SONA Systems: http://abdn.sona-systems.com

1. Introduction

Participating in research is a crucial aspect of studying Psychology. It provides not only an opportunity to earn course credit but also a chance to gain insights into diverse research methodologies, interact with researchers, and better prepare for your own Level 4 projects. It is important that people from diverse backgrounds and communities participate in our research, and that includes our students.

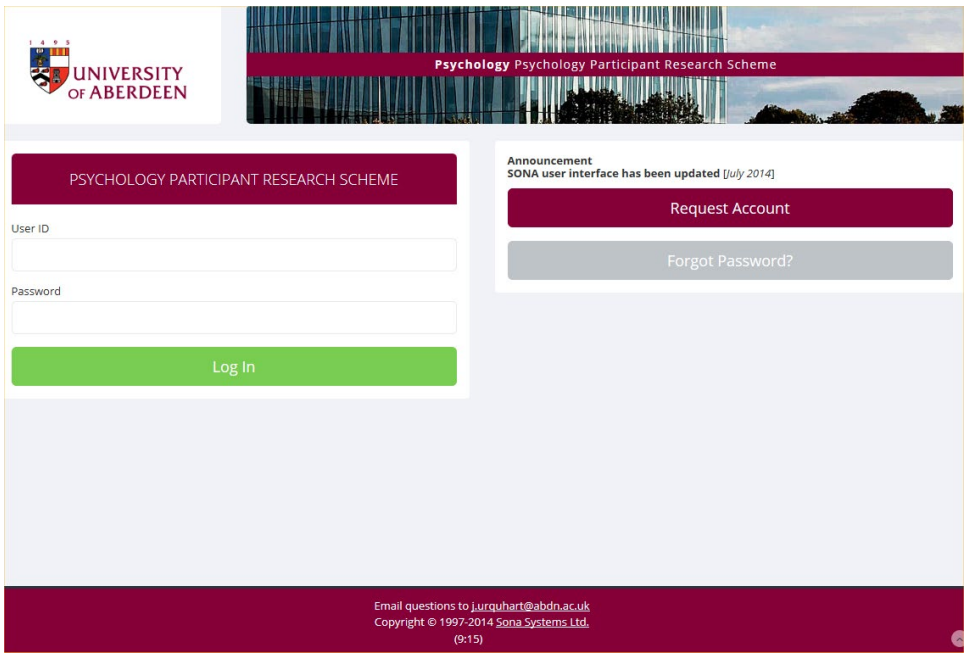
The School of Psychology is using Web Based Software to enable timetabling of experiments and to issue credit for the Psychology Research Scheme used by the Methods courses. The Experiment Management System provides an easy method for you to sign up for studies and track your progress through the term. Everything is done through the software's web-based interface, so you can access SONA at any time, from any device with a web browser.

After you log in to the system, you can view a list of available studies, sign up for studies that interest you, and track your progress throughout the term. The system will track when you receive credits for a study, so you can view this online as well.

