

Murdoch University Research Participant Portal

GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

General information about the Participant Portal

First-hand experience in research is a critical component of learning about psychology, and the best way to start is by participating in research studies. This gives you direct research experience with research and develops your knowledge of how the process works.

Therefore, research participation is incorporated into an assessment component for this unit. We have created a research participation portal that lists all Ethics-approved Psychology research studies at Murdoch at: <https://murdochpes.sona-systems.com>

At this website, participants can read research study advertisements and sign up to participate in research studies of their choice. Researchers use the portal to advertise their (Murdoch Ethics-approved) project, recruit participants, and record their participation.

You will need an account to participate in the Portal. Anyone may request an account and participate in the Research Participant Portal, whether or not you are a student at Murdoch University. However, students enrolled in select Psychology units (PSY141, BSC201, BSC302) are automatically enrolled because they receive unit credit for participation; they will receive an e-mail with login details at the beginning of term. Some studies offer only credit in these units, other studies are available for paid compensation.

With each project, there are several things you should expect from the researcher conducting the participation session. First, you should be given information about the study you are participating in, such as a general outline of what you are expected to do. Second, you should be asked for your consent to participate in the study, usually by completing a "consent form" (and you may withdraw your consent at any time). If you choose to not participate in the experiment, you may complete an alternative written assignment instead, which is expected to take a similar amount of time (which you can request from the experimenter). At the end of the session, in most cases, you should be given further information about the study to help you understand what you had done and why. For most projects, a report of the results (when they become available) will be accessible through the Psychology Research Results website (<http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/Research/Psychology-Research/Research-results/>).

If no studies are available to you or if you are ineligible for them, you have the option of earning credit through the "written option." The written option allows you to earn credit by evaluating and reviewing a published journal article. Complete instructions on this option are available at <http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/Staff-and-Student-forms-and-resources/Research-Participant-Portal/Written-Option-Information/> .

For questions, contact pesUG@murdoch.edu.au. Please contact this address for technical questions. For administrative issues, contact the Participant Portal Administrator (Dr R. Matthew Montoya; matt.montoya@murdoch.edu.au).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Which units are selected to include experiment participation as a unit assessment component?

The selected units are PSY141, BSC201, and BSC302. The Research Methods units are typically included, but unit outlines will specify if they include experiment participation. It is not expected that the number of units will exceed four.

Q. How do I access the Participant Portal?

A. The Research Participant Portal is at <https://murdochpes.sona-systems.com>, and a link to the portal can be found at: <http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/Staff-and-Student-forms-and-resources/Research-Participant-Portal/>.

Q. How do I create an account, sign in, and/or retrieve my password?

At the start of term, participant accounts are created automatically for students enrolling in the relevant units, but only if they do not already have an account. Login information will be sent to the email address students nominated for official university communications. Lost passwords can be retrieved from <https://murdochpes.sona-systems.com>. Email pesUG@murdoch.edu.au for other questions regarding accounts and login info (after checking the FAQ).

Q. How do I use the Participant Portal?

A. See the participant documentation file (Documentation for participants.pdf) for all the details on how to use the portal. There is also a walkthrough video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OnT2ZU6QQ>

Q. Why are hours "deducted" at the end of the semester?

Credit hours are deducted to apply them toward the unit assessment component. This is not a penalty, it is merely a withdrawal of credits as required to apply to the unit mark. Achieving fewer than the required number of hours at the end of term will result in partial credit for the completed hours. Students not enrolled in a unit using experiment participation will have no deductions at the end of term, and no negative balances are retained across semesters.

Q. Do I still have to do 15 credit hours to enrol in 4th-year units?

No. The enrolment hurdle arrangement no longer applies now that research participation is a unit assessment component. However, you are welcome to participate in experiments even if you are not taking a selected unit.

Q. Will surplus credits carry across semesters?

Yes.

Q. Do students enrolled in two units with experiment participation have to complete twice the hours in a given semester?

This is a special case because most relevant units cannot be taken concurrently, and only applies to students enrolled in two selected units in the same term. If you are one of these students, you may not be expected to earn more than 5 hours in a given semester, but this is at the discretion of the portal administrator and both of your unit coordinators, so you should contact all of them (e-mail the portal coordinator, cc'ing both unit coordinators) no later than Week 12 of the relevant semester.

Q. How many hours do I need to complete?

A. Check your unit outline for details regarding the assessment. Most likely you will need to complete 5 hours of research participation for each unit as part of a larger assessment.

Q. Can I do only (on-line) survey studies for credit?

A. Online survey studies are one of many important methods of psychological research. Other studies require your presence in a laboratory to collect the data in-person. To ensure that you benefit from experiencing the full variety of psychological research studies, we may restrict the number of online survey studies you can do for credit.

