

Murdoch University Research Participant Portal

GUIDE FOR RESEARCHERS

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 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 they 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 email 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, the participant should be given information about the study, such as a general outline of what is expected to happen. Second, the participant should be asked for their consent to participate in the study, usually by completing a "consent form" (and the participant may withdraw their consent at any time). If the participant chooses not to participate in the experiment, then they may complete an alternative written assignment instead, which is expected to take a similar amount of time. In this case, the participant can request the written assignment from the experimenter. At the end of the session, and in most cases, the participant should be given further information about the study to help them understand what happened 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/>).

In the rare case in which studies are not available, participants have the option of earning credit through the "written option." The written option allows participants 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, such as the creation of an account, or to get your login details if you've lost them.** For administrative issues, you may contact the Participant Portal Administrator (Dr R. Matthew Montoya; matt.montoya@murdoch.edu.au).

Information for researchers

Fourth year thesis students (Honours, GradDip), postgraduate research students in Psychology, and academic staff members in Psychology and their research assistants may use the Participant Portal to recruit participants for their studies. Academic staff members automatically receive researcher accounts, but students have to request one through their supervisor, citing the Ethics approval code for the project they will be associated with. **To request a researcher account, the supervisor must send an email request to pesUG@murdoch.edu.au (please also cc M.Trac@murdoch.edu.au and F.Lee@murdoch.edu.au) with the student(s) name, email address, and Ethics approval code.** With a researcher account, it is possible to create a study and request approval for advertising on the portal.¹ Academic staff are responsible for ensuring their students use the Portal appropriately (regarding ethical behaviour of researchers, privacy of participants' information, and prompt crediting of participation).

All experiments must have an alternative written assignment available should participants (participating for unit credit) request it in place of completing the experimental protocol. The assignment should relate directly to the experiment and take a similar amount of time. On satisfactory completion of the assignment (as judged by the experimenter), the participant is entitled to receive the unit credit as if they had participated in the experiment.

Advertising projects

Consult the documentation (Documentation for researchers.pdf) for instructions on how to use the portal. Send questions to pesUG@murdoch.edu.au. Also see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec8S3xfO-a8> for a walkthrough video on using the portal. Below are some general guidelines for creating your study entry.

- Title of your project – keep this short and to the point.
- You must include the ethics permit number of your project for approval.
- Students – be sure to include your supervisor's name on the project as a researcher
- In your description of your project for potential participants, outline what participation in the project will entail. You should also include your contact details (or your supervisor's contact details) for students seeking further information. These descriptions should be succinct.
- Decide whether you are offering unit credit and/or payment as compensation for participation. You can do both by duplicating the experiment with different settings (see documentation).
- Ensure the number of credit hours participants will receive for the project represent the time that a participant is likely to contribute to the study to the nearest 30 minutes (.5 credits). The minimum is 30 minutes. **There needs to be a perfect relation between the time estimated in the Study Description and the number of credits granted.**
- Request approval using the "Send Request" button under "Study Information"—this is a separate process *after* Ethics approval.
- Quote your study name and HREC approval code in any correspondence regarding your study.
- If the study includes a survey hosted by Qualtrics, include code in the URL (specifically, %SURVEY_CODE%) to ensure that credit is automatically allocated to participants who complete the study.

¹ Note that (a) creating a study and (b) requesting approval are two different steps. When your study is ready for review, make sure that you click the button to request approval. If you do not click this button, the Portal administrator will not be notified of your study.

Providing a feedback report

In almost all cases, researchers are expected to provide feedback of the results of the study to participating students. A common form for this feedback is to post findings on the Psychology Research Results page (<http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/Research/Psychology-Research/Research-results/>) so that participants can track your research. The feedback report should be provided as soon as possible after completion of the data collection phase of the project, and in most cases by the end of the calendar year. If the project is occurring over an extended period (e.g., across calendar years), an interim report may be requested, usually at the end of the calendar year.

