

## Frequently Asked Questions about Participating in the Psychology Course Credit Participant Pool

**\*\*\* Do I need to register for SONA? \*\*\***

**If you have ALREADY REGISTERED on Course Credit SONA at any time after January 1st, 2017, please use your existing user ID and password. All others, please request for a new account.**

**If you DO NOT have a user account on SONA, please register ASAP to become a course credit pool participant and complete the prescreen questionnaire.**

**Participant Pool Coordinator (Shoko Watanabe): [psych-subjects@illinois.edu](mailto:psych-subjects@illinois.edu)**

*1) How do I register in the Course Credit Participant Pool so that I can participate in studies and earn credit for my course?*

To register for the Course Credit Participant Pool, you must: (a) Create an account in the online SONA system, and (b) Complete the prescreen questionnaire. SONA is an online system where you can sign up for studies and keep track of your credits earned.

First, go to the website <https://uiuc.sona-systems.com/> and click “Request Account.” **Use your UIUC email address to register.** Your password will be sent to that email address within 24 hours (be sure to check your junk mail folder). It is best to use your UIUC NetID as your login ID. Next, you will fill out a prescreen questionnaire used to determine your eligibility for various studies. The prescreen results are purged at the end of each semester, so you will be prompted to complete the prescreen every semester when you take psychology courses that allow credit for study participation.

If you want to participate in some studies for course credit and others for pay, you have to register separately in the Psychology Paid Pool even if you have already registered in the Course Credit Pool. That includes completing the prescreen questions even if you have already done so for the Course Credit Pool. The study numbers are different in the two systems (e.g., Course Credit Study #123 is not the same study as Paid Study #123). You cannot receive both course credit and pay for the same study, and you cannot change your mind later about which you want to receive for a particular study you have done.

*2) How do I sign up for studies?*

Once you have registered in SONA, you can sign up for studies. To sign up for studies, log in to the Course Credit SONA website and click the Study Sign-Up box. This will take you to a list of the studies that you are eligible to participate in. You can also click on Studies from the top toolbar and a list will be provided. This page shows studies that are available on a particular day. You can select a different date by using the drop-down menu at the top of the page. Studies that currently have available participation times (timeslots) will have “TIMESLOTS AVAILABLE” listed next to the study. If none of the studies have available

timeslots, you may want to log on to the system a few days later to see if new timeslots have been added. For each study, you can see available timeslots, and the length and location of the study. You won't know any other details about the study until you arrive. Please note that some studies are not held in the Psychology Building, so pay attention to the study's location. You will receive a reminder email the night before the study. However, you are responsible for showing up even if you do not get the email.

*3) What is the difference between registration and signing up for studies?*

Registration consists of creating a SONA account and completing the prescreen questionnaire. This allows you to be eligible to sign up for studies. Signing up for individual studies occurs after you have registered.

*4) I tried to log in to the SONA system, but it says my password isn't valid.*

The SONA system does not use passwords that you use for other university services. Click 'Request Account' and register for a SONA account. If you have already created an account this semester but cannot remember your password, click 'Lost Password'. You will be able to retrieve your password by following the steps outlined there (be sure to check your junk mail folder). If you have received 2 Unexcused No-Shows, your account may be locked (see #16 for more information). If you are still unable to log in or retrieve your password, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator.

*5) I have participated in the Psychology Course Credit Pool in previous semesters. Can I reuse my old log-in and information?*

Yes.

*6) I am under 18 years old and need to participate in Course Credit Pool for my class. What do I do?*

If you are under 18, **you still need to register for the Course Credit SONA and complete the prescreen (see #1 above)**. After you register, you can complete the Under-18 Alternative Assignment, which allows you to complete simulated experiments online. Instructions on how to complete the Under-18 Alternative Assignment can be obtained from your instructor or you can download it from the Psychology Department's website here: <https://psychology.illinois.edu/resources/participant-pool/credit-pool/participants-credit-pool>

*7) It is after the registration deadline; can I still participate in the Course Credit Pool?*

Even though it is past the registration deadline, you can still create a Course Credit SONA account and sign up for studies. If you are under-18, you can still create a Course Credit SONA account and complete the Under-18 Alternative Assignment (see #6 above).

