**Northern Kentucky University**
**Department of Psychological Science**
**Human Subjects Policy**

**About This Document**
This document describes the policies of the Department of Psychological Science at Northern Kentucky University regarding research involving human subjects. This document describes the rights and responsibilities of **students who participate in such research (red font)**, **researchers who conduct such research (blue font)**, and **instructors who allow their students to participate in such research for credit (green font)**.

**Experiment Management System**
The Department of Psychological Science currently leases software developed by Sona Systems, Ltd. This software product is an online experiment management system. In order to access the experiment management system, please go to the web address listed below.

http://nku.sona-systems.com/

The Sona Systems, Ltd. experiment management software complies with all major regulations governing human subject research and privacy of data stored online. This system complies with both HIPAA and Common Rule for customers in the United States.

**System Administrator**
The local administrator for the Sona system is Dr. Kim Breitenbecher. Please feel free to contact Dr. Breitenbecher with any questions about the Sona system. Dr. Breitenbecher’s contact information is listed below.

Dr. Kim Breitenbecher  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychological Science  
MEP 357 (enter through MEP 337)  
Northern Kentucky University  
Highland Heights, KY  41099  
(859) 572-5519  
breitenbeche@nku.edu
Participants’ Rights and Responsibilities

1. The Sona experiment management system allows you to do the following tasks online:
   • browse a list of currently available experiments (some of which are laboratory-based studies, and some of which are online studies)
   • schedule appointments to participate in laboratory-based studies
   • cancel appointments to participate in laboratory-based studies
   • check your list of scheduled appointments for laboratory-based studies
   • participate in online studies
   • assign research credits to particular courses in which you are enrolled
   • check the number of credits you have earned

   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1OnT2ZU6QQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1OnT2ZU6QQ)

   You are responsible for understanding and implementing the instructions and information provided in the video described above. If you have any questions about this video, or about the experiment management system in general, please contact your instructor or the local Sona administrator, Dr. Kim Breitenbecher, at breitenbeche@nku.edu.

2. **If you are less than 18 years old, you must obtain documentation of the consent of your parent or legal guardian for you to participate in studies listed on the experiment management system.** In order to accomplish this task, you must do three things:
   • Contact the researcher and ask him or her to provide you with a hard copy of the consent form. (The Sona sign-up page provides the contact information for the researcher.)
   • Ask your parent or guardian to review the document and indicate his or her consent for you to participate by signing the form.
   • Give this signed consent form to the researcher. In the case of a laboratory-based study, you can simply bring the signed consent form to your appointment. In the case of an online study, you must give the signed consent form to the researcher prior to beginning the online study.

   If you are less than 18 years old, and you do not provide such documentation of your parent or legal guardian’s consent, you may not participate in the study.

3. By signing up for an experiment, you are informing the researcher of your intent to participate. In the case of a laboratory-based study, you will be expected to be present at the specified location at the specified
date and time. In the case of an online study, you will be expected to respond to a series of questions online.

4. If you participate in an experiment (online or laboratory-based), you will be awarded research credit. **The amount of credit that you receive will depend upon whether the study in which you participate is an online study or a laboratory-based study.**

In the case of **online studies**, we allot credit in 15-minute increments. Thus, an online study that takes 15 minutes to complete is worth 1 research credit. An online study that takes 30 minutes to complete is worth 2 research credits. An online study that takes 45 minutes to complete is worth 3 research credits, etc. In most cases, your research credit for participation in a particular experiment will be posted on the experiment management system approximately 24 hours after you complete the experiment.

In the case of **laboratory-based studies**, we also allot credit in 15-minute increments. However, because laboratory-based studies are generally less convenient for participants than online studies, we **triple** the amount of credit. Thus, a laboratory-based experiment that takes 15 minutes to complete is worth 3 research credits. A laboratory-based experiment that takes 30 minutes to complete is worth 6 research credits. A laboratory-based study that takes 45 minutes to complete is worth 9 research credits, etc. In most cases, your research credit for participation in a particular experiment will be posted on the experiment management system approximately 24 hours after you complete the experiment.

