

Psychology Research Program:
General Psychology Research Requirement
Fall 2009

Information for Students in General Psychology

Background

Each student in general psychology must satisfy the Department of Psychology research requirement. Credits can be earned in three ways: (1) by being a participant in a research study, (2) by completing a research-based alternate activity (e.g., attending a research talk or reading a research article and passing a quiz on the article), or (3) by participating in a clinical psychology experience (participating in a psychological evaluation or another clinical activity such as an interview or simulated psychotherapy).

The primary reason for this requirement is to increase your understanding of psychology as a science and as a professional practice. Psychology textbooks provide a lot of information about the science of psychology and about the application of psychological science, but these books do not give a complete picture of what psychologists do. For example, your general psychology text describes the overall results of many psychological research studies, but it typically does not provide details about how that research was conducted, or what the experience was like for the researchers and participants involved in those studies. Similarly, your textbook discusses many aspects of clinical psychology practice but does not fully reveal to you what it is like to have a psychological evaluation or to participate in psychotherapy. The Psychology Research Program (PRP) is designed to go beyond the science and practice presented in psychology textbooks by providing hands-on experiences in the science and/or practice of psychology.

In addition to gaining a more complete understanding and appreciation of psychology, the PRP also provides other benefits to you and others. First, you may discover an area of psychology that fascinates you, leading you to want to take additional courses or do extra readings. Similarly, you may decide that you want to major in psychology. Second, when you act as a participant in a research study, you are helping MSU psychology faculty and students learn more about human behavior. As your textbook shows, we already know a lot about human behavior, but there is so much more to learn; therefore, continuing to conduct scientific studies is essential to our field and society. Third, when you participate in a clinical psychology experience, you are helping clinical psychology graduate students learn and practice the scientifically-based skills and techniques used by clinical psychologists in professional settings. In addition, when you participate in a clinical psychology experience, you might learn something about yourself!

The PRP offers a variety of opportunities to learn about psychology and in the process, satisfy the general psychology research requirement. More information is provided below about the nature of the requirement, and how you can satisfy it.

General Information

To satisfy the research requirement, you must earn a net total of **EIGHT** (8) or more research credits through the Psychology Research Program (PRP). If you do not earn a net total of at least 8 credits through the PRP by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, 2009 (the last day of the semester), then your grade for general psychology will be dropped by one full letter grade (e.g., if you earned a B but failed to satisfy the research requirement, your grade will drop to a C). Please note that you must earn a *net total* of 8 credits; *penalties are subtracted from the number of credits earned to yield a net total* (see below for more information about earning credits and penalties).

Because this is so important, you should start earning credits as soon as you can. If you wait until the end of the semester, you might not have enough time or opportunities to earn all of your credits, so be certain to start soon, and keep earning credits all semester. A lack of opportunities at the end of the semester is *not* an acceptable excuse for failing to complete the requirement; there will be more than enough opportunities to earn the required credits plus extra credits (if you choose), but only if students do not wait until the end of the semester. *Here is another reason to start early: most general psychology instructors will give extra credit if you earn more than the required 8 credits. Your instructor will provide you with details about this, if applicable.*

Research credits are earned through the Psychology Research Program, which is run through the following web site: <http://msstate.sona-systems.com>.

As stated above, credits can be earned in three ways: (1) by being a participant in a research study, (2) by completing a research-based alternate activity (attending a research talk or reading a research article & passing a quiz on the article), or (3) by participating in a clinical psychology experience (participating in a psychological evaluation or another clinical activity such as an interview or psychotherapy). All credit-earning activities are posted on the Psychology Research Program web site, and you must sign up for each activity before participating in it.

Getting Started

Follow these steps to get started:

1. Make sure that you have a relatively new web browser. If you do not, you can still use the system, but it works best with a newer web browser.
2. Make sure that you know your net ID and your 9-digit MSU ID number.
3. Go to: <http://msstate.sona-systems.com>. On the line for “user ID,” enter your net ID only (NOT your full email address), and on the line for “password,” enter your 9-digit MSU ID number (do NOT use your net password).

