McCombs Behavioral Research Laboratory

Instructions for Using Behavioral Lab

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Glossary of Terms

URA- Undergraduate Research Assistant

Session- The time period in which the lab staff runs one or multiple studies. Depending on the study, a session can be as long or as short as needed.

Study Session Form- This is a form that researchers will fill out prior to their study session which includes all the need to know information for lab staff to run a session effectively

Instructions Sheet- In order to avoid repeat participation in the same studies, participants can receive individualized Instructions Sheets with instructions of which studies to complete and not complete in a session.

URA Instructions Sheet- URAs receive a Instructions Sheet for all study sessions, regardless of whether the study is computer-based or not, providing them with specific language to use and detailing session procedures.

Check-In Form- Either a half-sheet of paper or electronic survey given to participants at check-in. This tracks which participants used what computer for security purposes, as well as their lab ID, and what type of compensation they are receiving for a session.

Researcher Study Application

To use the facility and its data collection resources, researchers must submit an Application Form. Researchers must follow the application procedures below.

Steps

Applications for lab usage are handled online at https://www.mccombs.utexas.edu/Tech/Labs/Behavioral-Lab/Reservation%20Information

1. **Submit a completed Application Form online.** Requests for lab use will only be considered if they are completed in full. If not complete, the lab staff will return the request to the requester for completion. The Application Form will request the following information:
   - Desired date(s) of data collection
   - Researchers involved in study (if you are a Phd student, include your faculty advisor)
   - Preferred room
   - Participant source (recruiting own participants, distribution list of potential paid participants, course participant pool, specialized sample)
   - Target participant number
   - Estimated hours needed to collect data
   - Type of study (e.g., computer-based, paper and pencil survey, focus group, etc.)
   - Indication if permissible for study to be combined with another study. *(Please note that if a researcher allows their study to be combined with another study, it would allow the behavioral lab to maximize use of its participant pools. In addition, researchers may receive quicker access to data collection.)*
   - Project-specific IRB approval #
   - Exemption request to run own studies:
     - Researchers must still fill out an Application Form so that lab staff is kept informed of all studies taking place in the lab. (The Session Study Form is no longer required.)
     - Provide a brief explanation for exemption. This will help lab staff better understand the ways in which URAs can be further trained for future utilization.
     - If a researcher elects to run their study without URA involvement during normal lab hours, they will have access to lab space but must recruit and manage their own participants.
     - Researchers will be responsible for the security of all equipment while running their studies and must return the facilities as they found them.

2. **Check to see your study session scheduled as requested.** Once applications are approved, please double check the Calendar to make sure your application was processed and approved as requested.

3. **Submit IRB Approval Number**. In order to schedule time in the lab, it is highly recommended that researchers submit their IRB number with their Application Form. However, studies can be scheduled without it. Applications are subject to cancellation if

IRB approval has not been received one week prior to the conduct of the study and will be automatically cancelled if the project has not been approved one week before the time of the scheduled study session(s). Exemption to this rule will be handled on a case by case basis.

Guidelines

1. **The lab space must be used for academic research projects.**
2. **At least one principal investigator must be a McCombs School faculty member.** Ph.D. students are welcome and encouraged to use the Behavioral Research Laboratory. However, their applications must be made jointly with a McCombs School faculty member.
3. **Application Forms are approved on a first-come, first-served basis.**
4. **Sessions can be scheduled Mondays from 12-5PM and Tuesday-Friday from 8-5PM.** Monday mornings will be used to prepare for that week's sessions. URAs will also be trained for the studies they will be facilitating on Monday mornings. In addition, researchers can schedule time to test software or pilot procedures for their studies on Monday mornings from 8-12PM. Researchers can contact the lab coordinator, if interested in testing on Mondays.
5. **Each researcher is allotted a maximum of 20 hours per week AND a maximum of 40 hours a month**. Every co-author involved in a study will have hours deducted from their allotment, with the exception of faculty supervisors. Piloting time used on Mondays will not count towards the weekly or monthly allotment.
6. **If a researcher would like to use the lab outside of the normal hours of operation, they are permitted to do so.** The researcher should be aware of the following.
    a. Lab staff will not be available to assist with these studies.
    b. These hours will not be deducted from a researcher's weekly or monthly allotment of hour.
    c. Researchers must still fill out an Application Form so that lab staff is kept informed of all studies taking place in the lab. The Session Study Form is no longer required.
    d. Researchers should note that lab staff may be running studies up until 5PM on the day of their study. If that is the case, researchers should schedule their time in the lab so as to allow themselves sufficient time to set up their study room and materials.
    e. Researchers will be responsible for the security of all equipment while running their studies and must return the facilities as they found them.
    f. Because lab staff may not be there to open or close the lab, researchers need to be granted security access (i.e., a key and access code) to the lab. Researchers should contact Mark Wimby at least two weeks in advance of their study to be granted lab access.
7. **Application Forms may be submitted up to two months in advance, but no later than 14 days prior to the proposed week.**

