Texas A&M University-Commerce  
College of Business and Entrepreneurship  
Business Research Experience Program (BREP)  
SONA RULES AND REGULATIONS  
FOR ALL RESEARCHERS & PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS  
Updated June 2012

It is important that all researchers using the participant pool (regardless of whether they access the SONA system) familiarize themselves with these rules and procedures so that participants are treated with respect, and to ensure that the educational goals of the research requirement are met. Any researcher who violates these rules may lose the privilege of using the pool.

**Human Subjects Training:**
All individuals conducting research involving human subjects must complete the online tutorial required by the Institutional Review Board. Review required training at: http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool/research/RequiredTrainingIRB092210.pdf
Follow the steps posted at the TAMUC graduate school site (Required compliance training) for: https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp

**IRB Approval:**
Researchers will not be allowed to post a study in the BREP SONA system without the required training and study approval by the IRB. A copy of the IRB approval email should be sent to the BREP Administrators.

**Researchers:**
Request a BREP SONA account by emailing BREP.ADMINISTRATOR@TAMUC.edu
User ID and password information will be emailed to you.

**Instructors:**
**BA 303, BAAS 444, BA 595, EMBA 595**
Additional courses may be added.
An email with User ID and password information will be email to you at the beginning of the semester. We ask that you notify students via the syllabus and through email, the following information:

**Research participation** – 5 points out of a total 100% course grade.

A goal of this class is to help you familiarize yourself with research methods. One manner to obtain this goal is to have you participate in research studies. Participating in research studies contributes to students and faculty at TAMUC, your understanding of how research is conducted, and human knowledge in general. All students in this class will be required to participate in the Business Research Experience Program (BREP), or complete alternative assignments (see your instructor for more information on alternative assignments).
Students must complete a total of 5 research points (1 point for each study).

Studies will be made available at: http://tamuc-cbe.sona-systems.com/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f Students will need to log in as a NEW PARTICIPANT and request an account.

After creating an account, students will sign into the experiment system (SONA) and be asked to complete a prescreen survey. The prescreen takes about 30 minutes to complete, and will count as the first point. Then, students will need to select 4 other studies to complete. Some studies may be offered online, while others require face-to-face interaction.

If you fail to complete this portion of the class requirements, your grade will be lowered by 5 points. In effect, if you have an ‘A’ in the class but fail to complete your research participation (either through participating in research studies, alternative assignments, or a mixture of both) your final grade in the class will be a “B.”

Students:
Students enrolled in the above mentioned courses will log in and create their own accounts at: http://tamuc-cbe.sona-systems.com/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f

Study information
*In general, the only information that should be presented to students is the name of the study, expected duration, amount of credit, researcher contact information, and any specific requirements or detailed instructions.

1. Name of Study
When entering the Study Name in the experiment creation phase, please select a name that will uniquely identify your study using the following conventions. The first set of characters should consist of the researchers' last name(s) or initials, followed by the characters “Study.” A second set of characters can consist of a simple alpha-numeric labeling convention established for your research team. You will then use this name to identify your study to participants (e.g., for door signs). For example, “FGR GH1A” and “Flanagan Study HA4” would be valid Study Names. However, “Smith Study on Alcohol” would not be a valid name as it includes descriptive information about the study.

2. Description of Study
Placement of ANY descriptive information about a study in sections visible to participants is discouraged. Information that may encourage students to sign up for a particular study (e.g., "Only 20 minutes," "This is an interesting study," "This study involves sex," “Study involves completing a survey”) is NOT allowed. You are encouraged to include special instructions regarding: a) the location of your study, b) clarification of cancellation procedures, and c) clarification of no prior participation.
3. Duration of Study

Please only enter times in increments of 30 min. For example, if your study is estimated to take 25 minutes then you should still enter 30 minutes in the duration field. We highly encourage all researchers to create studies that take about 30 minutes to complete.

4. Study Credits

In the first semester of the BREP – all studies will count for a full point. Adjustments may be made in the following semesters.

5. Prescreening

There is a prescreening survey that is given to each participant in the system each semester, and it is meant to determine participant eligibility in further studies. A new prescreen is created each fall and spring. Researchers who wish to submit items to be included in the prescreen must contact the BREP Administrator via email, at least 1 month prior to the first week of the fall or spring semester (prescreen items need to have IRB approval). The prescreen will remain in operation over the summer using the questions that were administered during the prior spring semester.

Researchers can screen participants’ answers to these questions and only allow eligible participants to sign up for their studies. These restrictions are enforced automatically by the SONA system.

The SONA system can be configured to display your study only to the participants who have answered in a certain way on the prescreen questionnaire. Participants will not be aware of these automatic restrictions. Any questions used to screen participants must be formatted as multiple choice (select one).

- From your Study Information page, click the “View/Modify Restrictions” link.
- Follow the instructions at the top of each page. You can set restrictions on individual items or on summed/averaged items (in this case, all items must also be numeric).

