

Who can use the SONA system?

Faculty in the Department of Psychology and students working under their supervision are eligible to apply to use the system. In some cases, faculty in other units at the university may be granted permission to use the system at the discretion of the Chair of the Psychology Research Participation Committee. Any research project that makes use of the system must have been approved by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Committee (see <https://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/>).

How do I apply for adding a study to Sona?

Once you have Human Ethics approval:

1. Submit your application to the Sona Psych Committee here: <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/p100res/prps/>
2. The Sona Psych Committee will review your application within 36 hours of submission. When you are approved, you can add your study on the Sona system here: <https://uvic.sona-systems.com>

Your application is sent to each member of the committee, one faculty member, one graduate student, and the Sona admin. Each committee member will review the material as soon as possible and communicate their approval or concerns to the Chair of the committee, who will forward this information to the researcher.

If a project was approved in a prior academic year, a renewal application must be filed for it to be reactivated for the current academic year.

The application form requires the following information:

- a. A short, unique, memorable name for the study. This is to help students keep track of the studies in which they have taken part and is used by the system to manage sign-ups and record credit.
- b. UVic ethics approval number. UVic ethics approval must be obtained before applying to use this system.
- c. Name of faculty sponsor and, if applicable, the names of students or assistants conducting the study.
- d. The location of the study and contact information. If the location of the study or contact changes, please inform the Psychology Research Participation Committee Chair.
- e. A UVic e-mail address (ending in @uvic.ca) for the designated experimenter is required. This address is used for establishing the project in the sign-up system. A password allowing the experimenter to log into the system, to post sign-up times, and assign student credit will be e-mailed to this address.
- f. The expected duration of the session, including time for a debrief session at the end of the session, and the number of credit points being offered. 0.5 credit points are assigned for each 30 minutes (or part thereof) of participation. For example, a session requiring one hour and 15 minutes is 1.5 credits. Researchers may also offer nominal payments for participation, such that students have the option of participating for credit OR for pay (and other members of the community can sign up for pay); if payment is offered, the amount (e.g., \$5/hr) should also be indicated. **Note: In-person studies are eligible to give 1 extra credit on top of the credits given for participation time.** For example, a 2 hour in-person study would be eligible for 2 credits for the students' time and an additional credit for being in-person, for a total of 3 credits.

- h. A one- or two-sentence description of the study that will be used on the sign-up site. This description should accurately convey the nature of what the student will be asked to do in the study. Any restrictions on who can sign up for the study (e.g., right-handed people only) should be described and justified. Researchers are strongly encouraged to be as inclusive as possible to provide all students with ample opportunities to participate in research projects for bonus points. If you want to restrict participation to PSYC 100A/B students, you can do this in your experiment description on the Sona site.
- i. A brief description, written for the Committee, of the procedure involved in the study, including the independent and dependent variables (if applicable) and hypotheses being tested (not required for renewal projects). This description should be about 200 words in length.
- j. A written explanation of the purpose of the study (not required for renewal projects). This explanation should summarize the debriefing students will receive after participation. The text can be either a script that the researcher will follow when explaining the study or a written document that the student will be offered after completing the study. This is an important component of the application because it indicates that an intelligible explanation will be given to students, thus fulfilling the educational objective of this program. Rather than simply handing students a debriefing sheet, researchers must schedule time at the end of the session to talk to students about the objectives of the study.
- k. Submission of the application means that the sponsoring faculty member agrees to take responsibility for appropriate use of the Psychology Research Participation System by all those involved with the project.

What do I do once my request has been approved?

The Chair of the Committee or Sona admin will inform you as to whether your application is approved. Upon receiving approval, you can use the Sona experiment management system (uvic.sona-systems.com/) to begin posting and managing sign-ups for your experiment.

To do so, you will need a researcher account on the Sona system. To request a researcher account, send an e-mail message to the Sona admin (p100res@uvic.ca).

