

# School of Psychology On-line Subject Pool

## General information about the Subject Pool

It is a core requirement for entry into PSY441 Psychology Project (BPsych) and PSY4039 Honours Thesis that students have completed five hours of research participation in the School of Psychology for each full-time year of study.

It is a prerequisite to have completed 5 hours before enrolling in PSY212; 10 hours before enrolling in 311 or 315; and all 15 hours before enrolling in the 4th year research project (B.Psych or Hons).

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.

With each project, there are several things you should expect from the researcher conducting the participation session. First, you should be given information about the study you are participating in, such as a general outline of what you are expected to do. Second, you should be asked for your consent to participate in the study, usually by completing a "consent form" (and you may withdraw your consent at any time). At the end of the session, in most cases you should be given further information about the study to help you understand what you had done and why. Finally, for most projects a report of the results (when they become available) will be accessible through the Subject Pool website

The following sections cover information related to your participation. 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 participants**

Students seeking to enrol in PSY4039 Honours Thesis or PSY441 Psychology Project (BPsych) are required to have completed a specified number of hours (called **Target Hours**) of research participation or, alternatively to have written to a satisfactory standard a research-related essay set and assessed by the Subject Pool Administrator.

### **Q. How do I know how many hours I need to complete?**

*A. You need to complete 5 hours for each full-time year of study that you have left to complete before fourth year. If you are starting the first year of your degree then you need to complete 15 hours total. Part-time students and those with advanced standing can work out their target hours using the same formula. For example, if*

*you have completed Part I and 12 points of Part II units, then you have 1.5 years of full-time study equivalent to go before fourth year, so your target hours are 7.5. Target hours are calculated in 30 minute units, so if your target hours turn out to be an awkward fraction you should round the answer to the nearest half hour.*

Students who are not intending to complete fourth year, students currently completing fourth year, postgraduate students and Murdoch students studying psychology whilst enrolled in another degree are also welcome to participate in studies and can sign up for them on-line.

#### Using the On-line Subject Pool

The On-line Subject Pool is accessed via Murdoch University's School of Psychology homepage, or by going directly to: <https://www3.murdoch.edu.au/apps/psychology/subject-pool>. To access it, you will need to provide your student number and MAIS password. Having logged in, you will find yourself in the Subject Pool welcome page. The buttons on the left of the screen allow you to read about current research projects (*Projects* button), to check your personal contact details (*My Details* button) and to see a history of the projects you have signed up for or taken part in and how many credit hours you received for each one (*Reports* button).

- Viewing and signing up for advertised projects

1. Click on the '*Projects*' button.

You will see a list of project titles with information about the chief investigator and the number of credit hours you would receive for taking part.

2. Click on the name of a project.

This will allow you to read some more about the project and what it would involve. It will also provide you with the contact details of the investigator if you wish to ask questions or seek further information about the project. Student projects will also list the name of the supervisor of the project.

Because some psychology projects involve an initial stage of screening potential participants for a particular characteristic, these projects will list two lots of hours: 'Selection Process Hours' refer to the credit you will receive if you take part in the screening process but are not selected for the main study. 'Credit hours' refer to the additional credit hours you will receive for completing the main study.

3. If you wish to enrol in the project, click on 'enrol'.

You will see a statement of the name of the project that you are about to enrol in and your personal details. If your contact details are incorrect, it is important that you click on the '*My Details*' link and update them – otherwise the investigator will not be able to contact you! If all the details are correct and you wish to go ahead with the enrolment, click on the '*Confirm*' button. Otherwise click on the '*Cancel*' button.

4. After you have enrolled in a project, that project will disappear from your '*Projects*' list and appear in your '*Reports*' list. If you wish to check any of the project information or investigator contact details again after enrolling, you should click on the '*Reports*' button to find the project. |

- Viewing your personal information
  1. Click on the 'My Details' button at the left of the screen.  
This will show you your name and student number, your email address and telephone number, and your Target hours and total hours of participation completed.
  2. If you wish to change your contact details, click on the 'Update Details' link.  
This will allow you to change your contact details (not your target hours or completed hours!).
  3. If you believe your target hours are incorrect, you should contact the Subject Pool Administrator. Students with unusual enrolment histories may have inaccurate Target Hours and should have these amended.
  4. If you believe your total hours accrued are incorrect, you should first check the recorded details of your research participation via the 'Reports' button. Investigators may take a few days to record your participation, but if you took part in their study some time ago and still have not received your due credit, you should contact the Subject Pool Administrator.
  