How to Register as a PARTICIPANT

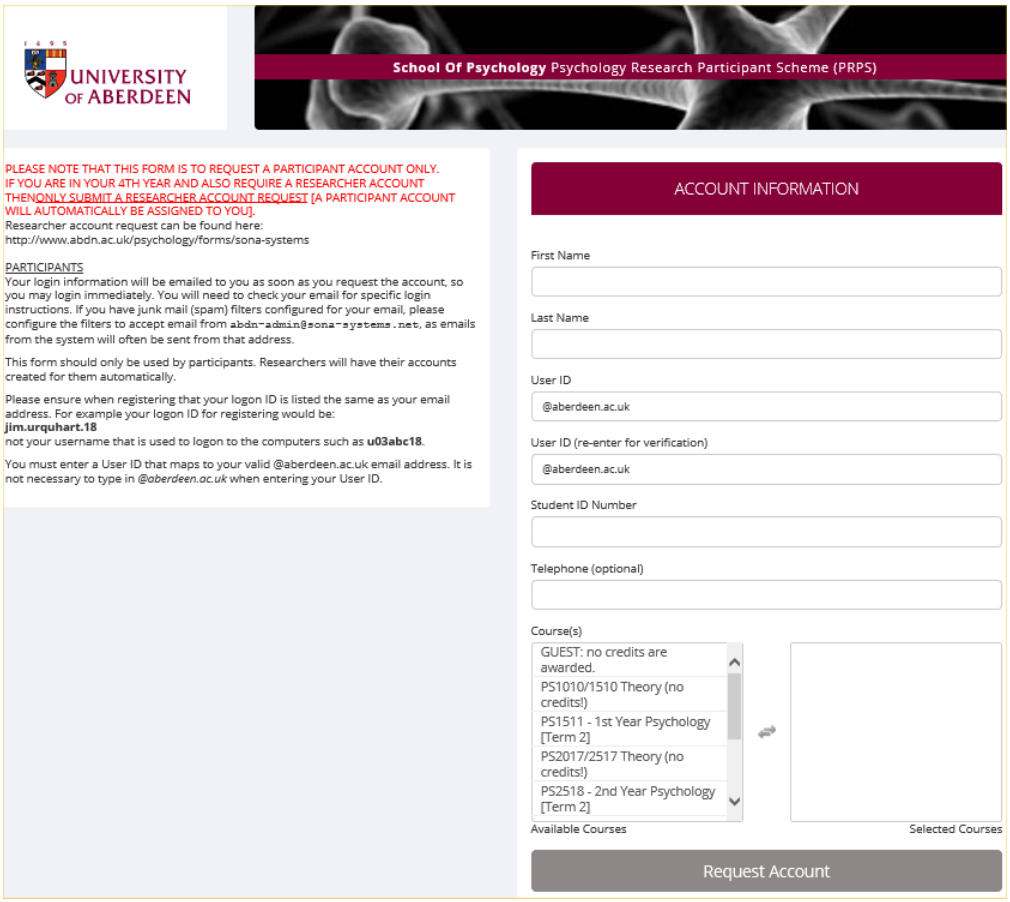
Undergraduate students have the opportunity to obtain a set number of credits per term by participating in research. The exact number per course is confirmed on the Sona login page and the students' home page once they register for the course. To make sure that you have enough time to earn your credits, please make sure you complete your registration as soon as possible, and **no later than October 9th.** Note that failing to register and engage with the research projects may lead to a C6.

To register, go to **http://abdn.sona-systems.com** *then select* ***Request Account***



Alternatively, visit the School of Psychology Home Page at www.abdn.ac.uk/psychology, then click on ***Research – SONA Research Participation System – Register as a participant***

Online registration consists of a short form:



- Fill in the information requested which will require an *abdn.ac.uk* e-mail address *Note:you can only use a valid University of Aberdeen email address. You must be registered with the University IT Services before attempting to create an account.*

- Please ensure that you fill in the correct course code. If in doubt, please check your course handbook or contact your course coordinator.