The System Instructions State: You may restrict to one choice or many choices for any question. If you restrict on multiple questions, it is the same as a logical “AND.” For example, if you setup the prescreen restrictions so that participants must have answered “Yes” to a “Do you wear glasses?” question and “Blue” or “Grey” to “What color are your eyes?” then they must meet both requirements to participate. In other words, only participants who wear glasses and have either blue or grey eyes are eligible. There is no support for a logical “OR” restriction across multiple questions.

6. Options for Scheduling Participants

Here are some methods that can be used to schedule participants if your study requires face-to-face interaction…

- **Researchers are NOT ALLOWED to directly solicit participants from classes that are either offering credit for students to participate in the research pool, or are feeding participants into the pool.** This is done so as to not create competition among researchers to recruit participants.
You can post available times on the web system and give out “authorization” codes & the Study Name to only those students who qualify for your study. Please make sure the student has clear instructions including your name, the Study Name, and the code that will allow that participant to sign up for times you have posted on the web system.

With a participant’s consent, you can schedule the timeslot on his/her behalf. You are strongly encouraged to schedule the session on the web system. If you do not schedule a session on the web-system, the participant will not be able to cancel via the web, will not be able to check the web to confirm the time and location of the study, and will not have noted credit in the system. Credit will always be awarded via the web-based system if the participant schedules within the system.

Another alternative is to schedule “open sessions” for eligible participants. You can then inform participants that they can receive credit if they show up for one (and only one) of several available sessions. You will not officially assign an appointment time, but will only give credit if the person completes one of your available sessions. Thus, a student cannot be a no-show with this approach. Rather, he or she can attend one of several possible sessions based upon personal convenience.

Note: It is important that researchers (1) not unnecessarily delay notifying students who have "qualified" for the experiment and that (2) the appointments be scheduled as soon as possible. Students who have been told that they will be scheduled for testing some time later in the semester and who then are not contacted for several months are likely to become worried that they have been forgotten, or may complete their credits elsewhere.

7. Debriefing

Researchers must explain the purpose of their study to participants. In order to maintain the credibility of the claim that research participation is an educational experience, it is necessary that students be educated in some way about research in general and/or about the specific research in which they have just participated. Therefore, it is the researcher’s obligation to clearly explain the specific purpose and procedures of the study to the participant at the end of the testing session. If, for the purpose of maintaining the experimental naiveté of future participants, a full explanation is not possible at that time, the researcher must arrange to provide such an explanation at a later date. However, all researchers should always provide the participant with at least a general idea of what the study was about and why it is of importance (theoretically, practically, or both) at the end of the testing session(s).

8. Assigning Credits

Here are the instructions for how to handle a few common situations, with regard to awarding credits:

If a subject declines to participate. If, at any point after reading the "Informed Consent" form (which is required for all studies), a student declines to participate, he/she should be gracefully excused and given credit in the amount that the study is designated, despite not having participated in the study.

If a student who shows up for a study cannot participate for any reason (e.g., the equipment has failed, more participants than are necessary for a group experiment have
arrived), he/she should be awarded credit in the designated amount for the study, even if the appointment is rescheduled. At the time of the rescheduled testing session(s) (if any) the participant must receive the appropriate credit, without considering the credit already earned.

For studies involving multiple testing sessions the participant should receive his/her research credit(s) after completing each session. If, after a particular session, he/she declines to participate further, the credit(s) earned to that point must be awarded. If a student participates in one (or more) session(s), but fails to show up for the remaining one(s) and has not rescheduled or canceled, he/she should be given one "No Show."

Subject cancellations/"No Shows." Students may cancel via the web-based system, email, or by calling a number you have provided. You may try to reschedule the participant for another time. Participants may cancel appointments up to the study start time. Experimenters should WAIT 5 MINUTES before giving a No-Show, and should always check all three cancellation modalities (web, email, voicemail) to see if a participant cancelled before logging the No Show on the web-based system. The No Show must be logged WITHIN 48 HOURS of the research appointment. Each no-show is logged into the system along with credits, and each student’s instructor can use their own policy for handling each. There is no automatic penalty in the online system associated with no-shows.

Researcher "No Shows." This will be handled by the RESEARCHER. The researcher should make arrangements to assign credit on the web system and notify the student of the missed appointment. Students are to WAIT 10 MINUTES for the researcher before determining that it is a researcher "no show." The student may also contact the researcher directly when it becomes clear that the researcher is absent. The student must report the “Researcher No Show” directly to the researcher within 24 hours. The researcher should respond to the student's request within 48 hours. If a participant has not received a satisfactory response, he or she can file a "Complaint Form" with the main office. The office staff and/or the research pool coordinator will make a final decision on the complaint and assign credit if necessary.

Researcher cancellations. If a researcher needs to cancel a session he/she may do so by emailing or calling the participant AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE the appointment. If the experiment needs to cancel with less than 24 hours’ notice, or is unable to reach the participant in person, he/she should leave a note for the participant(s) on the laboratory door, and leave phone and email messages for the participant. The note should inform the participant(s) that he/she/they have been or will be credited via the web system. Please assign this credit as soon as possible to avoid any problems or participant complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns, ideas please contact the BREP administration committee.

Best wishes in your research!
Shonda Gibson
Jennifer Flanagan
Alan Francis
Charlotte Larkin