Your User ID for this account will be the first part of the UVic e-mail address (the part prior to @uvic.ca) that you entered on your application. Your password will be e-mailed to that e-mail address. The password will be a long string of digits, but you can change it once you log into the system (by going to the “My Profile” section once you are logged into the system). If you are running multiple experiments, you will access all of them through this one User ID. Therefore, if you already are running an approved experiment, any subsequent experiments that you run will be managed with your established User ID.

How do I add my study?

Go to uvic.sona-systems.com and enter your User ID and password.

To create a new study, click on "Add New Study". Fill in the required information, including the approved name of your study (it is critical that you use only the approved study name).

Enter in the “*Short Description*” the description that was provided on your application for approval of this study. End this description with the contact telephone number/email for the study (e.g., Contact: 721-7777) that students may use to cancel appointments.

Provide more complete information in the “*Long Description*” section.

In the “*Eligibility Requirements*” section, you may specify student restrictions (e.g., bilingual students only). In addition, each student will have completed a pretest profile that requires the student to indicate gender, year of birth, handedness, whether English is their first language, whether they are a fluent speaker of English, and whether they have normal colour vision.

After adding your study, you can go back to view it (click on "view and edit" under the My Studies heading and select the relevant study) and you will see a section called “*Pretest Restrictions*.” You can add restrictions based on pretest responses here.

“*Duration*”. Specify the duration of the session (default is 30 minutes). The Sona system allows for specification of only a single value for session duration (and for associated credit) for a single study. At present there is no way in the Sona system to assign a variable amount of credit as a function of actual session length. Any completed session will be assigned the amount of credit you specify here. Therefore, if your study sessions have the potential to require varying amounts of time for different subjects, you will need to estimate the longest duration that is reasonable to expect and base your session duration and amount of credit (one credit per hour) on that estimate. Any student who completes your study will be granted that amount of credit, even if their session turns out to take less time than expected. If you encounter cases in which a student takes more time than your maximum, there is a mechanism for granting additional credit. In these rare instances, you can manually grant an appropriate amount of credit.

“*Preparation*”. Enter any advance preparation the subject must do prior to participation.

“*Credits/Pay*”. One credit for each hour of participation is to be assigned.

No *HRB* approval code is needed, since your project will have received approval from the UVic ethics committee prior to being submitted for approval by the Psychology Research Participation Committee (the approval number is required on the application form).

“*Active Study*”. Click “Yes”.

In the “*Prerequisites*” section, you may specify that students complete a specific study before participating in the one you are adding. This is a good method for setting up studies requiring multiple sessions. The Sona system allows for setting up studies with two, three, or four parts. For multiple-session studies involving more than four sessions, the simplest option is to schedule only the first and last sessions using the Sona system, and to schedule the other sessions outside the system. Total credit for participating in such a study would then be split between the sessions scheduled in the Sona system.

An explanation of the multiple-session nature of such a study would be included in the “*Long Description*” section of the posting on the Sona system. Note that if a student completes some but not all sessions and wishes to terminate participation, he or she must receive credit for the session time that was completed.

The “*Course Restrictions*” section allows you to specify whether only students from PSYC 100A/B or only students from other courses may participate.

The “*Disqualifiers*” section allows you to exclude students who have already participated in certain other studies (perhaps because those studies are too similar to the one you are now adding).

“*Invitation Code*”. We do not issue passwords to students for specific studies.

Indicate whether this is a web-based study. If so, you may need to provide the URL for the study web site (this depends on whether your study is administered by the Sona system).

Click the “*Add This Study*” button when you are ready. You can edit it later by clicking on “view and edit” under the “My Studies” heading and selecting the desired study. You can also add restrictions based on student responses to the pretest, as explained above.

Once your study is ready, e-mail the Sona Admin at p100res@uvic.ca to request that your study be made visible to students. Warning: Any edits will set the study back to ‘invisible’ and you will need to request reapproval from the admin.

Be sure that you logout at the end of each Sona session by clicking the “Logout” button near the upper right corner of the Sona window.