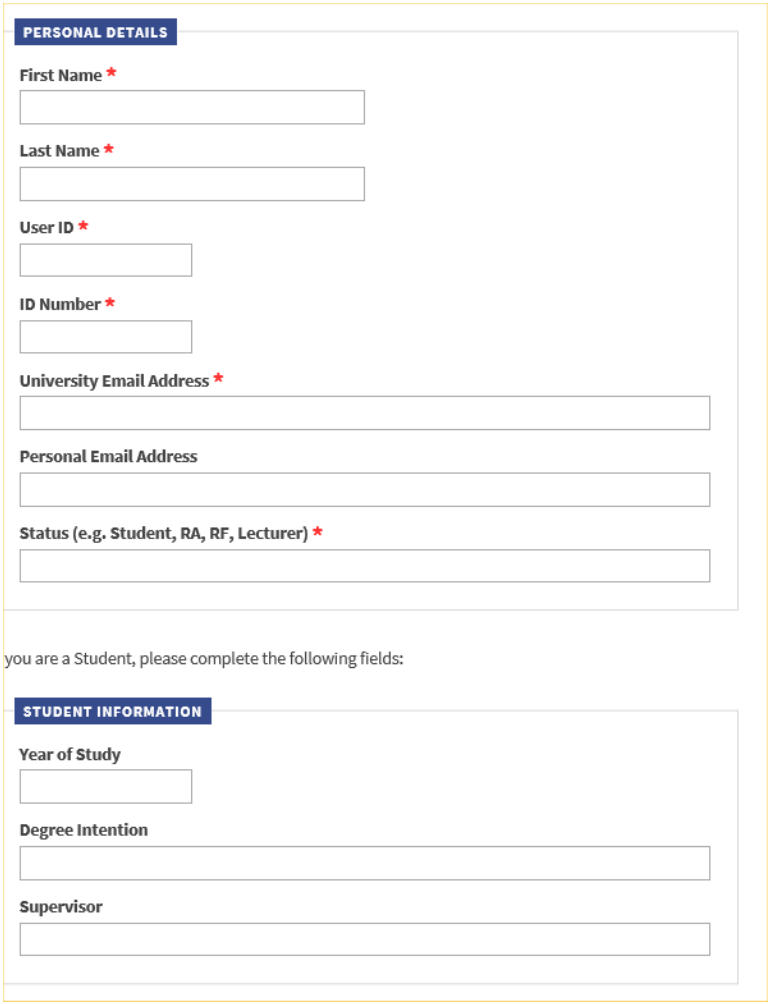
Assuming that you have registered correctly you will receive an email notification within the following 6 hours that will include login instructions for the system. You will be assigned a default password, which you can change after your first login. If you do not receive the said email within 48 hours please contact the system Administrator (j.urquhart@abdn.ac.uk).

DO NOT TRY AND CREATE THE ACCOUNT FOR A SECOND TIME as this will result in your participation credits being split between more than one account.

How to Register as a RESEARCHER:

Level 4 Students have the opportunity to register as researchers and be allowed access to the School's pool of SONA participants for their own projects. They are also required to earn credits by participating in other studies. Students may register as a Researcher (which automatically includes registration as a Participant) by visiting www.abdn.ac.uk/psychology and clicking on ***Research – SONA Research Participation System – Register as a Researcher***

Researcher registration form



- Fill in the information requested which will require an *abdn.ac.uk* e-mail address
  Note: you can only use a valid University of Aberdeen email address. You must be registered with the University IT Services before attempting to create an account.
- Please ensure that you complete the STUDENT INFORMATION section, no account request will be accepted without this.

Assuming that you have registered correctly you will receive an email notification within the following 48 hours that will include login instructions for the system. You will be assigned a default password, which you can change after your first login. If you do not receive the said email within 48 hours please contact the system Administrator (j.urquhart@abdn.ac.uk).

All Researcher accounts include the role of Participant, UG students who have applied for a Researcher account should NOT fill out the Participant account application.