*8) I have a Course Credit SONA account, but I need to change my course/section assignment (i.e., which class I belong to). How do I do that?*

If you have already created an account, here is how you change your course assignment: Log into your Course Credit SONA account. Click on My Profile near the top of the page. Click on Change Courses. Scroll down until you find your correct course/section and click on that course/section and then click Save Changes.

*9) I am enrolled in multiple courses that are included in the Course Credit Pool. What do I do?*

You can use one account for multiple courses. However, each study can only count towards one class. For example, if you have 2 classes that each need 3 credits, you would have to complete six 1-hour studies. If you already have a Course Credit SONA account, you can register for both classes under that account. To sign up for both classes: Log into your Course Credit SONA account. Click My Profile near the top of the page and then click Change Courses. Scroll down until you find your first course and select it. Scroll down until you find your second course and select it. This should move your selected courses to the box on the right. Click Save Changes. If you do not have a Course Credit SONA account, you will have to create an account first (see #1 above), then follow the steps above when you're asked to select your course.

*10) I want to change which course my study credit is assigned to. How can I do that?*

If you are registered for more than one course, you may reassign a credit from one course to another. To do this, simply use the Reassign link that appears when you view My Schedule/Credits. You may not split a credit between two courses (e.g., splitting a 3-credit study and allocating 2 credits to one course and 1 credit to another). Credit assignments may be changed at any time during the semester, and until the date that the Course Credit Participant Pool closes, which is usually the day after Reading Day (see the calendar on the Psychology Department's website).

*11) When I try to sign-up for studies it says that studies are not available. Am I doing something wrong?*

First, make sure you are looking in the right spot for studies to sign up for (see #2 above). Second, if you indicated during the prescreen questionnaire that you're under-18, you will not see any studies because you should be completing the Under-18 Alternative Assignment (see #6 above). Third, the system only shows you the studies that you are qualified for. Do not panic if there are no studies posted for the first few weeks of the semester. Studies are posted throughout the semester as researchers are ready to run them. There is no specific schedule for when studies are posted, which is why you need to check the site frequently. Dates and times fill up quickly, so you should check often. It often takes a few weeks at the beginning of the semester for studies to be posted, but eventually you will find them scheduled for every day of the week and at many different times. You must schedule studies via the SONA website, attend only the studies that you schedule via SONA, and you must attend at the date/time that you've scheduled. If it has been 1 month after the semester has begun and you still do not see any available studies, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator.

*12) How do I know how many credits I have earned?*

You can keep track of your appointments and the credits you have earned using SONA. Log into your SONA account and click on My Schedule/Credits.

*13) I need 3 credits for my class. Do I need to complete all 3 credits through one study?*

Studies in the Course Credit Pool are worth anywhere from 0.5 to 3 credits, depending on their duration. You may participate in any combination of credit hours to complete the credits needed for your class. However, you will not be awarded extra credit for any hours over the maximum amount of credit allowed for your class.

*14) I received a No-Show. What does that mean?*

A No-Show includes any situation in which the participant does not complete a study session and receive credit. A No-Show is not necessarily a penalty because it does not remove credit earned; it just does not add a credit to your account. There are two kinds of No-Shows: Excused and Unexcused.

An Excused No-Show is marked when a participant does not show up and has a valid documented excuse (e.g., doctor's note, letter from the Emergency Dean). Excused No-Shows are also granted whenever a researcher cancels a study session more than 24 hours in advance, or if a participant chooses to withdraw from a study.

