies as disqualifiers. Alternately, if you have run a previous study with similar hypotheses/methods, you may want to be sure people do not participate in both.

Note that once a Participant completes one study, they will still see the other studies in the list of available studies. The Sona system will simply tell them they can't participate if they were to try to sign up (and why—because they already did the disqualifier study).

If you're going to set up a multi-part study in this way, I have two suggestions:

1. Only make one 'study' available at a time, using the Active Study? setting. This will allow you to control the N for each group and might help reduce Participant confusion.
2. Include a note in either the Study Description or the Abstract saying that if they participate in this study, they will not also be able to participate in the other study(ies).