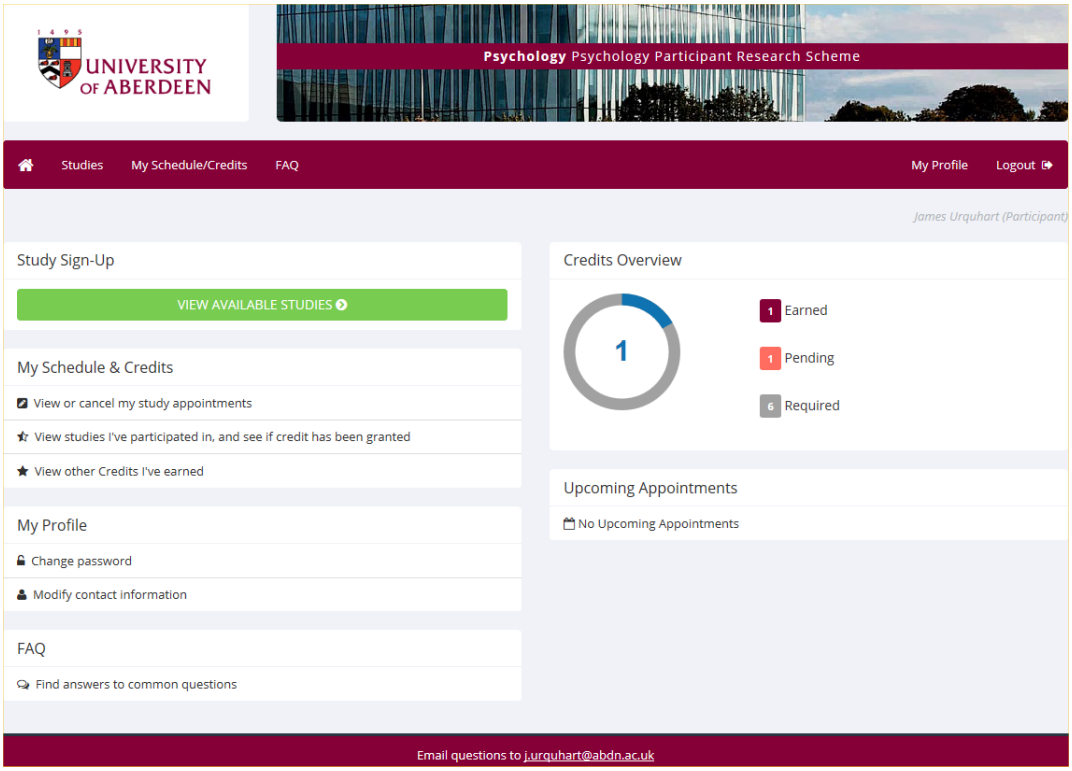
Set up your account: pre-test questions

After receiving your registration details, log back into the Research System with the username and password as listed in the confirmation email. Confirm that you agree with the privacy policy, then complete the pre-screening questionnaire.

The pre-screening allows researchers to restrict who can sign up for their experiments. For example, a study may require only participants that write with their left hand and are native speakers of a certain language. Once you have completed and saved the pre-screening questionnaire, you will then proceed to the start screen for The Research Participation System.

2. How to Use the Research System

Once you login you will see the Main Menu:



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.

Retrieving a Lost Password

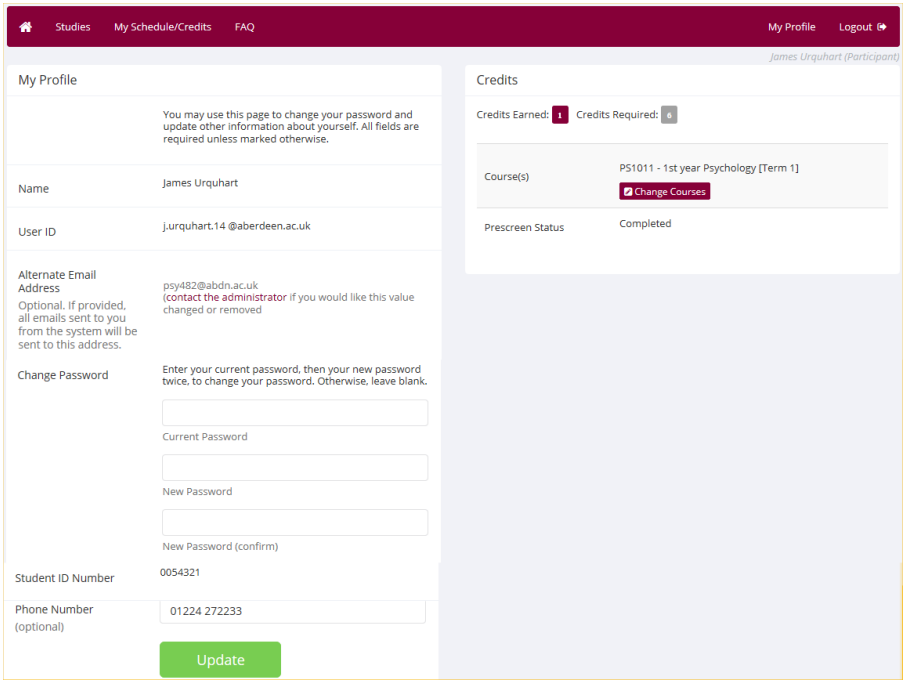
If you have forgotten or do not have your password, then you may choose to have your password emailed to you. You will see this option on the home page. Your password will be emailed to you after you submit the form and should arrive within a few minutes.

