

COM SONA Participant Manual



Sona Systems, Ltd.

Cloud-based Research Participant Management System

—

**Master Manual Set
18 January 2017**

Contents

- Introduction** 3
- Getting Started**..... 3
 - Requesting an Account*** 3
 - Logging In*** 4
 - Retrieving a Lost Password**..... 4
 - Logging Out***..... 4
 - Changing Your Password and Other Information***..... 4
 - Email Address Options** 5
 - Changing Courses**..... 5
 - Unique ID Codes***..... 5
- Studies** 5
 - Viewing Studies*** 6
 - Two-Part Studies*** 6
 - Online Survey Studies*** 6
 - Signing Up For Studies***..... 7
 - Canceling a Sign-Up***..... 8
- Tracking Your Progress** 8
 - Reassigning Credits*** 9
- Online Prescreening**..... 9
- Frequently Asked Questions** 9

Introduction

The Online Research Management System provides an easy method for you to sign up for studies, and tracks your progress throughout the term. Everything is done through the software's web-based interface, so you can access the system at any time, from any computer, using a standard web browser.

It should be noted that this manual covers all features in the system, but the administrator may have chosen to disable certain features. Do not be alarmed if the manual covers options and features that are not visible on the COM SONA System. If you have any questions related to SONA, please email comsona@bu.edu.

Getting Started

We hope that your interaction with the system will be minimal and hopefully as painless as possible. After you log in to the system, you can view a list of available studies and any restrictions, sign up for studies you are interested in, and track your progress throughout the semester. The system will also track when you receive credits for a study, which can be viewed online.

The system works best on any popular web browser that is less than 2 years old, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome. It will also work with other web browsers, and with older versions of web browsers noted above. However, the layout may not be as clean. No functionality will be lost when using an older web browser. Additionally, the software will work with a screen reader or other assistive tools for those with disabilities.

This manual assumes you have a basic knowledge of how to use the web. While using this system, it is not necessary to use the Back button. You can use the toolbar on the top of every screen to navigate the site.

Requesting an Account

Once you click the Request Account link on the front page of the site, you will be required to provide some basic information. You will receive an email notification immediately with your login information. The email notification will include login instructions for the system. You will be assigned a default password, which you may be allowed to change after your first login. In many cases, you may also provide an alternate email address (after your first login) if you prefer to receive future notifications at a different email address. The email will come from the administrator's email address (comsona@bu.edu), so be sure to configure your junk mail filters to allow emails from that address.

If you did not receive your login information, please check your email program's junk mail folder before contacting the administrator. One of the most common reasons for not receiving login information is that an email program misclassified the email as junk mail.

Logging In

Once you have your login information, go to the front page of the site and enter your user ID and password to log in.

Once you log in, you may be asked to review and acknowledge the human subject and privacy policy for research. You will need to acknowledge this only once every 6 months. You may also be asked to participate in a prescreening. After you complete these tasks, you will see the Main Menu.

Your login (also known as a session) will expire after a certain period of inactivity, which is usually around 20 minutes. The system will warn you a few minutes before the expiration. This is done for security purposes. If this happens, you can always log in again. Once you are done using the system, it is better to fully 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 in a lab.

Retrieving a Lost Password

If you forget or do not have your password, you may choose to reset your password. You will see an option on the front login page. Using this option, a link to reset your password will be emailed to you after you make the request. This link is valid for 24 hours. Once you click the link, a new password will be generated and emailed to you. If you have provided an alternate email address (see the Email Address Options section of this manual), it will be sent there. Otherwise, it will be sent to your main email address, which is derived from your user ID. If you requested a password reset and no email from the system has arrived after 30 minutes, then check your email program's junk mail folder in case the email was delivered there. Typically, the email is sent within a few seconds of the request, but sometimes there can be a delay on behalf of some recipient email servers.

Logging Out

Once you are done using the system, choose Logout from the top toolbar on the right side to log out. You are now logged out. It is always a good security measure to close all of your browser windows, 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 do *not* want to change your password, simply leave these boxes empty.

If you change your password, please be sure to select a password that you do not use on any other systems or websites, following good computing practice.

Email Address Options

There are certain events in the system that will cause an email notification to be sent to you. Most often, these are notifications that you have received credit for a study, or confirmation that you have signed up for a study.

You have two choices for your email address. When you update your profile, you will see a box where you may provide an alternate email address. If you provide such an address (this could be a Yahoo account, for instance), this is the address where all notifications will be sent, as well as the address that will be displayed to researchers (if enabled).

If you do not provide an alternate email address, the system will derive your email address from your username. Typically, it will add “@bu.edu” to the end of your user ID to form the address.

Changing Courses

You may have the option to remove yourself from existing courses and add yourself to new courses, or you may only have the option to add yourself to new courses. If you remove yourself from a course, and had credits assigned to that course, the credits will *not* be reassigned to another course. You will receive a warning about this and be taken to a page where you can reassign those credits. You can go to My Schedule/Credits at any time to assign unassigned credits to a course.

