General information about the Participant Portal
First-hand experience in research is a critical component of learning about Psychology, and the best way to start is by participating in research studies. This gives you direct research experience with research and develops your knowledge of how the process works. Therefore, research participation is incorporated into an assessment component for this unit. We have created a research participation portal that lists all Ethics-approved Psychology research studies at Murdoch at: https://murdochpes.sona-systems.com

At this website participants can read research study advertisements and sign up to participate in research studies of their choice. Approved researchers use the portal to advertise their (Murdoch Ethics-approved) project, recruit participants, and record their participation.

You will need an account to participate in the Portal. Anyone may request an account and participate in the Research Participant Portal, whether or not you are a student at Murdoch University. However, students enrolled in select Psychology units (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311) are automatically enrolled because they receive unit credit for participation; they will receive an email with login details at the beginning of term. Some studies offer only credit in these units, other studies are available for paid compensation.

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). If you choose not to participate in the experiment then you may complete an alternative written assignment instead, which is expected to take a similar amount of time. In this case, you can request the written assignment from the experimenter. 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. For most projects a report of the results (when they become available) will be accessible through the Psychology Research Results website (http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Psychology-and-Exercise-Science/Research/Psychology-Research/Research-results/).

For questions, contact pesUG@murdoch.edu.au. Please contact this address for technical questions. For administrative issues, you may contact the Participant Portal Administrator (Jon Prince; j.prince@murdoch.edu.au).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. How do I access the Participant Portal?
A. The On-line Participant Portal is accessed via Murdoch University’s School of Psychology homepage, or by going directly to: https://murdochpes.sona-systems.com

If you are enrolled in PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 then you will receive account login information via your official email address (the one you selected to be used for all official university communication). If you are not enrolled in these units then you may request an account by clicking on the Request Account button on the right side of the screen.

Q. How do I use the Participant Portal?
A. See the participant documentation file (Documentation for participants.pdf) for all the details on how to use the portal. There is also a walkthrough video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1OnT2ZU6QQ

Q. (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 students only) How many hours do I need to
complete?
A. Check your unit outline for details regarding the assessment. Most likely you will need to complete 5 hours of research participation for each unit as part of a larger assessment. If you are enrolled in more than one of these units then you will have to.

Q. (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 students only) What if I haven’t received credit for my hours?
A. First check with the experimenter. If you cannot resolve the problem with them then contact the Participant Portal Administrator.

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 portal. You are under no obligation to take part in any particular project if you do not wish to. You can choose the alternative written assignment for a research study if you do not consent to participating in the experiment itself – ask the experimenter if you choose this option. As a participant, you are free to withdraw from a study at any time.

Q. Are my personal details going to be publicly available?
A. No. The only people with access to your personal details are the researchers of the projects you volunteer for and the Participant Portal Administrator. No information that you provide about yourself in the course of a study will be connected to the Participant Portal database.

Q. When can I enrol?
A. The Participant Portal website can be accessed at any time but students participating for credit have to complete your hours before the end of term (check with your unit coordinator for their deadline). It may be a few weeks into the term before a wide variety of experiments are available. Keep checking back for new studies, and do not wait until the last minute!

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 cannot be given credit until you enrol in the experiment.

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.

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. Unexcused no-shows (i.e., without a valid excuse) will be penalised the number of credits equal to the value of the study for a no-show (e.g., -1 credit for a 1-credit study), and cancellations must have at least 24 hours notice. If you think you might miss an appointment, you should contact the researcher right away to explain your situation.

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 may complete the alternative written assignment instead - make this known to the researcher right away. If you simply leave without explanation, 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 can cancel your participation with a minimum of 24 hours notice. It is courteous to
provide more advance notice to the researcher so that they can give your place to another
participant and don’t waste time and money trying to contact you or sending you
questionnaires, etc.

Q. Can I get more hours of credit by filling in a questionnaire very, very slowly?
A. No. Each study advertises how many credits it offers, which represents a reasonable
estimate of how much time the study should take for an average participant. 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. (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 students only) Can I do only (online) survey
studies?
A. Online survey studies are one of many important methods of psychological research.
Others require your presence in a laboratory to collect the data in-person. There is a limit of
doing 2 out of 5 credits as online surveys in order to ensure that you benefit from
experiencing the full variety of psychological research studies.

Q. (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 students only) 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. Also, some studies
may offer payment for participation (instead of unit credit), and there is no limit on how
many you participate in.

Q. (PSY141, PSY173, PSY285, PSY311 students only) I did X hours of research
participation in the old subject pool – can that be credited to my target hours?
A. Contact your unit coordinator to see if an exemption can be arranged. In some units the
research participation forms part of a larger assignment and you may not recall the necessary
details from your earlier participation in order to complete the assignment successfully. In
general, the first 5 hours of research participation from the old subject pool can often be
applied to PSY141/PSY173, then the next 5 (6-10 total) to PSY285, and any additional hours
beyond 10 might go to PSY311.

Q. What if I take part in psychological research conducted by researchers from
elsewhere?
A. You are quite welcome to take part in any research project you wish, but you will only
receive credit for projects advertised on the Participant Portal.

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 researchers 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. Communicate with the researcher and
the Portal Administrator in such a scenario.

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. 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 researcher in charge
and ask to participate. If the procedure does not put you at risk and the researcher 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 researcher may decide not to include your data in the analyses. You will, however, receive your credit hours.