5. **If you are a Psy 100 student, you are required to earn a certain number of research credits. Students who are taking Psy 100 during any fall or spring term are required to earn a minimum of 15 research credits.** Students who are taking Psy 100 during any summer term are NOT required to earn research credits. If you are a student in an upper-level course, you may or may not be required to earn research credit; please check with your instructor to clarify his or her policy on this issue. **Please note that, in all classes, it is unethical for instructors to require their students to participate as subjects in research. Thus, instructors who require you to earn research credit must provide alternate assignments (e.g., research papers, PsycInfo assignments) in order to fulfill any research credit requirements.**
Your instructor will be able to access a record of your research credits. Your instructor can tell you how many points each research credit is worth. Please check with your instructor to clarify his or her policy regarding this issue.

6. **You have the right to cancel an appointment that you have scheduled to participate in a study.** If you find that you are unable to attend an appointment to participate in an experiment, it is very important that you cancel your appointment. **You must cancel your appointment prior to the start of your scheduled appointment.** You can cancel your appointment in one of three ways:

- by logging in to Sona and cancelling your appointment online
- by emailing the researcher
- by calling the researcher

Please note that the researcher’s contact information is listed on Sona sign-up page for each particular study.

**Unexcused absences:** If you fail to attend an appointment, without canceling prior to the start of the appointment, your failure to attend will be considered a “no-show” or an “unexcused absence.” **If you accrue 2 unexcused absences, your Sona account will become limited.** This means that you will be able to login to Sona (to view a list of the credits you have earned, for example), but **you will NOT be able to sign-up for any additional studies on Sona.** Thus, if you want to (or are required to) earn additional research credits, you must complete the alternative research assignment(s) designated by your instructor.

7. It is very important to be on time for laboratory-based studies. In most cases, participants who arrive late will not be permitted to participate in the experiment. **If you arrive late, and are not able to participate, you will be considered an unexcused absence.**

8. You have the right to decline to participate in any study. As noted above, **it is unethical for instructors to require their students to participate as subjects in research.** Thus, instructors who require you to earn research credit must provide alternate assignments (e.g., research papers, PsycInfo assignments) in order to fulfill any research credit requirements.

9. **You have right to withdraw from any study.** In the case of a laboratory-based experiment, if after reading the consent form or participating in some portion of the study, you decide that you do not
want to participate further, simply inform the researcher that you wish to withdraw.

In the case of an online study, you can simply exit the survey.

Please note that, for both laboratory-based and online studies, **if you withdraw prior to completing the study, you may not receive full credit for the study.**

10. Please be advised that researchers in the Department of Psychological Science at NKU must conduct their research according to ethical guidelines established by the American Psychological Association. If you wish to review the APA’s ethical guidelines with respect to research, please click on the following link: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#8.

11. **You have the right to give informed consent to participation in any studies here in the Psychology Department.** The APA ethical standard 8.02, Informed Consent to Research, reads as follows:

(a) When obtaining informed consent as required in Standard 3.10, Informed Consent, psychologists inform participants about (1) the purpose of the research, expected duration, and procedures; (2) their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; (3) the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; (4) reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects; (5) any prospective research benefits; (6) limits of confidentiality; (7) incentives for participation; and (8) whom to contact for questions about the research and research participants' rights. They provide opportunity for the prospective participants to ask questions and receive answers. (See also Standards 8.03, Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research; 8.05, Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research; and 8.07, Deception in Research.)

(b) Psychologists conducting intervention research involving the use of experimental treatments clarify to participants at the outset of the research (1) the experimental nature of the treatment; (2) the services that will or will not be available to the control group(s) if appropriate; (3) the means by which assignment to treatment and control groups will be made; (4) available treatment alternatives if an individual does not wish to participate in the research or wishes to withdraw once a study has begun; and (5) compensation for or monetary costs of participating
including, if appropriate, whether reimbursement from the participant or a third-party payor will be sought. (See also Standard 8.02a, Informed Consent to Research.)

12. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your instructor or the experimenter. (The descriptive information that accompanies each experiment will include the researcher’s name and contact information.) You are also encouraged to contact the local experiment management system administrator, Dr. Kim Breitenbecher, with any concerns. You can reach Dr. Breitenbecher in her office, MEP 357. Dr. Breitenbecher’s telephone number is 859-572-5519. Her email address is breitenbeche@nku.edu.

13. We recommend that you print this document to keep for your records.
Researchers’ Rights and Responsibilities

1. The Sona experiment management system allows you to do the following tasks online: post laboratory-based and online studies, collect and extract data (in the case of online studies), manage your laboratory schedule (i.e., schedule sessions, cancel sessions), communicate with participants, assign research credits, and designate absences for laboratory-based studies as “excused” or “unexcused.”