Logging Out

When you are done using the system, choose Log Out from the toolbar on the left side to log out. You are now logged out. It is always a good security measure to close all your browser windows as well, especially if you are using a computer that is shared by others.

Changing Your Password and Other Information

If you would like to change your password or other information about yourself, choose **My Profile** from the top toolbar. If you would like to change your password, type your new password (twice, for confirmation) in the provided boxes. If you would *not* like to change your password, simply leave these boxes empty.



You can also change your phone number and course assignment in the My Profile section. It is unlikely you will need to change your course assignment unless you have accidentally signed up to the wrong course.

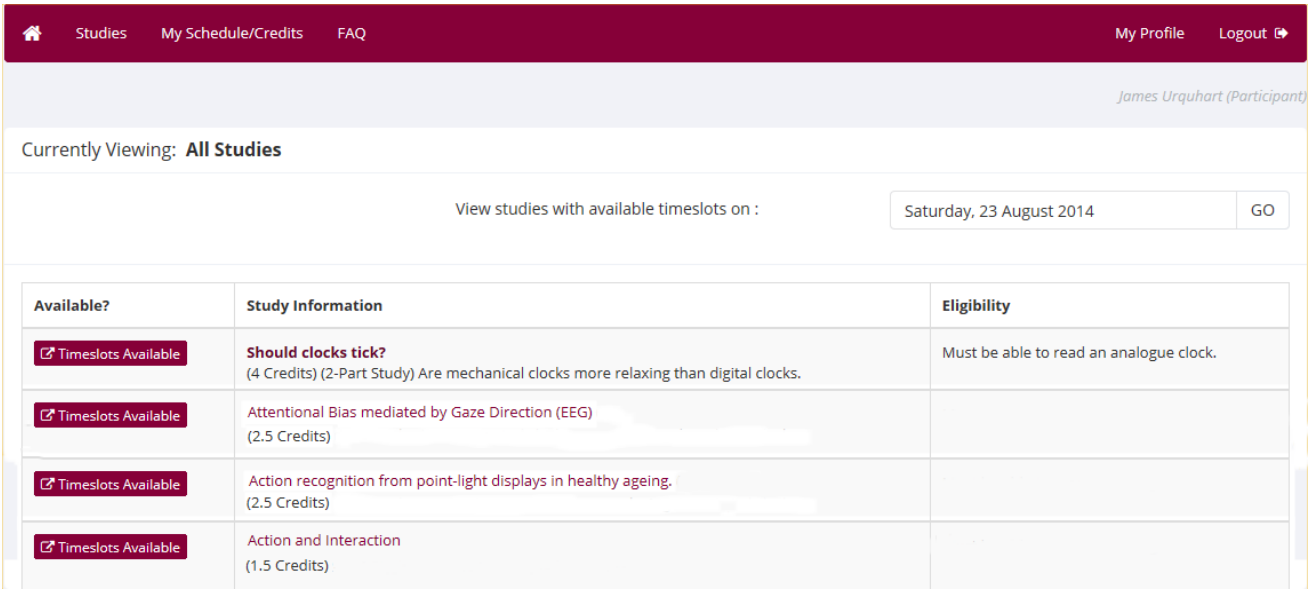
3. Studies

This is the main part of the SONA System. It is from here that you will read about and sign up for studies. During the course of each term, you have the opportunity to obtain a set number of credits from participating in studies. Some studies can be carried out online, while the others require your physical presence (usually in the laboratory). Only half of your required credits can be earned from online studies. This is to ensure that you experience a range of different methodologies while completing your credit requirements. If you have a compelling reason that prevents you from being able to participate in face-to-face studies, please contact your course coordinator as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Credits are awarded at the rate of 1 Credit per 30 minutes of participation. Each test session of 15 minutes or part thereof, is worth half of 1 Credit. Therefore, an experiment lasting longer than 30 minutes but shorter than 45 minutes would be worth 1.5 Credits.