8. **If the requested time period for lab usage extends beyond two months past the date of the submission of the Application Form, that request will be honored only if the requested dates are for a single experiment to be run on consecutive business days.**
9. **IRB codes used must be project-specific.**

Other Considerations

1. If a researcher requests the lab for a certain number of hours and the behavioral lab can collect their target number of participants in less time, researchers will be advised to lessen their hours in their application to free up space for other researchers and to protect the researcher's monthly allotment of hours.
2. The behavioral lab staff will be in charge of determining capacity for a requested week and also for reserving the room and times of an application's data collection session(s).
3. Conflicts in multiple researchers requesting the Behavioral Research Laboratory at the same time are resolved on a first-come, first-served basis.

Cancellation Information

To cancel use of the lab after an Application Form has been approved, please send an email to: larissa.garcia@mccombs.utexas.edu. Please give a two week notice to cancel any approved Application Form.

Application Approval: Next Steps

Study Session Form

After receiving application approval, researchers will receive a Study Session Form to complete. This form should be filled out the week before the scheduled session day. Below are the deadlines for the corresponding studies.

- If **recruiting own participants or using course credit participant pool**: Researchers are responsible for emailing their Study Session Form to the lab coordinator no later than Monday at 12PM of the week preceding their scheduled week.
- If using the **Distribution List of Potential Paid Participants**: Researchers need to email their Study Session Form no later than Monday at 12PM, 1 week prior to their scheduled week.
- If a requesting a **specialized sample**: Researchers must submit their Study Session Form 2 months prior to their requested week. Please note that requests for specialized samples are not guaranteed to be fulfilled. Lab staff will keep researchers updated on recruitment progress, including any challenges or barriers to recruitment.

These deadlines exists for several reasons.

- Lab staff need time to test any software or survey links
- Lab staff need time to prepare the schedule for the upcoming week and to recruit participants

- The lab coordinator needs time to meet with URAs to review instructions for facilitating studies for upcoming sessions

The researcher must email their Study Session Form to the lab coordinator, which will include the following information:
- Description of the study
- Directions to access software or computer program, if applicable
- Link to survey, if applicable
- The estimated time it takes to run the study
- Does the study require any special equipment (besides a computer) or materials, such as headphones or paper materials?
- Does the study require any specific language, besides general instructions?
- The research question. Does the lab coordinator need to be aware of any carry over effects?
- If the study can be combined with other studies or not. Please note the following regarding participant pool use:
    - Studies using the **Distribution List of Potential Paid Participants** can be run **alone or combined** with other paid studies if requested and if other paid studies are available
    - Studies utilizing the **course credit participant pool** generally should be **combined** for researchers running in the same week
    - Studies that use **specialized samples** would likely be run **alone**
- IRB approval number (must match number used on Application Form). Researchers must also indicate if this study is related to any other prior IRB number. As described in the "Link and Software Testing" section below, the lab coordinator will be thoroughly screening the content of study links. This will help to prevent duplicate participation in a single study but will also help ensure that IRB numbers match the submitted project. This process will help all users of the lab adhere to the project-specific IRB policy.

If a researcher is not using a computerized survey to collect data, they need to meet with the lab coordinator to explain their project in more detail and review specialized software and setup, in addition to submitting a Study Session Form. Also, if a survey requires additional materials (e.g., paper materials, stimuli, etc.) or a specific set up, it is recommended that the lab coordinator and researcher meet prior to the data collection session. **Researchers must meet at least a week in advance of their *scheduled week* if they need to discuss their study with the lab coordinator.** The more time the researcher gives the lab staff to prepare for a study, the better.

Consent Form

If running a computer-based program, it is recommended that researchers used electronic consent forms linked before their survey. If a researcher needs or chooses to use a paper consent form, they must email it to the lab coordinator in advance, along with their Study Session Form. In addition, researchers should supply lab staff with the appropriate number of hard copies of their consent form at least one week in advance of their session(s).

