

## School of Psychology On-line Subject Pool

### General information about the Subject Pool

It is a requirement for entry into PSY441 Psychology Project (BPsych) and PSY4039 Honours Thesis that students have completed a specified number of hours participation in psychological research carried out in the School of Psychology.

The intended benefits for the School of Psychology from having a Subject Pool are:

- Participating in other people's research will give undergraduates valuable experience of how psychological research is conducted before they are required to conduct any themselves.
- The Subject Pool system will make both students and staff more aware of the active areas of research going on within the School of Psychology. This should help students to select research topics and potential supervisors and should facilitate productive collaboration between staff members.
- It will be easier for students and staff conducting research to recruit undergraduate volunteers for their studies.

To streamline the process of advertising projects, signing up for them and keeping track of participation hours, we have developed the School of Psychology On-line Subject Pool. This can be accessed via Murdoch's School of Psychology homepage, or by going directly to: <https://www3.murdoch.edu.au/apps/psychology/subject-pool>.

A MAIS PIN is required to access the Subject Pool web pages. Students can use the On-line Subject Pool to read advertisements for projects and to sign up for projects of their choice. Investigators can use it to advertise their project and recruit participants. Investigators will also use it to record the participation of students in their project.

The following sections cover information related to the role of investigators in Subject Pool studies. We have also included the information provided to participants, including answers to frequently asked questions from students, so that you are aware of what is expected of you from students. Please be familiar with the content of **both** sections.

The Subject Pool Administrator is **Graeme Ditchburn** (email: [Graeme.Ditchburn@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:Graeme.Ditchburn@murdoch.edu.au)), who will be pleased to assist you with any further enquiries. Jenny Edmonds (email: [J.Edmonds@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:J.Edmonds@murdoch.edu.au); tel. 9360 2537) will also be available to assist with using Subject Pool.

### Information for investigators

Fourth year students enrolled in PSY4039 Honours Thesis, PSY441 Psychology Project (BPsych), postgraduate research students in Psychology and academic staff members in the School of Psychology and their research assistants may use the On-line Subject Pool to recruit participants for their studies. Advertisements for studies need to be submitted electronically to the Subject Pool Administrator (Jenny Edmonds) for posting on-line. Once a project has been advertised, investigators can access a list of volunteers for their study directly. Investigators are also responsible for recording the participation of students in their study.

### Advertising projects

The following information should be submitted electronically to the Subject Pool Administrator. Keep the formatting simple.

- The title of your project. Given that space is limited, try to keep this short and to the point.
- The ethics permit number of your project
- Your name(s) as investigator(s)
- Your student number(s) or staff number(s)
- Your supervisor's name (if you are a student)
- A brief description of your project for potential participants, outlining what participation in the project will entail. You should also include your contact details (or your supervisor's contact details) for students seeking further information. As space is limited, these descriptions should be succinct.
- The number of credit hours participants will receive for the project. These should represent the time that a participant is likely to contribute to the study to the nearest 30 minutes. The minimum is 30 minutes.
- If your study will involve a substantial screening process (i.e. if you are planning to recruit many participants and select only a subset for further testing) you should also include the number of hours that volunteers will receive if they complete the screening component but are not selected for the main study. These are the selection process hours. Please make it clear how many hours are attached to each component of your project.

When your advertisement is posted, your project will be allocated a number. You should quote your project number in any subsequent correspondence the Subject Pool Administrator.

### Using the On-line Subject Pool

Subject Pool is accessed via the School of Psychology home page, or directly by going to: <https://www3.murdoch.edu.au/apps/psychology/subject-pool>. You will need to log in using your Murdoch login and password. Having logged in, you will find yourself at the Subject Pool Welcome page. The buttons on the left show you your options. The '*Projects*' button allows you to see any of your projects that are currently advertised and to obtain a list of volunteers. It also allows you to view other people's advertisements and to sign up to participate in them (if you are a student). The '*My Details*' button allows you to check your current contact details and update them if necessary. The '*Reports*' button allows you to view a list of the students enrolled in your project.