Viewing Studies

To view a list of studies, click on ***Studies*** from the top toolbar. You will see a list of studies. The list of studies is shown in a random order. A brief description of each study will be listed, as well as any special requirements that may restrict your eligibility to participate in the study, and whether the study is carried out online or in person.



Studies that currently have available participation times (timeslots) will have "**TIMESLOTS AVAILABLE**" listed next to the name of the study. If no studies have available timeslots, you may want to logon to the system a few days later to see if new timeslots have been added. You may also select a specific date to view studies with available timeslots on that date. To view more information about a study, click on the name of the study.

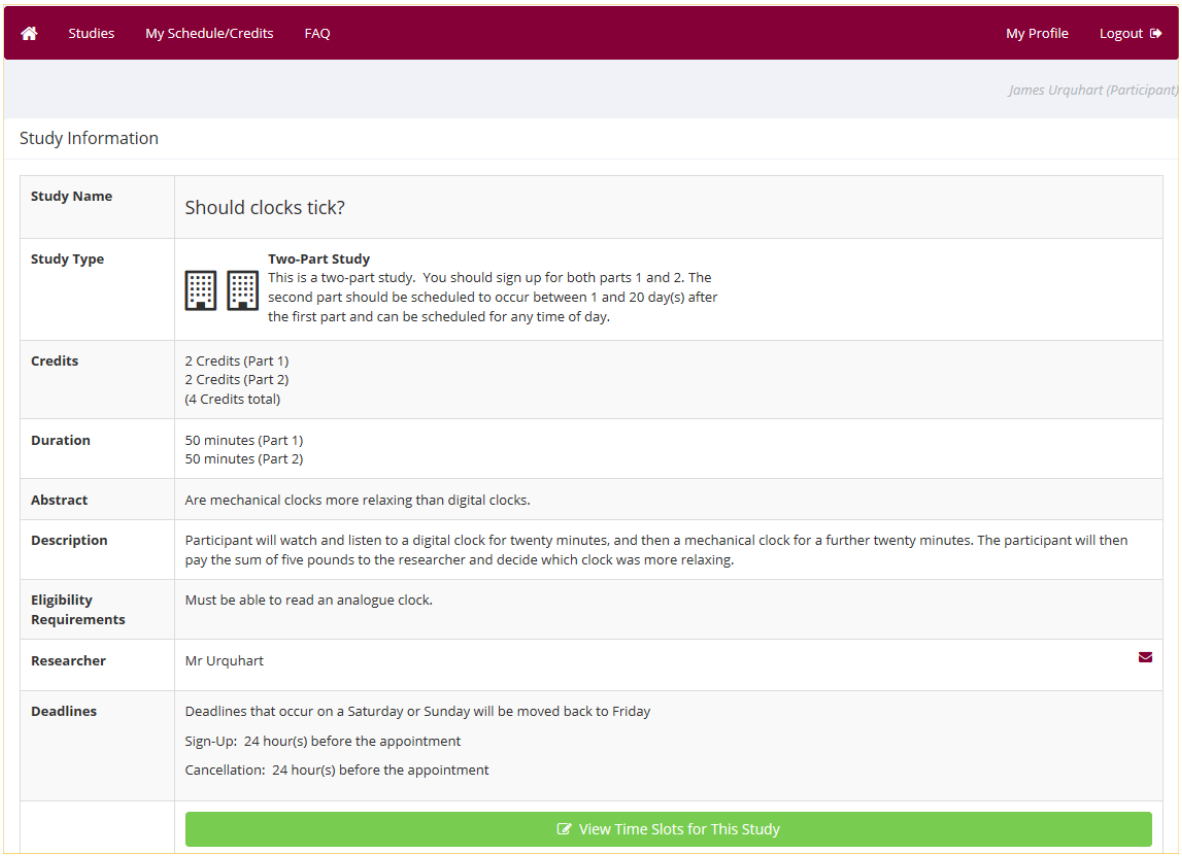
Multiple Part Studies

Some studies involve multiple sessions, where you must sign up for each part of the study at once, and the parts must be scheduled a certain number of days apart. These studies will be clearly marked.

