

Human Subjects Committee Guidelines for Reviewing Research Protocols

No research can be conducted using the Psychology Course Credit Participant Pool until after it has been approved by the campus Institutional Review Board (IRB). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all in-person research activities must have specific IRB approval with COVID safety precautions. The IRB determines whether your research is allowed to transition to an in-person mode.

After IRB approval, a study must be reviewed by the HSC before it can be run in the Course Credit Participant Pool. These are the guidelines that the HSC uses to review a study. This review focuses on consent forms, debriefing sheets, and study procedures. It is important that a study adheres to these guidelines before submitting it for review. Otherwise, you may be required to revise documents which will delay the study's approval.

Consent Form

Consent forms are already approved by the IRB. The items on the IRB checklist are not the HSC's concern; we are only looking for fit with credit pool requirements.

1. **Duration:** Specify the length of the study, up to 170 minutes. The maximum durations are as follows: 25 mins (for 0.5 credit), 50 mins (for 1 credit), 80 mins (for 1.5 credits), 110 mins (for 2 credits), 140 mins (for 2.5 credits), and 170 mins (for 3 credits).
 - a. It is acceptable for researchers to use a blank space to be filled in later.
 - b. It is acceptable for the wording to be in terms of hours, not minutes (1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours, etc.).
 - c. Sample text: "The study will take under 50 minutes to complete." "The study will take about 2 hours to do." "The experiment will last approximately _____, and you will receive one course credit for each hour of participation."
2. **Credit Received:** Specify the number of credits (0.5, 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, or 3). Credits must be evenly divisible by 0.5 (e.g., no 0.75 credits, 1.2 credits, etc.) and are fixed for all participants in a given study (e.g., you cannot offer bonus credits based on performance, etc.). This credit description should be phrased in terms of subject pool credit with no mention of Psychology 100 credit.

Sample text: "You will receive 1 course credit (1 subject pool hour) for participating in this study."
3. **Early Withdrawal:** As of Fall 2009, we give prorated credit for partial completion of multi-hour and multi-session studies. The informed consent form should, therefore, vary depending on the duration/type of study.
 - a. For 0.5-credit or 1-credit studies, specify that participant can withdraw at any time but if they do so, they won't receive any credit.

Sample text: “Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (but you will not receive credit).”

- b. For longer studies (more than 50 minutes), specify that participant can withdraw at any time and that they will receive prorated credit reflecting completed segments of participation (e.g., If a student withdraws from a 3-credit study after participating for ~80 minutes, they will receive 1.5 credit). The Consent Form must also mention the Early Withdrawal Form, which is part of the procedure for early withdrawals.
 - c. For Multi-Session studies (more than one session), specify that if a student decides to stop participating in between sessions, they will need to cancel their subsequent session(s) prior to the study cancellation deadline indicated on SONA. Students will not receive credit for the sessions they do not participate in.
4. **Changes to Consent Forms:** The HSC Reviewer will detail changes that need to be made. They may send this information to the Participant Pool Coordinator, who will communicate this with the Researcher. The Researcher is responsible for making the changes and submitting the consent form and amendment form to the IRB. The amendment form is on the IRB website. Once it is approved by the IRB, the Researcher will send the newly approved consent form and approval letter to the Pool Coordinator, who will forward the documents to the Reviewer. The Reviewer will send final approval to the Pool Coordinator.

Debriefing Sheet

The Course Credit Participant Pool is an educational experience for students to better understand psychological research. The debriefing sheet is key in providing this information. As such, researchers must provide to each participant a written summary of their study without technical jargon. Note that the debriefing sheet is required for all course credit studies, even for those without deception.

1. The HSC requires that a debriefing sheet includes:
 - a. Explanation of research goals and methods (e.g., What is the main hypothesis and how did you test it? What will this study tell us about human psychology?) written in plain English without using technical terms.
 - b. Suggestions for further reading (2-3 academic references), preferably from easily accessible journal articles (i.e., rather than book chapters).
 - c. Contact information (name/email/phone) for a faculty/graduate student who can discuss the research.
2. **Changes to Debriefing Sheets:** The Reviewer will detail changes that need to be made. They may send this information to the Pool Coordinator, who will communicate this with the Researcher. The Researcher is responsible for making the changes and sending the newly revised debriefing sheet to the Pool Coordinator, who will forward the documents to the

Reviewer. The Reviewer will send final approval to the Pool Coordinator. IRB reapproval is not needed for modifications to the debriefing sheet.