Q. Can I still volunteer for projects if I have already completed my hours for the unit?

A. Yes. There is no upper limit on the number of projects in which you take part. Some studies may offer payment for participation (instead of unit credit), and there is no limit on how many in which you participate.

Q. If I just sign up for a study but do not show up on the day, do I still get credit?

A. No. **Unexcused no-shows (i.e., without a valid excuse) can be penalised the number of credits equal to the value of the study for a no-show (e.g., -1 credit for a 1-credit study), and cancellations require at least 24 hours notice.** If you think you might miss an appointment, you should contact the researcher right away to explain your situation. **If you fail to provide 24-hour notice, you may still receive a no-show.**

Q. What if I decide to withdraw from a study before the end?

A. If you make a principled decision to withdraw from a study before its completion, you may complete the alternative written assignment instead—make this known to the researcher right away. If you simply leave without explanation, or fail to appear for a subsequent testing session, you may not receive your credit hours.

Q. What if I enrol in a study then decide that I don't want to participate after all?

A. You may cancel your participation, but this requires a minimum of 24 hours notice to avoid a no-show penalty. It is courteous to provide more advance notice to the researcher so that they can give your place to another participant and do not waste time and money trying to contact you or sending you questionnaires, etc.

Q. What if I haven't received credit for my hours?

A. **First, email the experimenter.** If you cannot resolve the problem with them then contact the Participant Portal Administrator.

Q. Is this ethical?

A. Only projects that have been cleared by Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee are allowed to be advertised in the portal. You are under no obligation to take part in any particular project if you do not wish to. You can choose the alternative written assignment for a research study if you do not consent to participate in the experiment—ask the experimenter if you choose this option. As a participant, you are free to withdraw from a study at any time.

Q. Are my personal details going to be publicly available?

A. No. The only people with access to your personal details are the researchers of the projects you volunteer for and the Participant Portal Administrator. No information that you provide about yourself in the course of a study will be connected to the Participant Portal database.

Q. When can I enrol?

A. The Participant Portal website can be accessed at any time but students participating for credit have to complete the hours for that unit before the end of term (**check with your unit coordinator for the deadline**). It may be a few weeks into the term before a wide variety of experiments are available. Keep checking back for new studies, and do not wait until the last minute!

Q. Do I have to enrol online?

A. Yes. Occasionally you may find out about a project and volunteer in ways other than online (replying to an advertisement in a local newspaper, the researcher is your friend, etc.) However, to receive Portal credit for your participation, you **MUST** enrol online. Even if the researcher knows who you are and how many hours credit you deserve, you cannot be given credit until you enrol in the experiment.

Q. What if there are no experiments for me to participate in?

A. Keep checking throughout the term as experiments can be posted/alterd at any time. Get in touch with your unit coordinator if you are having continued difficulty finding experiments. If you are in need of research credit, the "written option" is available.

Q. Can I get more hours of credit by filling in a questionnaire very, very slowly?

A. No. Each study advertises how many credits it offers, which represents a reasonable estimate of how much time the study should take for an average participant. Although some people are likely to take a little longer than others, in the interests of fairness, all participants will receive the same credit.

Q. What if I take part in psychological research conducted by researchers from elsewhere?

A. You are quite welcome to take part in any research project you wish, but you will only earn credit for projects advertised on the Participant Portal.

Q. What if the credit hours offered for a project does not correspond to the amount of time spent actually doing it?

A. Credit hours are calculated in 30 minute increments and researchers are asked to round their time estimates to the nearest 30 minutes. Some projects will take slightly more or less time than the credit hours suggest, but this should average out over your participation in multiple studies. If a particular study takes so much longer than predicted for a large number of participants that its advertised credit hours are incorrect, these may be amended retrospectively to give you credit for the extra time. If this is the case, communicate with the researcher first and ask them to contact the Portal Administrator.

Q. What if I have characteristics that make me ineligible for projects?

A. Projects in some areas may exclude participants with certain characteristics (e.g., left-handers, those taking medication, those whose first language is not English). Sometimes the reason for the exclusion is that the study procedures could be harmful to you. Sometimes the reason is that the experimenter wishes to control for these factors. It is unlikely that these factors will stand in the way of you meeting your target hours. However, it may be that you are excluded from studies in an entire field that you are interested in and would like to learn more about. In this situation, you could contact the researcher in charge and ask to participate. If the procedure does not put you at risk and the researcher has sufficient time/resources, he or she **MAY** agree for you to take part. However, you should make it clear that you do not meet the selection criteria, and the researcher may decide not to include your data in the analyses. You may nonetheless be able to receive your participation.