

Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences Research Experience Program (REP) Policy

For more information about the REP, please visit the REP webpage at <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/x77r>.

The organization and procedures of the Research Experience Program (REP) in the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences (henceforth "the School"), outlined in this document, have been established and reviewed by the School and (from time to time) by the University of Melbourne's Psychology, Health and Applied Sciences Human Ethics Sub-committee (HESC). The current guidelines are designed to ensure maximum benefit and protection for researchers and participants. The REP is overseen by the School's Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) and the REP Convenor (Dr Pete Koval; p.koval@unimelb.edu.au) independently of the first-year psychology teaching team.

BACKGROUND

No proper training in psychology and its ethical underpinnings is complete without understanding the perspective of research participants. Providing first-year students with the opportunity to participate in research projects illuminates aspects of the research process that may not be obvious from other course content. In particular, the REP gives students a first-hand understanding of the importance of research participants being freely able to consent to participate in research, having the option of withdrawing their consent, having access to support and further information in case of any concerns, and being fully debriefed about the aims and rationale of the research project.

AIMS

The REP has three main aims:

1. To give first-year psychology students a first-hand understanding of empirical psychology research by being participants in research projects within the School.
2. To give postgraduate and fourth-year students appropriate training in research ethics and management, by conducting research under the direct supervision of experienced academic researchers.
3. To provide academic and student researchers within the School an avenue for recruiting research participants.

INFORMATION FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS (REP PARTICIPANTS)

The REP provides first-year students with a "participant-eye-view" of how psychology research is conducted, ensuring that the privacy and integrity of participants is respected. Students are given: (i) a choice of projects from a large set, (ii) appropriate information for choosing projects, and providing informed consent, (iii) an alternative if they choose not to take part, (iv) appropriate ways of gaining support if needed, (v) appropriate follow-up information and feedback.

Students enrolled in both first-year psychology subjects may participate in 5 hours of research participation per semester (i.e., 10 hours in total during first-year). **Students who choose to participate in the REP will be awarded 1% course credit per hour of research participation completed, up to a maximum of 5% per semester.** *Note that students are not eligible for additional course credit beyond 5 hours (5%) per semester.*

The School emphasises the importance of obtaining a range of research experiences. Thus, **students should aim to participate in REP projects on a variety of topics and that use a range of different methods** (e.g., surveys/questionnaires, perceptual/cognitive tasks, other experimental tasks, experience sampling/diary methods).

No individual project or participation is compulsory for any student.

Students are provided with short descriptions of REP projects, through advertisements approved by the School's HEAG and, where appropriate, by the University's Psychology Health and Applied Sciences Human Ethics Sub-Committee (HESC).

Approved projects are advertised at <https://unimelb.sona-systems.com> and on the first-year psychology site within the University of Melbourne's Learning Management System (LMS). No other advertisements or enticements are permitted. While the School endeavours to make REP projects available throughout the semester, availability of projects may vary over time.

Students sign-up for a specific REP study and, where relevant, students select a specific session-time to complete the study. Students may contact the responsible researcher(s) to arrange an alternate time to participate, although no guarantees are made. **Students are credited by the responsible researcher via SONA systems ASAP after completing their participation.**

If it happens that a researcher does not keep a scheduled appointment, the REP credit advertised for that study should be awarded to the participant. In practice, this rarely occurs, but if it happens the participant should contact the REP Convenor. On the other hand, if a participant does not attend a scheduled appointment or does not complete a study to which they signed up, the REP credit advertised for that study will normally not be awarded to the participant, other than in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the REP Convenor.

Participating in the REP is entirely optional. Any student who does not wish to participate in the REP but would like to be eligible for the additional 5% credit per semester may contact the REP convenor to arrange an alternative assessment task. Students wishing to make use of this alternative provision must contact the REP convenor within the first 4 weeks of semester. Requests for alternative assessment submitted after this date will not be considered. Students who have concerns about participating in research through the REP may contact the REP Convenor. This provision is drawn to students' attention in the first lecture, and the first laboratory class each semester and is clearly stated in the subject manual available on LMS.

INFORMATION FOR STAFF AND RESEARCH STUDENTS (REP RESEARCHERS)

Researchers wishing to access the REP must (i) follow principles of ethical research as stated in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (available at <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/4pjj>); (ii) have approval from the relevant ethics committee to recruit participants via the REP; (iii) create an REP study on the SONA systems website (see below) and have it approved by the REP administrator/convenor; and (iv) complete a summary report communicating their (preliminary) research findings in plain English to REP participants at the end of each semester (see below).

Research students from within the School may apply to access the REP as long as they comply with all of the above and an academic staff member of the School accepts responsibility for their project as "Principal Investigator". REP studies are approved for one semester and researchers wishing to extend existing studies across semesters will need to request approval to do so by emailing REP-psych@unimelb.edu.au.