An Unexcused No-Show is marked when a participant does not show up and has no valid documented excuse (e.g., forgetting about the study appointment, arriving late, failing to complete an online study by the deadline). If you have been granted an Unexcused No-Show and can provide a valid documented excuse, email the Participant Pool Coordinator (be sure to include your name, NetID, study #, date/time of study session). If approved, your No-Show will be changed from Unexcused to Excused. If you receive two Unexcused No-Shows, your account will be locked. While your account is locked, you will NOT be able to sign up for studies, although you can still take part in any studies that you have already signed up for and keep the credits you have already earned through other studies. See #16 for information on how to unlock your account.

*15) I missed (at least) two studies, and now I can't log into my account. What happened?*

If you missed at least two studies without providing proper documentation (see #14 above), then you were marked as Unexcused No-Show for those absences. This is why your account has been locked/disabled. See #16 for information on how to unlock your account.

*16) My account has been locked. What can I do?*

Accounts are locked/disabled if a participant has received 2 or more Unexcused No-Shows. You can be marked as Unexcused No-Show if you do not have a valid excuse for missing a study, for arriving late to a study, or if you do not complete an online study by the deadline. While your account is locked, you will NOT be able to sign up for studies, although

you can still take part in any studies that you have already signed up for and keep the credits you have already earned through other studies.

There are two ways to get your SONA account unlocked:

First, you can provide documentation justifying your Unexcused No-Shows. Valid documentation would include a letter from the emergency dean, McKinley, or other authorized professional. You can submit your documentation via email to the Participant Pool Coordinator (be sure to include your name, NetID, study #, date/time of study session). If approved, your No-Show will be changed from Unexcused to Excused, and your account will be unlocked.

Second, if you do not have a valid documentation for missing the study session(s), you can follow these steps to complete additional online ethics training:

- a) Go to the CITI Program website here: <https://www.citiprogram.org>
- b) Click "Register Here".
- c) Select University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from list of participating institutions. Also complete sections 2, 3, 4, and 5 on this page (you can select "no" for sections 6 and 7). Click "Submit".
- d) Fill out the information on the next page (for the "what is your role in research question you can just select "student researcher - undergraduate"). Click "Submit".
- e) Click to enroll in the Core Basic Training with the option that reads "Basic: Social and Behavioral Research". You can ignore or click "n/a" for all the other options. Click "Submit".
- f) Click "no" on next page (to indicate that you do not want to affiliate with any other institutions).
- g) You will then come to your main menu. Here you should see "Social and Behavioral Research, Basic Course" listed under "My Courses". Click "Enter".
- h) You need to complete the following 6 required modules that are part of that basic training:
  - o Belmont Report and Its Principles - SBE (ID: 1127)
  - o History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)
  - o Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)
  - o Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)
  - o Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)
  - o Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)
- i) Submit the completion report to show that you have successfully completed the ethics training. **You must submit the completion report via email as a PDF document.** The dates on your completion certificate must reflect that you completed the ethics training after your account was locked.

Without documentation justifying an Unexcused No-Show or showing your completion of the ethics training, your account will remain locked for the rest of the semester. If you have more than 4 Unexcused No-Shows in a given semester, your account will be permanently locked, and you will NOT be able to earn any further SONA participation credits to fulfill course requirements. Please consult your instructor should that happen.

*17) Can I cancel a study appointment?*

The cancellation deadline is clearly marked on the study information page. If it is before the deadline, then you can cancel online in the SONA system. Log in and click My Schedule/Credits. This screen shows studies that you are signed up for. There will be a Cancel button next to it. Once you click Cancel, you will need to confirm that you want to cancel the appointment. Save a copy of this page as a record of your cancellation. If the cancellation deadline has passed or if you miss an appointment, an Unexcused No-show will be recorded on your account. If you have a valid justification for the cancellation/absence with supporting documentation, email the Participant Pool Coordinator. This information will be reviewed and in certain cases (e.g., documented illness), the Unexcused No-show may be changed to Excused.