Signing Up For Studies

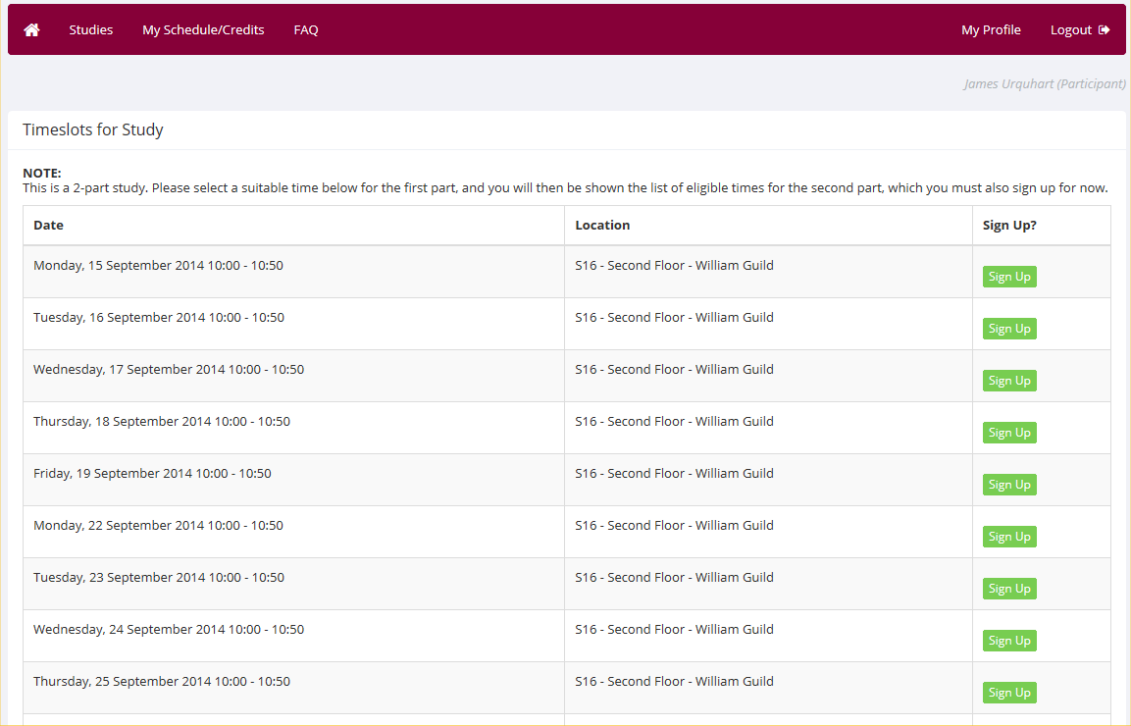
To sign up to participate in a study, find the study you would like to participate in. Click on the study name for more information. You will see a list of any eligibility requirements, as well as a contact person if you have questions about the study.

Some restrictions are automatically enforced by the system. If a study has certain pre-requisites or disqualifiers (studies you must *not* have participated in to participate in this study),-it will not appear in your available studies list (i.e., a particular study may be included in your available study list but may not be included in a fellow student's list).



The study may have other restrictions listed as Subject Restrictions. An example of a Subject Restriction is “must not have experience of working in a nursing home”. The system will not automatically enforce this restriction, but you should only sign up for the study if you meet this restriction. If you sign up for the study and you do not meet the restrictions, you will likely not receive credit for the study, and could face a penalty. If you have any questions about your eligibility, you may contact the researcher directly.

You may only sign up for a timeslot up until a certain time before that timeslot is scheduled to occur. The system will not show a Sign Up button for timeslots where it is too late to sign up.



Once you have determined you meet all the requirements, click on View Timeslots for This Study and you will see a list of available timeslots. Choose a timeslot that is convenient for you and click ***Sign Up***.

After you click Sign Up, you will see information displayed confirming the time and location of the study you plan to participate in. You will also receive email confirmation as well. You are now signed up for the study. To cancel your sign-up, see Cancelling a Sign-Up below.