How to get access to the REP as a researcher:

If you do not have an existing REP researcher profile:

- 1) Send an email to REP-psych@unimelb.edu.au with the following info:
 - your University of Melbourne username
 - your University of Melbourne staff/student ID number
 - your full name
 - your University of Melbourne email address
 - if you are a student, your primary supervisor's name
- 2) You will be advised by email when your REP researcher profile has been created
- 3) Visit <https://unimelb.sona-systems.com> to access the REP portal where you can create new studies, administer existing studies, assign credits to participants, etc.

If you already have an existing REP researcher profile:

- 1) Go to <https://unimelb.sona-systems.com> to create new REP studies, administer existing studies, assign credits to participants, etc.
- 2) If you require assistance with accessing the REP portal, please email REP-psych@unimelb.edu.au

Rules for conduct of REP research projects:

REP Quotas: Researchers can access the following number of REP hours per semester:

- academic staff¹, PhD and MPhil students: 100 REP hours per semester
- fourth-year and MPsy students: 80 REP hours per semester

Researchers may combine their REP hours to run larger studies as long as all researchers involved are listed as study investigators on the study's approved ethics application.

Time involvement per project: To achieve variety across the 5 hours of participation, no single REP project should involve more than 3 hours participation time (unless approved by the REP coordinator). Longer studies (over 1 hour) should aim to combine online and offline methods.

Risks to participants: REP studies should avoid/minimise risk to student participants wherever possible, and appropriate strategies should be in place to deal with any adverse circumstances arising from any such risks. High risk projects are not suitable for the REP. Any risk to participants must be justified in the relevant ethics application.

Conflicts of interest: If researchers listed on an REP study teach into a first-year psychology course, the researchers are expected to clearly indicate how they will deal with conflicts of interest. This applies to lecturers and tutors (Note: tutors may not advertise or recruit in lab classes). Any dependency needs to be stated in the PLS with an explicit indication that students will not be penalised in any way if they do not participate or they withdraw from a study after consenting to participate.

Withdrawal from projects: The PLS makes clear that participants have the right to withdraw without penalty, both before and after having signed up for a project. Students who withdraw their participation after partially completing a project (in good faith) should still receive REP credit(s) on a pro-rata basis or as indicated in the PLS.

Incentives. Researchers are not permitted to offer further incentives to participants (e.g., payment) for REP projects, unless all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- There is a scientific justification for including additional incentives in the study. For example, a study investigating the effects of monetary incentives on decision making may be conducted within the REP
- The study's ethics application must justify the need to include additional incentives in the REP study and this must be approved by the relevant ethics committee.
- The additional incentive must not be mentioned in the REP advertisement to avoid excessive inducement and to ensure other REP studies are not disadvantaged.
- The additional incentive must not be so large as to constitute inducement. Specifically, the maximum incentive should be no more than 30% of the current minimum hourly wage (e.g., the minimum wage as at 1-Feb-2019 is \$18.93 per hour. Thus, the maximum incentive allowed in an REP study is \$5.68), or equivalent. Please note that the School encourages researchers to pay participants in gift vouchers rather than cash.
- The REP convenor will independently review applications for REP studies that request to include an additional (monetary) incentive to ensure they are suitable. The REP convenor reserves the right to reject such applications if deemed inappropriate for the REP, independent of previous approvals obtained from relevant ethics committee(s).

Support: If an adverse event occurs during or after an REP study, the Principal Researcher is responsible for providing support and/or counselling to participants. For fourth-year or postgraduate student projects, the responsible researcher must be the student's primary supervisor. Student researchers should not provide support or counselling to REP participants. Concerns/complaints about the ethical conduct of an REP study should be directed to the relevant ethics committee.

Referral: The PLS and/or Debriefing Statement must include contact information for referral in case a participant has concerns arising from their involvement in an REP study. In the first instance, the supervisor (or Principal Investigator) will see the participant and arrange a referral. If the project has clinical implications and the supervisor is not a clinician, a clinician's name and contact details should be included in the PLS and/or Debriefing Statement.

End of semester summary report: At the end of each semester, the Principal Investigator must ensure that a summary report of (preliminary) findings is completed for all their REP studies using an online form available at <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/7pjj>. Summary reports will be made available to REP participants at this webpage: <http://go.unimelb.edu.au/3pjj>. For REP studies that run across semesters, a preliminary report should be completed at the end of Semester 1 and then updated at the end of Semester 2. To update an existing summary report, complete the online form (<http://go.unimelb.edu.au/7pjj>) again and add "Semester 2 update" to the end of the study title.

¹ Honorary staff members are not eligible to access the REP, unless approved in writing by the Head of School. The only exceptions are honorary staff who have internal supervisor status within the School, which applies to most "resident honoraries" and "honorary partners". If unsure, please contact the REP Convenor to seek clarification.