Study Procedures

Standard procedures that are routinely approved include online questionnaire studies, computer-based testing, eye-tracking, brain imaging (fMRI), electrical brain measurement (ERP), and studies conducted over video-conference (e.g., Zoom).

The HSC reviews any procedures that seem to be unduly coercive or out of the ordinary. A reviewer can raise these issues for discussion with the rest of HSC. In general, issues regarding risk and safety are assessed by the IRB, not by HSC. However, the HSC will closely review any procedures involving third party data collection and participant credit as detailed below.

1. **Third-Party or Follow-up Survey Data Collection:** The HSC will evaluate studies that require participants to: a) collect data from friends, family, or acquaintances (e.g., having these individuals complete surveys on their own time, bringing these individuals to the lab), or b) complete a follow-up survey via internet or email that is too short to be considered a multi-session study. Although it is the responsibility of the IRB to evaluate and approve research with respect to issues of coercion and informed consent, the HSC will evaluate third-party research or follow-up surveys on a case-by-case basis.
 - a. When a participant will be asked to provide third-party or follow-up data, they should know *before signing up for the study*. This information should be posted as a requirement for the study.
Sample text: “You will be asked to provide contact information for a parent or friend in this experiment. Providing this information is entirely voluntary and will in no way affect the credit you receive in this study.” “You will be asked to complete a follow-up survey a week after this experiment. Completing this follow-up survey is entirely voluntary and will in no way affect the credit you receive in this study.”
 - b. To ensure that no coercion is involved, the consent form must emphasize that recruiting third-party or follow-up data is entirely voluntary and in no way alters credit received for the study.
Sample text: “You will be asked to provide contact information of a parent. You will also be asked to send information asking them to complete a survey about their relationship with you. Providing this contact information is completely voluntary and will not change whether you receive credit for this study. Your parent’s response, or lack of response, will have no bearing on the course credit you receive for completing this experiment.” “You will be asked to complete a follow-up survey via email one week after this study. Completing this survey is completely voluntary and will not change whether you receive credit for this study. Your response, or lack of response, will not change the course credit you receive for completing this experiment.”
 - c. There must be no additional compensation offered for recruiting a third-party participant or for completing the follow-up survey (e.g., no extra credit, no monetary payment).

Sample consent form text: “You will not receive any additional course credit if one or both individuals complete the surveys.”

- d. The time involved to recruit a third party or complete the follow-up survey should not require additional time beyond that allocated for participation.
 - e. If a third party participates, the same IRB guidelines regarding informed consent apply. A mechanism must be in place for the third party to give informed consent and the consent form must be approved by the IRB.
 - f. The debriefing procedure should make clear why third-party or follow-up data are important to the research. That is, it should be clear what research questions are being tested by way of third-party or follow-up data collection and how the results may inform knowledge within the particular domain under study.
2. **Participant Credit:** Although small payment may be offered for some studies, in general, they must be separate from the Course Credit Participant Pool. Participants may earn course credit for a study but cannot be compensated twice by receiving both course credit and monetary payment for that same study, nor can they be enticed to stay late with payment. Although the HSC will evaluate course credit studies involving money on a case-by-case basis, the general rules are highlighted below.
- a. For studies in the Course Credit Pool, money cannot be used to reward or incentivize participation. Although participants might earn some small amount of money as an essential element of a study’s methodology (e.g., behavioral economic game studies), researchers may NOT use money as a recruitment tool and/or announce in advance that their study involves money.
 - b. At the end of the study (but not before), it is appropriate for the researcher to ask participants if they would like to provide their contact information (i.e., as part of a participant database) so that the researcher can contact them for participation in other studies offered outside of the Course Credit Pool that involve monetary compensation. Note, however, that there is no communication between the Course Credit Pool and the Paid Research System, which means there is currently no way to set up restrictions for a study in one system that depend on study participation status in the other.

Participating in the Course Credit Pool studies is meant to be part of students’ educational experience, for which they will receive course credit (and not monetary payment as compensation for their time). A second rationale is to avoid competition by researchers to recruit extra participants by offering extra incentives (payment on top of course credit). This does not mean that the same study cannot be run using both Course Credit Pool participants and Paid Research System participants. Rather, it means that a single participant cannot receive both course credit and monetary payment as compensation for participating in a single experiment. Consent forms should be specific to either compensation via course credit or payment (i.e., combined, "all-purpose" consent forms should be avoided).