- Viewing your history of research participation
  1. Click the 'Reports' button.
  2. Click the 'By Student' link.  
This will give you a summary table of your personal details including Target hours and number of participation hours accrued. Underneath this is another summary table listing the specific projects that you have signed up for or taken part in and how many hours credit you have received for each one.  
If you believe that this information is incorrect (and you have allowed an investigator sufficient time to record your participation) you should contact the Subject Pool Administrator.
  
- Obtaining a feedback report for research you have participated in
  1. Click the 'Reports' button.
  2. Click the 'By Student' link.  
Go to the summary table listing the projects, and identify the project that you want the report for (you can only access reports if you have already participated in the study)
  3. Click on the relevant project to see its details. If the feedback report is available, it will be shown on this page. If it is not available, check back at a later time  
*(NOTE: some projects take several months in collecting and analysing data, so the feedback report may not be available for some time. In most cases, though, by the end of a calendar year most projects should have at least an interim feedback report available)*
  
- Exiting the On-line Subject Pool
  1. When you have finished, click the 'Logout' button.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q. What if I disagree with my target hours?**

A. *You should see the Subject Pool Administrator to have them amended. Note that your hours can't be amended until you have logged in to the Subject Pool website at least once.*

**Q. Can I enrol in fourth year units before I have reached my target hours?**

A. *Yes. Restrictions only apply to PSY4039 and PSY441. You are free to enrol in other fourth year units before you reach your target hours.*

**Q. Is this ethical?**

A. *Only projects that have been cleared by Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee are allowed to be advertised in the On-line Subject Pool. You are under no obligation to take part in any particular project if you do not wish to. If you do not wish to take part in any projects at all then you can write an essay on a psychological research topic instead. As a participant, you are free to withdraw from a study at any time.*

**Q. When can I enrol?**

A. *The Subject Pool website can be accessed at any time and you can enrol in advertised projects at any time. Most fourth year students' projects will be advertised during the academic year between May and September, and your choice is likely to be greatest during this period. Some projects, typically by post-graduate students and staff, may run over the summer break, but bear in mind that there will be fewer options and fewer enrolment places available.*

**Q. Do I have to enrol online?**

A. *Yes. Occasionally you may find out about a project and volunteer in ways other than online (e.g. replying to an advertisement in a local newspaper, the researcher is your friend etc.) However, to receive credit for your participation, you MUST enrol online. Even if the researcher knows who you are and how many hours credit you deserve, YOU are the only person who can enter your name into the Subject Pool list and you cannot be given credit until you do so.*

**Q. What if a researcher puts a sign-up sheet on a notice board or hands one around in class?**

A. *Just say "NO!" If the researcher does not have an online advertisement then there is no guarantee that you will receive your credit for participating. Sign-up sheets may also publicise your contact details. To protect your own rights, only enrol online. (Of course, if you are happy to participate for no credit, you may decide to put your name on a sign-up sheet.)*

**Q. If I just sign up for a study but don't turn up on the day, do I still get my credit hours?**

A. *No. Your hours are credited after you have completed all of your participation in the study, not before. If you miss an appointment, you should contact the project investigator to arrange another time. If you are unable to make it to a testing session, you should try to contact the investigator ahead of time.*

**Q. What if I decide to withdraw from a study before the end?**

A. *If you make a principled decision to withdraw from a study before its completion, you should make this known to the investigator and you will receive your credit hours so long as you have participated in a substantial proportion of the session. If you simply leave at the beginning of the session, or at any other time without notifying the investigator, or fail to appear for a subsequent testing session, you will not receive your credit hours.*