If you are unable to log in: First, check the information you entered to make sure it is correct & then try it again. If that still does not work, and you are certain that you are in the PRP system, follow the link to obtain a lost password. If you do not think you are in the PRP system, click on “request an account here” (it is on the lower left side of the web page). Enter your first and last name, your net ID (in the space for “user ID”), your 9-digit MSU ID number (in the space for “student ID number”), and select the course that you are enrolled in (be sure to choose the correct section number). Check your information and when you are sure it is correct, click “request account.” Check the screen for the message that your request has been processed. It may take up to 1 business day to process your request; you will receive an email at your MSU address when your request has been processed. *Please note:* if you registered for your general psychology class before the first day of the semester, your account has already been created.

If you were registered in general psychology in a previous semester, use your old user ID and password.

4. When you log in for the first time, you will be asked to review and acknowledge the MSU human subject policy for research. You will be asked whether you accept this information; if you click “yes,” you will move into your account. You will need to acknowledge this only once during the semester.
5. Also during your first log in, you will be asked to answer a couple of simple questions about yourself, such as your gender and whether you have 20/20 vision. You can decline to answer any or all of these questions, but you should respond to each one (“decline to answer” is one way of responding). Your answers to these questions will be confidential and will NOT be used by anyone as research data; however, your responses may be used by Sona Systems to automatically determine your eligibility to participate in certain activities (e.g., certain experiments need people who are not color blind). **You will earn ½ credit for completing these prescreening questions.** When you log in after the first time, you will not have to read and respond to this information.
6. You are encouraged to change your password during the first time that you log in. To change your password, go to “my profile,” where you will be asked to enter your current password and then your new password. Be sure to click “update” when you are done.
7. Explore the information on your account, and when you are ready to start earning credits, read the next section.

Please note: Your login (also known as a session) will expire after a certain period of inactivity, usually 20-60 minutes. This is done for security purposes. If this happens, you can always log in again. When you are done using the system, it is better to explicitly log out, to prevent any problems that may arise if someone uses your computer before the session expires. This is especially important if you are using a public computer lab.

Earning Credits

All credit-earning activities are posted on the Psychology Research Program web site, and you must sign up for each activity before participating in it. Credits earned in previous semester will NOT be applied to this semester.

In general, the number of credits that can be earned during one activity is roughly equal to the amount of time that the activity requires. For example, activities that take 35 to 60 minutes are worth 1 credit. An activity that lasts for 30 minutes or less is worth half a credit. An activity that takes about two hours is worth 2 credits. If you miss an activity (without canceling 24 hours in advance), the penalty you earn will be equal to the credits you would have earned for participating (penalties are subtracted from your credits).

1. To sign up for experiments, log in to your Psychology Research Program account (see the section on “getting started”) and click, “study sign up” or “studies.” You can look at the experiments that are available and **click on the name of an experiment to learn about it** (e.g., to learn what you will be asked to do, the number of credits you can earn for participating, and if there are any special requirements for participation).

If there are available times for you to sign up, you can click the “timeslots” link that takes you to the available dates & times of the experiment (note that you must also choose a date or dates to check for available timeslots – this is at the top of the page that lists the studies). If you check and cannot find available timeslots, check other days. If you still cannot find a time, please check back again (at least once a day); new dates and times are posted regularly.

Please note that, although activities will be available early in the semester, it sometimes takes a week or two before there are a lot of options available; don’t worry – just keep checking and you will find plenty of opportunities.

Also note that you must sign up 24 hours or more in advance, so if you’re checking Tuesday morning, you won’t be able to sign up for anything for Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning.

When you find a date & time that you want, click on “sign up.” Wait until you see a confirmation that you have signed up for the experiment. Once you see a confirmation on the screen, write down the date, time, location (building and room number), experiment name, and name of experimenter. Do not wait until the day of the experiment to record this information – occasionally, the web site may be responding slowly or for some other reason you might not be able to access it.