*18) I am sick/have an emergency/other legitimate excuse and I can't make it to my appointment. What should I do?*

As soon as you realize that you are not going to make your appointment, a) you should cancel your appointment via SONA if it is prior to the cancellation deadline (see #17 above) or b) if it is after the cancellation deadline, you need to email both the researcher in charge of the study and the Participant Pool Coordinator. Please include justification for the cancellation/absence and any supporting documentation. This information will be reviewed and in certain cases (e.g., documented illness), the Unexcused No-show may be changed to Excused.

*19) A researcher cancelled my appointment. Do I still get credit?*

Sometimes, a researcher may cancel a study. If a researcher cancels less than 24 hours in advance, they should email you and explain that the session has been cancelled, and you will receive credit for the study. If it is more than 24 hours in advance, you will be marked as Excused No-Show in the SONA system, and you will not receive credit for the study (although you can reschedule and sign up for the same study again, if you'd like).

*20) I completed a study, but the status for that study is still awaiting action. Why?*

Researchers should record credit within 48 hours of the study. If it has been more than 48 hours and it still says "awaiting action," contact the researcher in charge of the study and the Participant Pool Coordinator. Be sure to include your name, NetID, study #, and date/time of your study appointment.

*21) I didn't receive study credit and was told that it would be an Excused No-Show. What does that mean?*

There are 3 reasons why you may have an Excused No-Show: 1) A researcher cancels a study at least 24 hours in advance, 2) You withdrew from a study or were asked to leave (e.g., using cell phone, being disruptive), or 3) You did not attend the study but you provided valid documentation for missing it. If your situation does not fall into any of these categories, contact the Participant Pool Coordinator.

*22) I need credit for Course Credit Pool, but I don't want to do studies. What other options do I have?*

As long as your account has not been locked due to Unexcused No-Shows, you can be given an alternative assignment instead of participating in Course Credit Pool studies. Please see your instructor for details about this alternative assignment. Please note that this alternative assignment is different from the Under-18 Alternative Assignment. Your alternative assignment will most likely be an essay assignment. Please see your course instructor for details.

*23) I am uncomfortable with a study that I am participating in. Can I withdraw from the study in the middle?*

If you feel that a study violates your moral, religious, or ethical values, or makes you feel uncomfortable, you can withdraw from the study. If you withdraw from a study that is shorter than 1 hour, you will not receive any credit for the session. For studies that are longer than one hour or studies that include multiple sessions, you can receive prorated credit for partial completion of the study. The researcher must provide you with a Course Credit Early Withdrawal Form, which you must fill out and return to the Participant Pool Coordinator to receive partial credit.

*24) I signed up for a multi-session study but missed one of the sessions. What do I do?*

If you sign up for a multi-session study, it is your responsibility to attend all of the sessions or cancel your participation before the cancellation deadline. Often, if you miss the first session, you will be marked as No-Show for the subsequent sessions. In some cases, you may receive prorated credit for partial completion of a multi-session study. Ask the researcher to provide a Course Credit Early Withdrawal Form, which you must fill out and return to the Participant Pool Coordinator to receive partial credit.

*25) I showed up to a study, but the researcher said I was not signed up for it. What do I do?*

Login and check your Course Credit SONA account and make sure that you are at the right study location at the right date/time. The researcher should also have access to the most up-to-date timeslots for their study on their Course Credit SONA website. If you can verify that you are at the correct date/time/place/study #, then you should be able to participate. If not, then you will not be able to participate.

*26) I accidentally participated in a study that I was not signed up for and haven't received credit. What should I do?*

Email the Participant Pool Coordinator and provide as much information as you can about the study ASAP (study #, date, time, location, room, researcher name, duration, study tasks, contents of the debriefing sheet are often helpful in determining which study it was).

*27) I got an email from a researcher asking me to complete additional follow-up questionnaires or come in for an additional study. Do I have to do it?*

Understand that you are only required to participate in each study for its specified duration. You are not required to do anything that you were not informed about before you began the study. Occasionally, a researcher might email you before or after a study and ask you to complete additional sessions or surveys. Unless this is part of a multi-session study, you are not required to complete this additional information but may do so voluntarily.