Cancelling a Sign-Up

If you need to cancel a timeslot you have signed up for, you can do this from the My Schedule and Credits page. Choose the My Schedule/Credits option from the toolbar. You will see listed all the studies you have signed up for, as well as those you have completed (see the Tracking Your Progress section of this documentation for more information). Studies you have signed up for that you are allowed to cancel will have a Cancel button next to them. Please note that you cannot cancel an appointment within 24 Hours of the appointment start time. By using the cancel option, the researcher will automatically receive an e-mail of the cancellation.

Once you click Cancel to cancel your sign-up, you will see a confirmation page. You will also be warned if your cancellation might affect your ability to participate in other studies you have signed up for, due to pre-requisite restrictions. If the cancellation will affect your ability to participate in another study you are signed up for, it is your responsibility to deal with this issue (usually by cancelling the depending study as well). The system will warn you but will not block the cancellation. Click ***"Yes"*** to cancel your sign-up and the sign-up will be cancelled immediately.

Please Note: If you cancel the first part of a two-part study, the second part will also be cancelled. If you cancel the second part of a two-part study, the first part will *not* be cancelled, but you will need to ask the researcher to sign you up for the second part again, if you would like to participate in it at a later date.

Tracking Your Progress

You may track your progress at any time by choosing the My Schedule/Credits option from the top toolbar, there is also a Credits Overview summary shown on the right side for your Home page. When you view this page, you will see a list of the number of credits you are required to earn, and how many you have earned so far. If you have signed up for any studies, those are listed as well. In the list of studies, you will see information about your credit status.

No-Shows

If you fail to appear for a study and did not inform the researcher by email more than 24 hours in advance, then you will most likely receive a No-Show Penalty of 2 credits. That will be displayed in your progress, and the penalty will be deducted from your current credit earnings. It is therefore possible to end up with a negative value for the number of credits you have earned. Next to each credit or penalty, you can also see any comments the researcher left regarding the study and your credit for it. Therefore, if you miss a test session without notice then you may need to complete 8 credits, rather than 6 (depending on your course selection), to pass the Individual Research Participation part of your course.

Late Arrival

If you turn up late for an appointment and the session cannot be started on time, it may affect the subsequent scheduled sessions of the study. It is within the discretion of the Administrator to class a late participant as a No-Show and therefore apply the no-show penalty. If time allows, the researcher may still ask you to participate and earn full credits for the study, but a no-show penalty will still be applied.

No-Show by a Researcher

If you have signed up and turned up for an experiment and the researcher fails to show up, please email the Psychology Office (psych@abdn.ac.uk).

You will**,** in most circumstances, receive the credits for the session unless the researcher gave you advance notice of cancellation. We expect researchers to give participants 24 hours notice of a cancellation.

Manually Being Credited for an Experiment

It is possible that a researcher may approach you to do their experiment, even though you have not signed up through the research participation system, and state that they will award you the credit directly. In this situation it is recommended that you make sure the researcher creates your appointment manually before you commence the study.

4.FAQs

I participated in a study, but I have yet to receive credit. How do I receive credit?

The researcher must grant you credit. This is usually done shortly after your participation however most researchers allow the system to issue auto-credit. Auto-credit happens 48 hours after the study took place. If it has been more than 48 hours and you have still not received credit, please contact the researcher.

Who can see the information about my sign-ups? I don't want everyone to know which studies I signed up for.

Only the researcher of the study can see that you have signed up for it, along with the SONA administrator. No other users, including other researchers, may see this information.

I noticed that with some studies, I can sign up for them again even if I participated before, while others don't allow for this. Why is this?

Researchers can choose if their studies allow you to participate more than once. Not all studies allow you to participate more than once.

What happens if I complete more than the required number of credits? Will I get extra marks or will they count towards the next semester?

In order to obtain full marks each participant must complete the required number of credits each semester. You can (and are encouraged to) continue participating in studies and earning credits, but they will not carry forward to the next semester and you will not obtain any additional marks for doing so. At the start of semester 2 all credit values are set to 0, and you will start earning credits from scratch.

5. Any problems or further queries

Please refer to the Sona Introduction recordings on MyAberdeen. If the question still remains then please contact the Sona Administrator (j.urquhart@abdn.ac.uk).