To view a video tutorial for researchers, please click on the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec8S3xfO-a8

You are responsible for understanding and implementing the instructions and information provided in this video. If you have any questions about this video, or about the experiment management system in general, please contact your faculty supervisor or the local Sona administrator, Dr. Kim Breitenbecher, at breitenbeche@nku.edu.

2. If you are a student, your research activities are under the supervision of your faculty supervisor. Please consult with your faculty supervisor before posting any studies on the experiment management system.

3. You are responsible for obtaining IRB approval, if required, for your study before posting your study on the experiment management system. Please discuss this issue with your faculty supervisor. Your faculty research supervisor will tell you whether your study requires IRB approval.

To download IRB forms, please click on the following link:

http://rgsrs.nku.edu/research/rgc/irb/irb.html

Please note that the IRB requires researchers to complete specific, online training modules before they will grant approval to protocols. Please see the website listed above for additional information.

4. You are responsible for complying with all the policies described under the “Participants’ Rights and Responsibilities” section of this document. Be sure that you have read and understand all the information contained in the “Participants’ Rights and Responsibilities” section.
5. You are responsible for following American Psychological Association guidelines with respect to the ethical conduct of research. Please discuss this issue with your faculty supervisor. If you wish to review the APA’s ethical guidelines with respect to research, please click on the following link: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#805.

In particular, you must obtain informed consent from your participants. APA ethical standard 8.02, Informed Consent to Research, reads as follows:

(a) When obtaining informed consent as required in Standard 3.10, Informed Consent, psychologists inform participants about (1) the purpose of the research, expected duration, and procedures; (2) their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; (3) the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; (4) reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects; (5) any prospective research benefits; (6) limits of confidentiality; (7) incentives for participation; and (8) whom to contact for questions about the research and research participants’ rights. They provide opportunity for the prospective participants to ask questions and receive answers. (See also Standards 8.03, Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research; 8.05, Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research; and 8.07, Deception in Research.)

(b) Psychologists conducting intervention research involving the use of experimental treatments clarify to participants at the outset of the research (1) the experimental nature of the treatment; (2) the services that will or will not be available to the control group(s) if appropriate; (3) the means by which assignment to treatment and control groups will be made; (4) available treatment alternatives if an individual does not wish to participate in the research or wishes to withdraw once a study has begun; and (5) compensation for or monetary costs of participating including, if appropriate, whether reimbursement from the participant or a third-party payor will be sought. (See also Standard 8.02a, Informed Consent to Research.)

You must provide your participants with the elements of informed consent in some appropriate format. In the case of a laboratory-based study, you can accomplish this task by providing each participant with a hard copy of a consent form that includes these elements and obtaining the participant’s signature on this form. In the case on an online study, you must provide these elements in an online consent page. This online consent page must
include a question asking the participant whether he or she consents to participate in the study.

6. **A participant who is less than 18 years old (i.e., a participant who is a minor) must obtain documentation of the consent of his/her parent or legal guardian before he/she can participate in studies listed on the experiment management system.**

The participant must contact you prior to his/her scheduled appointment (in the case of a lab-based study) or prior to beginning the online survey (in the case of an online study) to obtain a hard copy of the consent form. The participant must ask his/her parent or guardian to review the document and indicate consent for the minor to participate by signing the consent form. **The participant must bring this signed consent form to his/her appointment (in the case of a lab-based study) or bring the consent form to you (in the case of an online study) prior to participating.** If the minor participant does not bring a signed consent form, he/she must not be allowed to participate in the study.

7. **Research Credit**

Our policy is to award credit in 15-minute increments. Because laboratory-based studies are less convenient for participants than online studies, laboratory-based studies are generally worth three times the credit of online studies.

**Online studies:**
An online study that takes approximately 15 minutes to complete is worth 1 credit; an online study that takes approximately 30 minutes to complete is worth 2 credits; an online study that takes approximately 45 minutes to complete is worth 3 credits, etc.

**Laboratory-based studies:**
A laboratory-based study that takes approximately 15 minutes to complete is worth 3 credits; a laboratory-based study that takes approximately 30 minutes to complete is worth 6 credits; a laboratory-based study that takes approximately 45 minutes to complete is worth 9 credits, etc.