Link and Software Testing

Prior to running a session, all survey links and software programs will be tested. The lab coordinator or a URA will test the link or program and take notes to provide feedback to the experimenter, as well as note any nuances for the URAs that will be running the session. The following will be observed:

- Even though researchers should give an estimated time for the studies, are there any points in a study that may cause a delay or cause participants to move at varying speeds?
- Does the study require headphones?
- Is there a paper portion to the study?
- Is there any sort of deception, manipulation, or potential carryover effects (if so, will it affect the order in which the study is run)?
- Typos or unclear questions
- If running a computer-based study, do you ask participants to record their lab IDs? We ask every study to record this.

Policies for Paid Studies

The Distribution List of Potential Paid Participants (limited to UT Austin students) is to be used across departments for researchers utilizing URAs. Students interested in voluntarily participating in paid studies are recruited to sign up for this distribution list that will be emailed once a week with upcoming studies. If participants are interested in a study, they will be directed to sign up for a specific time slot ahead of time on Qualtrics.

Participants from the Distribution List of Potential Paid Participants will either be paid a fixed rate or paid based on their decisions and/or the decisions of others in the study. The standard compensation amount for paid participants has been $8 with the added opportunity to win a random drawing of $50 within each study. In all cases, participants will be given advanced notice of their expected payment before they sign up for a study**. Researchers using the distribution list need to provide the lab coordinator with funds no later than 2 days prior to their session(s) along with their Individual Receipt Form.** The lab coordinator will keep all funds in a safe located in one of the lab rooms that has an alarm. The funds must be clearly marked with the researcher's name and the amount given to the lab coordinator. The lab coordinator will then count the money in the presence of the researcher and place the money in the safe. The lab coordinator will be the only person handling money in the lab (i.e., URAs will not handle money).

For studies that choose to be combined, the payment of participants will be split evenly among every researcher in a given session.

If a researcher chooses to recruit their own participants, these policies do not apply.

Session Procedures

Session Preparation and Sign-in Sheets

The lab coordinator is responsible for preparing all details for an upcoming session one week prior to the start date. URAs are responsible for preparing the lab at the beginning and end of a session, in addition to monitoring participants while sessions are in progress.
URAs will take the following steps prior to facilitating a session:

- Arrive 30 minutes prior to assigned session, as instructed by the lab coordinator.
- Receive URA Instructions Sheet, which contains instructions for the session
- Retrieve sign in sheet and prep check in
    - Print sign in sheet from Sona System
        - UN: [redacted]
        - Password: [redacted]
- URAs and the lab coordinator will be the only individuals to have access to this password information.
- - Cross-check Sona Systems to ensure no duplicate data
- - Highlight any participants who have already participated in one or more studies in the session (but not all) to ensure they receive the proper Instructions Sheet upon check-in
- - Prepare Check-In Form (if not included online)
    - If a study requires it, assign cubicles to certain participants ahead of time
    - List day and time of session on each Check-In Form
- Turn on all computers and login in
    - Participant computers
        - Username: [redacted]
        - Password: [redacted]
- URAs, the lab coordinator, and Computer User Services Specialist will be the only individuals to have access to this password information.
- If running a computer-based study, go into Z drive and open electronic version of the Instructions Sheet for that session on every computer, which contains instructions for the participant, including the order in which the studies should be completed(if more than one). If participants do not need any specialized instructions, they will follow the instructions on the electronic Instructions Sheet. If a participant has already completed one or more studies in a session, they will receive a specialized Instructions Sheet upon check-in and will be instructed to follow that Instructions Sheet and not the electronic version
- If running a study that uses a computer program, go into Z drive and open program on every computer. Prepare program for use, as instructed. If a study is using Qualtrics, no further steps beyond the opening of the electronic Instructions Sheet is necessary
- Refer to URA Instructions Sheet or check in with lab coordinator to make sure everything is set up as needed (e.g., headphones, paper materials, money, etc.)
- Review instructions for running session on the URA Instructions Sheet, paying attention to any specific instructions

Check In

For participants receiving class credit or payment for their participation, URAs will refer to a sheet printed from Sona Systems to check in each participant, which will include the participant's name and lab ID. URAs should check to make sure that the participant is eligible to participate in the study (e.g., they have not participated in the same study before)

- 15 minutes before study, URA will check participants in and verify that they are participating in the study that they signed up for on Sona Systems
- URAs should make sure every participant has a Check-In Form and a pencil/pen
- URAs should indicate on the participant's Check-In Form whether a participant is receiving credit or payment.
- URAs should record a participant's lab ID on their Check-In Form before giving it to them
- URAs should make sure that any highlighted participants receive the correct Instructions Sheet upon check-in.
- If a participant is being paid, they should also receive additional forms to fill out
- If a study requires assigned cubicles, URAs should point out to participants their assigned computer, which should already be recorded on their Check-In Form

If two or more different studies are being run at the same time, the back entrances to the Large Conference Room (CBA 6.402) and the Workstation Room (6.499) can be used to enter, to minimize traffic.