Also, do NOT just show up at the psychology building and expect someone to be able to look up your experiment time and location for you – it is YOUR responsibility to keep track of this information and if you fail to come to an experiment because you forgot or mis-recorded the location or time, then you are responsible for the penalty that will result (see below). In addition, getting lost or failing to find the location are not excuses for missing or being late for an activity. The psychology department office staff will NOT look up experiments or other research activities for you.

New research activities and new dates & times for the existing activities are added several times a week, so check on a regular basis.

2. You can also complete alternate activities, such as attending a research talk, or participating in clinical psychology experiences. These work the same way as the experiments – they will be

listed on the Psychology Research Program web site, under “study sign up.” You must sign up for them, and you will get a penalty if you don’t cancel on time or if you don’t show up. These opportunities are usually worth at least 1 credit, and sometimes up to as many as 5 credits. All of these activities are noted as “alternate activities” so you can identify them easily.

3. One type of alternate activity is reading a psychology research article and then taking a quiz on it. You read the article on your own time and at your own pace, and then you sign up to take the quiz at a specific time; quizzes are taken in person, in a room in the psychology department. Each article and quiz is worth 1 credit, and you only earn the credit if you answer 7 or more questions (out of 10) correctly. You will NOT be penalized for taking a quiz and not passing it; however, you can only take each quiz one time, so if you do not pass a quiz, then you have lost an opportunity for credit. Also, you WILL be penalized if you sign up to take a quiz but fail to cancel 24 hours in advance or if you no-show.

To take advantage of this opportunity, log in to your PRP account and click “study sign up.” Look for listings that say “alternate activity – article & quiz.” Click on the name to see the description. In the description of the activity, you will see the PRP email address; send an email to that address (which is: PRPatMSU@gmail.com), requesting the article that you want (the description will provide a number for each article, so you can ask for “article 1,” “article 5,” etc.). You will receive a return email with an invitation code; this code will be required in order to sign up for a time to take the quiz. In addition, you will receive the article attached to the same email. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to open the article; you can download it for free at www.adobe.com. University computers have Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can read the article on the computer, save it on a disk to read later, or print it.

After you have read the article and you are ready to take the quiz, go back to the Psychology Research Program web site, log in, click on “study sign up,” and click on the relevant article & quiz title, and follow the links to sign up for a date and time to take the quiz. You will have to enter the invitation code prior to signing up for a time to take the quiz.

After taking a quiz, you will be given credit within 24 hours if you successfully passed the quiz. If you did not pass the quiz, your account will show that you have received 0 credit for that quiz (0 credit is NOT the same as a penalty).

Canceling Research Activities and Clinical Experiences

If you sign up for an experiment or any other PRP activity (including clinical experiences), you can cancel it up until 24 hours before it starts. You have 2 options to cancel:

- (1) You can cancel by logging into your PRP account, clicking on “my schedule,” and finding the experiment you wish to cancel. You must click “cancel,” and then you will be taken to another page and asked if you would like to cancel. You have to click “yes, I would like to cancel” before you are cancelled. Also, you must wait to receive a confirmation. If you do not receive a confirmation, you have not been cancelled and you will be penalized.
- (2) If you cannot get to a computer, you can CALL (do not stop by or email) the Psychology Research Program assistant to cancel (her name is Amanda, and she can be reached at 325-3202). Leave a voice mail if you do not reach Amanda. You still have to call 24 hours or more in advance. Also, you MUST provide your name, net ID, the date & time of the research activity, and the activity name. Also, you must clearly state that you are calling to cancel. If you do not provide ALL of this information, you will NOT be cancelled, and you will be penalized if you do not show up for the activity (see below). Amanda will not return phone calls to confirm a cancellation or to clarify unclear information; if you leave the appropriate information with her, she will cancel, and the system will automatically send an email to you indicating that your cancellation was processed.

Do NOT call your psychology instructor to cancel an experiment! Your psychology instructor CANNOT cancel your experiments!

Do NOT email or call the experimenter to cancel an experiment! Do NOT email Dr. Jacquin or Amanda to cancel an experiment. Email is NOT an acceptable way to cancel an experiment.