How do I post time-slots?

To post testing sessions, or time slots, to allow students to sign up for your study, log onto the Sona system and go to the “My Studies” heading, then click on “view, add, or change timeslots”.

Then, under the “View” column for the desired study, click on “Timeslots”. You will see a list of existing time slots and you can click on “Add A Timeslot” to add more.

Note that you will see an option to add multiple time slots at once. For each time slot you add, default information is initially displayed, but can be modified (except for the End Time, which is fixed by the Start Time that you designate and by the session duration that was specified when you set up your study). Be sure all relevant information, including location, is entered.

How do I grant credit or report a no-show?

If a student wishes to terminate participation prior to completion of a study, this wish must be honoured.

Credit for the full session is to be given if the student has a valid reason for terminating participation (e.g., becoming ill, finding some aspect of the procedure unpleasant). All students must be offered an explanation of the purpose of the study, even if they terminate their participation prematurely.

Students who terminate participation in a multiple-session study will be given credit only for the session during which they announce their termination and for any previously completed sessions.

If a student fails to show up for an appointment without canceling at least 12 hours in advance, mark them as a no-show in the system.

Exceptions are to be made in cases of documented emergency (e.g., sudden illness) and other situations beyond the student's control. In such cases, the student receives neither credit nor penalty (excused no-show). If a student arrives too late to participate, then that student is to be penalized as a no-show.

The Sona system is set up so that students who have signed up for a study are automatically granted credit for participation overnight, after the session time, unless some action is taken by the researcher prior to that time. This is a convenience because it means that researchers do not need to enter credit for normally completed sessions. But an entry does need to be made if the student is a no-show. In such cases you should make an entry for the student within a few hours of the testing session, otherwise the student will be automatically credited for completion of the session. Although you can correct this after the fact, problems may arise.

To make an entry, log into the Sona system at uvic.sona-systems.com and go to the “My Studies” section. You can click on the heading “View Your Uncredited Time Slots” to see a list of time slots with student sign-ups that have not yet been granted credit. You can then click the “View” button for a particular student to either grant credit or classify the student as a no-show. Alternatively, after going to the “My Studies” section, you can and click on “Timeslots” for the study. This will display a list of time slots. Click the “Modify” button for any time slot for which you wish to make an entry (e.g., grant credit, classify as no-show). Be sure to click the “Update Sign-Ups” button for each entry so that the change will take effect.

What do I do when my study is finished?

When data collection for the entire study is complete, please go into the Sona experiment management system and go to the “My Studies” section. Select your completed study and go to the bottom of the display. Select the “Change Study Information” option and go to the bottom of the resulting display. In the “Active Study” section, click the “No” option to deactivate your study.

How to solve common problems

If a student arrives for a session but does not meet restrictions that were clearly stated on the study description (e.g., bilingual) or has already participated in the study, you are entitled to cancel the appointment and not provide credit to the student. In this case, you will make a manual entry in the Sona system, selecting the option labeled “Excused No show”, so that the student neither receives credit nor is penalized.

Special allowances, however, are to be made for students with disabilities, who should be allowed to experience as much of the study as possible and receive the standard explanation of the purpose of the study and full credit for participation.

Students are entitled to receive the full credit points for a session if the researcher fails to keep the appointment or cancels with less than 24 hours’ notice. In these cases, the student is to report to the SONA admin as soon as possible, and the Chair will investigate. Full credit for participation will also be given in cases in which unforeseen events prevent researchers from completing a session with a student (e.g., equipment failure).

If the researcher judges that the student cannot be a valid participant in the study at a later time, then the student should receive the standard debriefing. If, however, circumstances allow the student to sign up to participate in that project at a later time, then the researcher may manually sign up the student for another time.

To do this, the researcher should agree on a time slot with the student, then manually sign the student into that slot (scroll down to the bottom of the page on the timeslot overview page).

If you are uncertain about how to handle a situation involving the Psychology Research Participation System, contact the SONA admin at p100res@uvic.ca

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