**Automatic award of credit and special circumstances:**

**Laboratory-based studies:** The system will automatically award full credit for all sessions of laboratory-based studies that are more than one hour old. The system awards this credit (i.e.,
the credit for all sessions of laboratory-based studies that are more than one hour old) once per day, usually in the evening. **If the researcher wishes to mark a participant’s time slot as an excused or unexcused absence, he or she must do so manually. (See “unexcused absences” below.) Otherwise, the system will automatically grant the student credit.**

**Online studies set up within Sona:** Undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members can use the survey creation tools available within Sona to create online surveys. Participants will be able to sign-up for these studies through Sona and complete the surveys online. **Sona will automatically award full credit for all such studies immediately after the participants have completed such studies.**

**Online studies hosted by outside websites:** Undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members can use outside websites (such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrix) to create online surveys. Such surveys can then be linked to Sona, such that participants can sign-up for the online surveys through Sona, and then be taken to the outside websites to complete the surveys. **Please note that, if you are using an outside website (such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrix), it is possible to set things up so that your participant will automatically be awarded Sona credit after he or she completes the survey. However, there are special steps that must be taken in order to make this happen. In addition, you cannot set things up so that a participant who completes a survey hosted by an outside website also remains ANONYMOUS.**

If you would like to learn how to set up your survey so that your participant automatically receives credit, please contact Dr. Breitenbecher to schedule an appointment. She can show you how to set things up on SurveyMonkey. (Dr. Breitenbecher is less familiar with Qualtrix.)

The important thing to remember is this: Unless you have taken the necessary steps to set up your survey in the appropriate manner, participants will NOT automatically receive credit when they complete the survey. Instead, **the researcher must manually award credit to all participants who complete**
surveys hosted by outside websites. Sona will NOT do so automatically.

Participants who notify you of their need to cancel: Participants may use Sona to cancel their appointments online. They may also, however, contact you directly to notify you of their need to cancel. In such a case, you will need to do one of two things: (1) cancel the participant’s sign-up using your researcher screen or (2) override the automatic credit grant described above.

Editing participants’ credits: Researchers can edit a particular participant’s credit for a study at any time. Please see the video tutorial (the link is available under #1, above) for instructions on editing a participant’s credit.

8. Absences: unexcused and excused

Remember: A participant has the right to cancel an appointment that he or she has scheduled. A participant who needs to cancel is expected to do so prior to the start of the scheduled appointment. Participants can cancel in one of three ways:

• by logging in to Sona and cancelling the appointment online
• by emailing the researcher
• by calling the researcher

Please note that the researcher’s contact information should be listed on Sona sign-up page for each particular study.

Unexcused absences: If a participant fails to attend an appointment, without canceling prior to the start of the appointment, that failure to attend is considered a “no-show” or an “unexcused absence.” If a participant accrues 2 unexcused absences, his Sona account will become limited. This means that the participant will be able to login to Sona (to view a list of the credits he has earned, for example), but he will NOT be able to sign-up for any additional studies on Sona. Thus, if the participant wants to (or is required to) earn additional research credits, he must complete the alternative research assignment(s) designated by his instructor.

Excused absences: There may be some circumstances in which a participant contacts you, after his or her scheduled appointment passed, to notify you of reasons why he was not able to attend. You may, if you
wish, designate such failure to appear as an “excused absence.” Excused absences do not cause a participant’s account to become limited. If you are unsure what should be considered an excused absence (as opposed to an unexcused absence), discuss this issue with your faculty supervisor.

**Please note that you will need to manually mark a particular participant’s time slot as being an excused or unexcused absence.** In other words, you will need to override the system’s automatic credit grant for time slots that are more than 1 hour old.

9. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your faculty supervisor or the local Sona administrator, Dr. Kim Breitenbecher. You can reach Dr. Breitenbecher in her office, MEP 357 (enter through MEP 337). Dr. Breitenbecher’s telephone number is 859-572-5519. Her email address is breitenbeche@nkue.edu.

10. We recommend that you print this page to keep for your records.
Instructors’ Rights and Responsibilities

1. Required Research Assignment: Instructions for Psy 100 Instructors

One of the student learning outcomes for Psy 100 is for students to gain familiarity with psychological research. This familiarity includes improved understanding of such issues as the following: the tools needed to conduct psychological research (e.g., use of the PsycInfo database), the process of research (e.g., research design, collection of data), the results of previous psychological research, and the ethical principles that guide research.

In order to facilitate students’ achievement of this student learning outcome, as well as to support the research mission of the university, the Department of Psychological Science requires all students who are taking Psy 100 during any fall or spring term to earn a minimum of 15 research credits. Students who are taking Psy 100 during any summer term are NOT required to earn research credits.