**Q. What if I enrol in a study then decide that I don't want to participate after all?**

A. *You don't have to participate. It is courteous, however, to inform the researcher that you don't want to take part. This allows the researcher to give your place to another student and means that they don't waste time and money trying to contact you or sending you questionnaires etc.*

**Q. Can I do my 15 hours by filling in one questionnaire very, very slowly?**

A. *No, you can't. Credit hours are defined ahead of time based on a reasonable estimate of how long an average cooperative participant would take to complete the tasks involved in a study. Although some people are likely to take a little longer than others, in the interests of fairness, all participants will receive the same credit.*

**Q. Are my personal details going to be publicly available?**

A. *No. The only people with access to your personal details are the investigators of the projects you volunteer for, their supervisors and the Subject Pool Administrator. They only have access to the information you see under 'My Details'. No information that you provide about yourself in the course of a study will be connected to the Subject Pool database.*

**Q. What if the researcher doesn't select me for the project I volunteered for?**

A. *It depends why you weren't selected. If there is a clear statement in the description of the study that excludes you (e.g., the study calls for male participants and you are female) then you will not receive any credit hours. Some studies, however, involve a screening process (e.g., filling in questionnaires) that takes a substantial amount of time. If you took part in the screening but were not selected for the main study, you will receive credit for your time in the screening process. It is also possible that many more people volunteer than the researcher has time or resources to test. In this case, those who volunteer early will be given preference. If you are not selected, the researcher should send you a courtesy email advising you of the fact so that you can find another study to take part in.*

**Q. What if I have characteristics that make me ineligible for projects?**

A. *Projects in some areas may exclude participants with certain characteristics (e.g. left-handers, those taking medication, those whose first language is not English etc.). Sometimes the reason for the exclusion is that the study procedures could be harmful to you. Sometimes the reason is that the experimenter wishes to control for these factors. It is unlikely that these factors will stand in the way of you meeting your target hours (but you should consult the Subject Pool Administrator if they do). However, it may be that you are excluded from studies in an entire field that you are interested in and would like to learn more about. In this situation, you could contact the investigator in charge and ask to*

participate. If the procedure does not put you at risk and the investigator has sufficient time/resources, he or she MAY agree for you to take part. However, you should make it clear that you do not meet the selection criteria, and the investigator may decide not to include your data in the analyses. You will, however, receive your credit hours.

**Q. What if I conscientiously object to taking part in Subject Pool?**

A. This is your right. In the interests of fairness and equity, you will be required to write a 3000 word essay for each year that you choose not to participate (3000 words is equivalent to 5 hours of participation time). The Subject Pool Administrator will set the topic and mark the essay. Essay topics and details about submission will be listed annually in the 'Projects' list. You will need to enrol in the essay option, as for a normal project, to receive your credit.

**Q. What if I develop a conscientious objection to taking part in Subject Pool later on?**

A. You will need to write an essay or essays for each year of non-participation. Depending on how much credit you need, you may choose to write a 'long' essay (3000 words for 5 hours credit) or a 'short' essay (1500 words for 2.5 hours credit). You may also choose to write an essay if you find that you need to 'top up' your credit at a time when not many research projects are running.

**Q. Do I have to complete 5 hours participation every year?**

A. No. Five hours per year is a rough guide. You may organise your research participation in any way that suits you. You may choose to do 15 hours all in one year. The only rule is that you complete 15 hours total before enrolling in PSY4039 or PSY441.

**Q. Can I still volunteer for projects if I have already completed my Target Hours?**

A. Yes. There is no upper limit on the number of projects you take part in.

**Q. What if the credit hours offered for a project don't correspond to the amount of time spent actually doing it?**

A. Credit hours are calculated in 30 minute units and investigators are asked to round their time estimates to the nearest 30 minutes. Some projects will take slightly more or less time than the credit hours suggest, but this should average out over your participation in multiple studies. If a particular study takes so much longer than predicted for a large number of participants that its advertised credit hours are incorrect, these may be amended retrospectively to give you credit for the extra time.

**Q. What if I take part in psychological research conducted by researchers from elsewhere?**

A. While you are quite welcome to take part in any research project you wish, you will only receive credit for projects currently run by the School of Psychology at Murdoch University.