If you have a true emergency and cannot cancel 24 hours in advance, and you can provide documentation for your emergency, call Amanda within 2 days after the missed activity to discuss the possibility of removing the penalty. You will be expected to show official documentation of your emergency.

Penalties

If you do not cancel in time, or if you do not show up at least 5 minutes BEFORE an activity is scheduled to begin, you will receive penalty credits equal to the credit value of the experiment (e.g., if an experiment is worth 2 credits, you will get 2 penalties if you fail to show up on time for it). Please note that if you are even 1 minute late for an experiment or activity, it may start without you, which means that you will receive penalty credit. Penalty credits are like negative credits and you have to make up for them. For example, if you earn 2 penalties, you have to earn 2 credits to make up for those penalties, PLUS the 8 credits that you have to earn to fulfill the research requirement. Therefore, try really hard not to get any penalties!

Another reason to avoid penalties is that penalties can cause you to lose your ability to earn credits. If you earn 5 or more penalties, your PRP account will be “frozen” and you will lose your ability to earn additional credits, unless you speak with Dr. Jacquin immediately and work out a plan to make up for the penalties.

Satisfying the Requirement: The Credit Total

Your credit total or net total must equal 8 credits by 5 PM on Tuesday, December 1, 2009, or you will lose a letter grade in your general psychology class. Your credit total equals the credits you have earned minus the penalties. For example, if you earn 8 credits and 1 penalty, your credit total is 7; this does NOT satisfy the requirement. If you earn 12 credits and 2 penalties, your credit total is 10; this satisfies the requirement and also provides you with 2 extra credits.

Keeping Track of Your Progress

To see a list of your scheduled experiments and activities, to view your earned credits and penalties, and to see your credit total, log in to your account and click on “my schedule/credits.”

Handling Scheduling and Other Conflicts

If you have difficulty finding activities that fit your schedule, keep checking. New opportunities are posted every week, and new dates and times are frequently posted for existing opportunities. In addition, numerous online activities are available; these can be done at any time of the night or day.

If you have an unusually busy schedule and you believe that you cannot find PRP activities that work with your schedule (and if you *are able to provide appropriate written documentation of your schedule*), call the PRP assistant, Amanda, at 325-3202. If you contact Amanda BEFORE October 1, she will discuss the possibility of helping you make arrangements for earning your credits. If you wait until after October 1, other arrangements cannot be made – no exceptions.

If you are visually impaired or hearing impaired or if you are unable to climb stairs, please contact Amanda, the PRP assistant, before October 1 to make arrangements to complete the research requirement.

The End of the Semester

The last day to earn credits is Tuesday, December 1, 2009; credits must be completed by 5 PM. Experimenters and people who are in charge of alternate activities will have until 6 PM that day to post all of your credits to your account. Therefore, you should check your account between that time and 8 AM on December 2 to make sure that all of your credits have been posted; contact the administrator (Dr. Jacquin) by December 3 at the latest (by phone, 662-325-1022) if you believe that there is an error. On December 4-5, credit reports will be provided to your instructor by the Psychology Research Program administrator (Dr. Jacquin). You do NOT need to provide credit information to your instructor; only credit reports from Dr. Jacquin will be accepted by instructors.

For More Information

If you have questions about ANY of this, the FIRST STEP is to carefully re-read this information. The SECOND STEP is to read the “frequently asked questions” on the PRP web site. If your question is still not answered, the THIRD STEP is to email the Psychology Research Program Assistant, Amanda, at PRPatMSU@gmail.com. If she does not respond within 2 business days, your email might not have been received; therefore, send another email (check to make sure you used the right address) or call her at 325-3202. If you leave a phone message for Amanda, you must speak your name and phone number very clearly, and indicate why you are calling; if your information is unclear, she will not be able to return your call. If you do not receive a return call within 1 business day, try again. It is your responsibility to make repeated efforts to contact Amanda if you have questions or concerns that are not resolved; she returns all calls promptly, but cannot do so if incomplete information is provided on voice mail. Similarly, she replies to emails that she receives, but sometimes, emails do not go through.