URAs- During/After a Session

At the start of a session, a URA will go out into the hall where participants are waiting for announcements and direct participants into the study room. Before entering the study room, each participant will hand their consent form to the URA at the door of the study room, if using a paper consent form. Any participant who did not receive a Check-In Form or other financial form (if needed) will receive this at the door of the study room. URAs' roles will vary according to the study they are facilitating but the following are what URAs should be doing for most studies in the lab.

- After all participants are in the room, URAs should briefly check the hallway for any late participants before giving announcements.
- After checking the hallway, URAs should give announcements at the beginning of the study including instructions and an opportunity for anybody to ask questions.
- Announcements include the following:
    - Ask participants to write their computer number on the Check-In Form they were given (if not assigned cubicles). Let them know that their participation will remain anonymous. The sheet of paper will only be used to make sure participant receives credit or payment.
    - No food or drink is allowed in the lab. If they have food or drink, please instruct the participant to place it in a backpack or leave it at the table when they first enter.
    - All cell phones need to be silenced or off during the duration of the study and placed in a backpack or pocket. Cellphones should not be visible during the

session. If a participant cannot place their phone away, they can raise their hands and a URA will collect their phone.
    - If running multiple studies in one session, let them know there is one credit given for the entire session, not per study.
    - Ask all participants to pay attention, as there are attention checks throughout the study.
    - At the end of the session, participants should hand their Check-In Form to a URA for review. If receiving payment, the lab coordinator will pay participants. Participants are then dismissed.
- 5 minutes after the study begins, the door should be closed to the study room. Any participants who arrive after the door has been closed should not be allowed to participate in the study.
- Periodically (I.e., 2-3 times throughout a one-hour session) walk around and observe the activity in the room and on the computers (if applicable). URAs should look to see if participants are engaging with their tasks, not browsing unauthorized websites, or looking at their phone.
- Watch for hand-raising and answer any questions participants may have about a study without giving information that might contaminate data
- If URAs notice unusual behavior from a participant, they will make a note of the computer of the participant in question during the session. This information will be emailed to the researcher at the end of the day.

After a session

- Push in all chairs
- If a paid study, URAs should collect Individual Receipt Form from desks
- Organize desks so they are ready for the next session
- Clean up any mess left behind
- Prepare computers for next session if running immediately afterwards
- At the end of their shift, URAs need to email researchers an update about that day's session(s) (more in Session Summary section)

Session Summary

At the end of a session(s), URAs are responsible for emailing each researcher (and cc'ing the lab coordinator) with a summary of their session(s). This summary includes how many participants they ran that day and any URA comments. If a study is running on more than one day, the summary will also include the total number of participants for the study overall. URA comments include any of the following information.

- If a participant did not complete a study and why
- If a participant broke the lab rule regarding no cell phones
- If an error occurred during a study
- If a participant displayed any outstanding behavior, such as finishing a study too quickly, not demonstrating computer skills, not understanding the task, etc.
- If a disruption occurred in the middle of the study, such as a fire alarm

Ex. of Session Summary

Hello __________,

The following is an update about the data collection carried out for your study today in the behavioral research lab. In today's session(s), we had a total of ____ participants, adding to a total number of ____[the part after the comma can be excluded if the study only ran one day]. We had no outstanding comments for your session(s) OR Below are a list of comments for your session(s).
If you have any questions or concerns regarding a session, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can properly address it.
Thanks,
Undergraduate Research Assistant

If a technical issue arose with the hardware, URAs will also notify Mark Wimby as soon as possible and will provide him with a detailed summary of what occurred.

Participant Cancellations and Absences Policy

Participants must cancel online within 24 hours of their study if they are unable to attend a session they are signed up for. If participants do not show up for a session for which they are signed up and do not contact the lab coordinator ahead of time, it will result in an absence. In addition, if a participant is more than 5 minutes late, they will not be allowed to participate, resulting in an absence. Three absences will result in a participant being barred from further participation in behavioral lab studies for the remainder of a school year.

URA and Participant Safety

The safety of both the URAs and participants are of the highest priority when running studies in the lab. All URAs are required to have their phones (silenced) on them and have internet and phone connectivity. There are also phones in the Workstation Room and the Small Conference Room. If at any time a URA or participant does not feel safe, URAs should contact the lab coordinator to assess the situation. In case of an emergency, the URA should contact 911.