

SONA Participant Management System Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures for faculty and students using SONA. SONA is an online system utilized by the psychology area to manage student participation in psychological research. Faculty and student researchers benefit from SONA by gaining access to a pool of potential participants. Student participants gain firsthand experience with psychological research from their participation through SONA.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all psychology faculty and students who wish to use the SONA participant management system in their research, all instructors who wish to include research participation as a part of their courses, and all students who wish to participate in research through SONA. This policy has been developed by the faculty of psychology who will update it at least every 3-5 years if not earlier.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 SONA:** An online system used by the psychology area to manage student participation in research.
- 3.2 Research:** An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation.
- 3.3 Study:** A specific research project for which student participants are recruited.
- 3.4 Faculty Researcher:** A full-time or part-time faculty member in the psychology area who is conducting research involving student participants.
- 3.5 Student Researcher:** A student currently registered in the honours stream of the psychology degree program who is conducting research involving student participants under the supervision of a faculty member.
- 3.6 Student Participant:** An individual currently enrolled in one or more courses at St. Mary's University who plans to participate in research through SONA.
- 3.7 Instructor:** An individual who is currently teaching one or more courses in the department of psychology.

4. Policies and Procedures for SONA Administration

- 4.1** The psychology area chair will act as the SONA administrator. The SONA administrator will review all SONA study applications and make a decision regarding their approval. The SONA administrator will also consult with the chair of the Research Ethics Board (REB) on any ethics-related issues regarding the SONA participant management system. No study will be considered for approval without the approval of the REB.
- 4.2** SONA is exclusively for research conducted by researchers associated with the psychology area. Researchers in other departments and areas within the university cannot access SONA.
- 4.3** This policy regarding participation for course credit through SONA will be made accessible to instructors, researchers, and students.

5. Policies and Procedures for Instructors

- 5.1** Students in the Winter sections of PSYC 203 are required to complete a research participation component comprising 5% of their overall course grade.
- 5.2** Currently the Winter sections of PSYC 203 are the only courses authorized to include a research participation component in order to balance demand for research participation credit with the number of available timeslots (studies involving human participants). Requests to include research participation in other courses may be considered by the Psychology Area Chair on a case-by-case basis if it is expected that there will be a greater than usual number of available research opportunities in a given semester.
- 5.3** All instructors who include research participation in their courses will provide an alternative exercise (i.e., article summaries) for students who wish to receive participation credit but who do not wish to participate in research or who cannot find a suitable study/time to complete their participation. Each individual alternative exercise will be worth 1% (with the opportunity to receive a total of 5%). This information must be included in the course syllabus.
- 5.4** At the end of each semester instructors who have included research participation in their courses will receive a report from the SONA system indicating the research participation credit earned by students enrolled in their course. Instructors will apply the research participation credits from the SONA report and any completed alternative assignments to the students' course grades.

6. Policies and Procedures for Faculty Researchers & Supervisors

- 6.1** Faculty supervisors are responsible for creating and managing studies on SONA on behalf of the student researchers they supervise. This includes entering the study information on SONA, seeking study approval from the SONA administrator, creating timeslots, and granting credits/no-shows when applicable.
- 6.2** All studies posted on SONA must first be approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB). Once ethics approval has been obtained, researchers must enter the study details into the SONA system and submit a request for approval to the SONA administrator (Area Chair). Studies will be visible to participants only after receiving approval from the SONA administrator.
- 6.3** Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the studies they conduct on SONA follow appropriate ethics standards, and that their research protocols match those in their approved ethics application. Researchers who do not comply with the SONA policy will have their SONA use privileges suspended until the issues are resolved.
- 6.4** Both in-person and online studies can be posted on SONA, after receiving appropriate ethics approval and SONA approval.
- 6.5** Studies may be posted on SONA for course credit or payment after receiving appropriate ethics approval and SONA approval. The course credit value listed for a given study should be based on the anticipated modal participation time. 15 minutes = .5%; 30 minutes = 1%; 45 minutes = 1.5%; 60 minutes = 2%.
- 6.6** It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the study format (in-person, online, multi-part in-person, multi-part online, take-home), duration, location, compensation, and/or eligibility requirements are clearly and correctly specified on SONA prior to requesting approval from the SONA administrator.
- 6.7** Researchers will grant credit or indicate a "no-show" within 48 business hours of the end of the research timeslot.
- 6.8** Researchers can cancel an appointment with a participant without rewarding credit, provided they give the student 24 hours' notice or more. Participants given less than 24 hours' notice of a cancellation shall receive full credit. Whenever possible the participant should also be given another opportunity to participate in the study.
- 6.9** Once a study is complete the researcher will change the status of the study from 'active' to 'inactive' on SONA so that the study no longer appears visible to students.

7. Policies and Procedures for Student Researchers

- 7.1** Student researchers are responsible for providing all information required to create and manage their study on SONA to their faculty supervisor in a timely manner. This includes but is not limited to recruitment information (study title, description, compensation information, eligibility requirements etc.), desired time slots, and information on participant attendance.

8. Policies and Procedures for Student Participants

- 8.1** The demand for timeslots may exceed the supply in a given term. Students are not guaranteed that there will be enough studies available to meet their research participation requirements. Sign up for research participation timeslots is on a first come, first serve basis. Students are encouraged to sign up early and check SONA regularly. These details must be specified in the course syllabus.
- 8.2** Students can cancel an appointment online with their SONA account provided they do so at least 24 hours before their scheduled appointment. If necessary, appointments can also be cancelled by contacting the researcher by email. Students who fail to cancel their appointment at least 24 hours in advance, or who arrive for their appointment 5 minutes late or more shall be classified as an "unexcused no-show".
- 8.3** In rare cases, students may be granted an "excused no-show", if they cancel within 24 hours of their scheduled timeslot due to an unexpected medical or personal emergency. Decisions around 'excused no-shows' will be made at the discretion of the researcher and students may be required to provide supporting documentation (i.e., medical notes).
- 8.4** Students who are classified as an "unexcused no-show" for two appointments in a given term will have their SONA account suspended and will not be able to participate in studies for course credit for the remainder of that term.
- 8.5** Students are responsible for ensuring that they have correctly entered their student ID number in SONA and that they have selected the correct course and section to which their research participation credits should be applied. Entering an incorrect ID number or choosing the wrong course and/or section will result in the student's credits not being properly reported to the instructor, which could result in a research participation grade of 0.
- 8.6** Students can only participate in a given study once.

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8.7 Certain studies may be looking for specific demographics and therefore might not apply to all students. It is the responsibility of the student to read all eligibility requirements prior to signing up for a study. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements posted on SONA will not be allowed to participate and will not receive credit. For example, you must add your birthday information to confirm eligibility for certain studies.

Approval Authority	Responsible Office	Effective Date	Date Last Revisited
	Chair of Psychology	August 29, 2024	February 12, 2025