Note that you can assign any point value that you wish to these research credits. For example, the research credits might be worth 2%, 5%, 10%, etc. of a student’s grade.

One way for students to earn such credit is for them to participate as research subjects in studies posted on Sona, the Department’s online research participation management system. As you most likely know, it is unethical for instructors to require their students to participate as subjects in research. Thus, you must offer alternative ways (alternative assignments) through which students can earn research credit.

You have considerable latitude in implementing this policy. For example, you can decide:

1. what the nature of the alternative assignments will be. If you need suggestions for such assignments, you can consult Dr. Breitenbecher.
2. the percentage of each student’s total grade that the 15 required research credits will be worth
3. whether to allow students to earn additional research credits (beyond the 15 required research credits) as extra-credit

Dr. Kim Breitenbecher is the Sona administrator. She can provide you with a template describing the research requirement for your syllabus. You can adapt or revise this template to suit your purposes.
Dr. Breitenbecher will create a Sona Instructor account for you. You will receive an email from the Sona system that contains your login information (specifically, your user ID and password). Your login information will be sent to your NKU email account. If you prefer to use a different email account, please let Dr. Breitenbecher know.

Dr. Breitenbecher will also load your course onto the Sona system. When students login to Sona, they will be able to select your course from a drop-down menu. Students will be able to tell the system to assign the research credits that they earn to your course. At any time during the semester, you can login as an instructor and access a list of the research credits that students in your course have earned.

You can also use Sona to award something called “non-study credit.” You can use this feature to award credit for completion of alternative assignments (i.e., assignments other than participation as a subject in research to fulfill the research requirement).

2. The Sona experiment management system allows you to do the following tasks online: browse a list of currently available experiments (some of which are laboratory-based studies, and some of which are online studies), access a report of the research credits earned by students enrolled in your classes, and award non-study credit grants.

3. If you are a Psy 100 instructor, you may choose to allow your students to earn extra research credits (beyond the 15 required credits), but you are not required to do so. If you are an upper-level course instructor, you may choose to allow your students to participate in research posted on the Sona experiment management system for credit toward your course, but you are not required to do so.

4. If you are an upper-level course instructor (i.e., an instructor of a non-Psy 100 course), you have considerable discretion regarding the incorporation of research credits into your students’ final grades. Such credits can be required (with one caveat; please see #5 below) or optional. In addition, such credits can reflect the percentage of a student’s final grade (e.g., 5%, 10%, etc.) that you deem appropriate. Lastly, you can decide how many points each research credit is worth (e.g., 1 research credit = 1 point, 1 research credit = 5 points, etc.). This decision should obviously be related to the total number of points available in your course.
5. Although you can require your students to earn a certain amount of research credit, you cannot require them to participate in research. Thus, you must provide some alternate research assignment (e.g., a research paper) for students who do not wish to participate in research. You can use the Sona experiment management system to award “non study credit grants” for the completion of such assignments.

6. Please be advised that researchers in the Psychology Department at NKU must conduct their research according to ethical guidelines established by the American Psychological Association. If you wish to review the APA’s ethical guidelines with respect to research, please click on the following link: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#8.

7. You are responsible for understanding the rights and responsibilities of students who participate in research. Please review the information contained in the section of this document titled “Participants’ Rights and Responsibilities.” In particular, please make sure you understand the policies regarding the following:

   • the participation of minor students in research
   • the awarding of credit for participation in research
   • the participant’s right to decline to participate in research
   • the participant’s right to withdraw from research
   • the participant’s right to give informed consent
   • the participant’s responsibility to cancel his or her appointment for a study that he or she cannot attend
   • the definition of, and consequences of earning, an unexcused absence.

   In particular, please note the following:

   **Unexcused absences:** If a participant fails to attend an appointment, without canceling prior to the start of the appointment, that failure to attend is considered a “no-show” or an “unexcused absence.” If a participant accrues 2 unexcused absences, his Sona account will become limited. This means that the participant will be able to login to Sona (to view a list of the credits he has earned, for example), but he will NOT be able to sign-up for any additional studies on Sona. Thus, if the participant wants to (or is required to) earn additional research credits, he must complete the alternative research assignment(s) designated by his instructor.

8. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the local experiment management system administrator, Dr. Kim Breitenbecher. You can reach Dr. Breitenbecher in her office, MEP 357 (enter through MEP 337). Dr. Breitenbecher’s telephone number is 859-572-5519. Her email address is breitenbeche@nku.edu.
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