- Obtaining a list of volunteers for your study
  1. Click on the '*Projects*' button.  
This will give you a list of projects for which you are nominated as investigator, including Project title, investigator name(s) and credit hours for participation.
  2. Click on the '*Enrolments*' link for the desired project.  
This will give you a list of the names and contact details for students who have volunteered for your study.
  3. To help you keep track of student participation, there is a column called "*Contacted*". If you wish, you can use this column to indicate which volunteers have been contacted to arrange sessions. This is especially useful when new volunteers are signing up frequently.
  
- Recording students' participation in your study
  1. Click on the '*Projects*' button.
  2. Select '*Investigator projects*' from the menu.
  3. Click on the '*enrolments*' link.  
This gives you the list of volunteers for your study.
  4. Click on the check boxes 'Selection' and/or 'Completed' to register the students on the list who have completed the Selection process of your study (if applicable) and the whole study.
  5. Click the '*Update*' button to save this information or '*Cancel*' to negate the changes.
  
- Checking your personal details
  1. Click on the '*My Details*' button.  
This will give you your current name and contact details.
  2. Click on the '*Update Details*' link to make any modifications.
  - 3.
  
- Checking your personal participation history
  1. Click on the '*Reports*' button.
  2. Select '*By student*' from the menu.  
This will give you a listing of the projects that you have participated in and the credit hours that you obtained for them.
  
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- Participating in other people's research  
(*nb.* This option is only available to investigators who are also students.)
  1. Click on the '*Projects*' button.
  2. Select '*Advertised projects*' from the menu.  
This will give you a listing of all research projects currently advertised.
  3. Click on the Project Name of any project that you wish to see more details for.
  4. Click on the '*enrol*' link to volunteer for a project.

- **Providing a feedback report**

In almost all cases, investigators are expected to provide feedback of the results of the study to participating students. The Subject Pool system is designed to facilitate this process, by allowing you to post your feedback report online (available only to those who have already participated in the project), so that students can access the report at a time and place convenient to them. This reduces the need for investigators to keep details of individual students for sending reports. The feedback report should be provided as soon as possible after completion of the data collection phase of the project, and in most cases by the end of the calendar year. If the project is occurring over an extended period (e.g across calendar years), an interim report may be requested, usually at the end of the calendar year.

1. The feedback report is usually 2-3 pages, and contain a summary of the major aims and study hypotheses (if applicable), the design and measures used in the study, a concise and easy to understand summary of major results, and interpretations/conclusions. The report must be in **Microsoft Word** or **Rich Text Format**. To see an example feedback report, click here

***<http://www.psychology.murdoch.edu.au/documents/researchrequirements.pdf>***

2. Feedback reports need to be posted by the Subject Pool administrators. Please email your completed feedback report to either Jenny Edmonds ([j.edmonds@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:j.edmonds@murdoch.edu.au)).

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q. How much participant time may I use in my study?**

- A. *On your ethics form you will have to justify your sample size, based on a power analysis or other defensible criteria, and you may not use more participants than this from Subject Pool. However, in order to give all projects a reasonable chance of recruiting participants, an upper limit of 100 participant hours may be sought from Subject Pool initially. If you require more participants, you may re-advertise your project after June 30.*

### **Q. What if my study ends up taking a lot longer than I said it would in my advertisement?**

- A. *It is your responsibility as an investigator not to waste participants' time. This means that you should be well organised, start your testing sessions on time and practise your procedures ahead of time so that you can conduct the study efficiently. Nevertheless, sometimes studies do take longer than anticipated. If your study is taking longer (in terms of credit hours) than it said it would in your advertisement, you should contact the Subject Pool Administrator to amend the credit hours attached to the study. This will retrospectively give participants credit for the extra time they spent doing your study.*

### **Q. When can I advertise my study?**

- A. *As soon as you have a permit from the Ethics Committee to run your study.*

### **Q. Do I have to use the subject pool?**

- A. *No. You are free to recruit participants from any source. However, if you intend to recruit Psychology undergraduates, this may only be done via the on-line*