The feedback report is usually 2-3 pages, and contains a summary of the major aims and study hypotheses (if applicable), the design and measures used in the study, a concise and easy to understand summary of major results, and interpretations/conclusions. The report must be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. To see an example feedback report, click here <http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/document/Research-Results/researchrequirements.pdf> Feedback reports need to be posted by the Participant Portal administrators. Please email your completed feedback report to pesUG@murdoch.edu.au for posting on the site.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. How much participant time may I use in my study?

A. On your ethics form you will likely have to justify your sample size, based on a power analysis or other defensible criteria, and the portal may initially assign a maximum number of hours for your study. If you require more participants, contact the Administrator.

Q. What if my study ends up taking a lot longer than I said it would in my advertisement?

A. It is your responsibility as a researcher not to waste participants' time. This means that you should be well organised, start your testing sessions on time and practise your procedures ahead of time so that you can conduct the study efficiently. Nevertheless, sometimes studies do take longer than anticipated. If your study is taking longer (in terms of credit hours) than it said it would in your advertisement, you should contact the Participant Portal Administrator to amend the credit hours associated with the study.

Q. When will my study be advertised?

*A. Once you have created the study on the portal and requested approval (**see footnote on page 2**), the Administrator will review your study and you will be notified of the outcome. Please note that Ethics approval from Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee is required prior to requesting to advertise on the SONA system.*

Q. Can I still recruit participants from lectures or sign-up sheets on notice boards?

A. One of the aims of the on-line Participant Portal is to stop recruitment from class. Thus, generally speaking, you should not recruit volunteers from lectures. If you believe it is necessary (and you have Ethics approval), you may supplement your Participant Portal advertisement with other means of advertising. However, you must exercise caution with protecting private information (student numbers, email address, etc.).

Q. What if I recruit participants through other means (such as local newspapers) and some of my volunteers turn out to be students in Psychology units?

A. Students enrolled in the relevant units can receive credit for participation by enrolling using the Participant Portal.

Q. How soon do I have to record people's participation on-line?

A. You should record that your participants have completed their part in your study as soon as possible, preferably the same day.

Q. What if no one volunteers for my study?

A. Although offering unit credit for participation improves the chances of recruiting participants, it does not guarantee that participants will sign up for your study. Students may choose not to take part in your particular study and their rights must be respected.

Q. What if too many people volunteer for my study?

A. Out of fairness to the students, the first eligible, contactable volunteers to enrol should be given priority. As a courtesy, you should contact any remaining volunteers and inform them that you will not be testing them so they know to look elsewhere for credit (do so at least **48 hours** in advance). To avoid this becoming too mammoth a task, you should contact the Participant Portal Administrator promptly when you have recruited enough participants and ask to have your advertisement taken down. You will still be able to access your list of volunteers.

Q. What if ineligible people sign up for my study?

A. It is good research practice to check that each of your volunteers actually meets any criteria that you set for participation. If your advertisement clearly states that you required people with a particular characteristic and you have a volunteer who does not possess that characteristic, you are not obliged to include them or to give them credit hours. If your advertisement neglected to mention the selection criterion, the volunteer is entitled to participate and receive credit hours (EXCEPT in the case where your procedure may cause them harm). Occasionally, ineligible students may approach you to take part in your study because it particularly interests them. This is a reasonable request and if you have sufficient time and resources to allow them to participate, and your procedures will not be harmful to them, you may choose to allow them to do so. If they do, they should receive full credit. However, you are not obliged to include the data from ineligible students in your analysis.

Q. When should I take down my advertisement?

A. As soon as you have recruited the participants that you need. If you need more than the default maximum hours of participant time, contact the Participant Portal Administrator for permission to use extra hours.

Q. When do I have to debrief my participants?

A. As soon as possible. Because research participation is intended to be educationally valuable to participants, one of the conditions of using the Participant Portal is that you give your participants some detailed information about your study, aims, methodology, and anticipated findings. You should also be prepared to provide answers to any questions they may have about your research. Depending on the nature of your study, you may debrief your volunteers immediately or you may wait until all your data is collected. Note that Ethics application forms now require you to include the written debriefing document that you intend to give to your participants. Feedback reports should also be provided as soon after the data collection phase as possible, with a deadline for most projects at the end of the calendar year. For projects with data collection across years, an interim feedback report should be provided.