*subject pool.*

**Q. Can I still recruit participants from lectures or sign-up sheets on notice boards?**

- A. *One of the intended aims of the online Subject Pool is to stop recruitment from eating into class time. Thus, generally speaking, you should not recruit volunteers from lectures. If you believe it is necessary, you may supplement your Subject Pool advertisement with other means of advertising, however, you MUST NOT use sign-up sheets to recruit Murdoch Psychology undergraduates. It is VERY IMPORTANT that students enrol on-line. If they do not, you will not be able to give them their participation credit, even if you know their names and student numbers.*

**Q. What if I recruit participants through other means (such as local newspapers) and some of my volunteers turn out to be Murdoch Psychology students?**

- A. *The Murdoch Psychology students need to receive credit for participation. This means that you need to keep records of the names, student numbers, contact details and credit hours of any participating students. You should send your project details (shown above) to the Subject Pool Administrator. They will be entered into the database but not advertised publicly. Student participants should then be directed to see the Subject Pool Administrator in person to receive their credit.*

**Q. How soon do I have to record people's participation online?**

- A. *You should record that your participants have completed their part in your study as soon as possible, preferably the same day.*

**Q. What if no one volunteers for my study?**

- A. *Although the requirement for undergraduates in the Psychology programme to participate in research improves your chances of recruiting participants for your study, it does not guarantee you participants. Students may choose not to take part in your particular study. You should discuss with your supervisor strategies that might improve your success rate.*

**Q. What if too many people volunteer for my study?**

- A. *Out of fairness to the students, the first eligible, contactable volunteers to enrol should be given priority. As a courtesy, you should contact any remaining volunteers and inform them that you will not be testing them so they know to look elsewhere for credit. To avoid this becoming too mammoth a task, you should contact the Subject Pool Administrator promptly when you have recruited enough participants and ask to have your advertisement taken down. You will still be able to access your list of volunteers.*

**Q. What if ineligible people sign up for my study?**

- A. *It is good research practice to check that each of your volunteers actually meets any criteria that you set for participation. If your advertisement clearly stated that you required people with a particular characteristic and you have a volunteer who does not possess that characteristic, you are not obliged to include them or to give them credit hours. If your advertisement neglected to mention the selection criterion, the volunteer is entitled to participate and receive credit hours (EXCEPT in the case where your procedure may cause them harm). Occasionally, ineligible students may approach you to take part in your study because it*

*particularly interests them. This is a reasonable request and if you have sufficient time and resources to allow them to participate, and your procedures will not be harmful to them, you should do so and they should receive full credit. However, you are not obliged to include the data from ineligible students in your analysis.*

**Q. What if I want participants in my study to be anonymous?**

*A. This poses a logistical problem because you need to know who has participated in your study in order to give them their credit. There are, however, various strategies you can employ to prevent participants' responses from being identifiable as theirs. Discuss your options with your supervisor or the Subject Pool Administrator.*

**Q. When should I take down my advertisement?**

*A. As soon as you have recruited the participants that you need OR as soon as you have recruited 100 hours worth of participant time, whichever happens first. If you need more than 100 hours of participant time, you may readvertise after June 30. The Subject Pool Administrator will take down your advertisement at your instruction, or when you have recruited your permissible 100 hours of participant time. All advertisements will be taken down automatically at the end of the calendar year unless you explain to the Administrator why this should not happen in your case.*

**Q. When do I have to debrief my participants?**

*A. As soon as possible. Because research participation is intended to be educationally valuable to participants, one of the conditions of using the Psychology Subject Pool is that you give your participants some detailed information about your study, your aims, your methodology and anticipated findings. You should also be prepared to provide answers to any questions they may have about your research. Depending on the nature of your study, you may debrief your volunteers immediately or you may wait until all your data is collected. Note that Ethics application forms now require you to include the written debriefing document that you intend to give to your participants. Feedback reports should also be provided as soon after the data collection phase as possible, with a deadline for most projects at the end of the calendar year. For projects with data collection across years, an interim feedback report should be provided.*