Unique ID Codes

The system will automatically assign a unique, numeric ID code to you. You should continue to use your normal login ID to log in to the system. The purpose of the numeric ID code is to identify you to researchers in a way that does not reveal your identity or compromise your privacy. You will see this ID code when you go to view your profile, as well as, in email confirmations and reminders about your upcoming study sessions. You should bring this ID code with you when you go to studies or when communicating with researchers, as they will only know you by your ID code and not your name.

Studies

With the system, you may view studies, sign up for studies that are interesting to you, and be made aware of any special eligibility restrictions. You may also cancel your sign-up through the system.

You may see that some studies are online studies. You should read the details of these studies closely, but generally you may participate in them online, without having to go to a lab. It is presumed that you will participate in the study shortly after you sign up for it, though you have until the Participation Deadline Date to participate.

Viewing Studies

To view a list of studies, click on Studies from the top toolbar. You will see a list of studies. 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.

Studies that currently have available participation times (timeslots) will have “TIMESLOTS AVAILABLE” listed next to the name of the study. If none of the studies have available timeslots, you may want to log on 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.

Two-Part Studies

Some studies are two-part studies. You must sign up for both parts of the study at once, and the two parts must be scheduled a certain number of days apart. These studies will be clearly marked, and the system will ensure you are only able to sign up for timeslots within the appropriate amount of time between the first and second parts.

Online Survey Studies

Some studies may be online survey studies that are administered in the system. If you sign-up for one of these studies, you will be taken immediately to the survey. As soon as you complete the survey, you will receive credit.

You may withdraw from the survey at any time by clicking the Withdraw button on the top right corner of the screen. When you withdraw you have an option to withdraw without the chance to receive credit, or with the chance to receive credit. If you withdraw *without* the chance to receive credit, then your sign-up will be completely deleted from the system. This is useful if you have changed your mind about participating in the survey, but might like to participate in it again at a later time.

If you choose to withdraw with the option to receive credit, then your sign-up will be logged and the researcher will be notified of the withdrawal. However, you will not be granted credit

immediately. The researcher may then choose to grant credit to you for your participation in the study. If this is done, you will not have the opportunity to participate in this study again (because you may not participate or receive credit for the same online survey study more than once). With this withdrawal option, you are not required to provide any explanation of why you are choosing to withdraw, but you may provide an explanation if you like. This information will be sent to the researcher when they are notified of your withdrawal.

With either withdrawal option, all the survey responses you provided are permanently deleted at the time you withdraw.

Signing Up For Studies

To sign up to participate in a study, find the study you would like to participate in (see Viewing Studies in this manual) and click on the study name for more information. You will see a list of any special restrictions or eligibility requirements, as well as a contact person if you have questions about the study. If the study has a principal investigator listed, you can click their name to view full contact information. In most cases, it is preferred that you contact the individual listed as the researcher if you have specific questions.

Some restrictions are automatically enforced by the system. If the study has certain prerequisites or disqualifiers (studies you must *not* have participated in to participate in this study), those may be listed, as well as a note about whether you meet those eligibility requirements. If you have signed up for a study with another study listed as a disqualifier study, then you will be prevented from signing up for the disqualifier study.

The study may have other restrictions listed as Eligibility Requirements. An example of an eligibility requirement is “Left-handed people only.” If listed, the system does *not* enforce this restriction. However, 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.

If the study is not an online study, then the sign-up and cancellation deadlines for the study will be listed. Those deadlines are based on the date of each timeslot.

If you are viewing a study that you have signed up for in the past and have already participated in, then you will not see the list of timeslots for the study.

Some studies require a special password (known as an Invitation Code) to sign up. In this case, it will be noted. The researcher should have given you this invitation code. It is *not* the same as the password you use to log in to the system. You will need to enter the invitation code just before you click the Sign Up button to sign up for a timeslot.

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

you sign up for a timeslot and already have another sign-up in the system that conflicts with that appointment time, the system will warn you of the scheduling conflict (though it will not prevent the 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 may receive an email confirmation as well. You are now signed up for the study. To cancel your sign-up, see Canceling a Sign-Up in this manual.

Canceling 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 top toolbar.

You will see all the studies you have signed up for, as well as those you have completed (see the Tracking Your Progress section of this manual for more information).

Studies that you have signed up for and that you are allowed to cancel will have a Cancel button next to them. There is a time limit before the study is scheduled to occur, where it will be too late to cancel. This restriction may be listed at the bottom of the page, or can be found by clicking on the study name and viewing the study details, depending on how cancellation deadlines are configured in the system.

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 that you have signed up for, due to pre-requisites and restrictions. If the cancellation affects your ability to participate in another study you are signed up for, it is *your* responsibility to deal with this issue (usually by canceling the dependent 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.

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.

When you view this page, at the top, you will see at the list of the number of credits you are expected to earn in addition to how many you have already earned thus far. You may also have an option to view how many credits you have earned for each course. Below that, if you have signed up for any studies, those will be listed as well. In the list of studies you will also see information about your credit status.

Next to each sign-up, you can see any comments the researcher has left regarding the study and your credit for it. In cases where the study was set up for monetary compensation and not credits, your participation will be noted as “participated.” This is done to ensure your eligibility for any studies where the study you just completed is a pre-requisite study.

Reassigning Credits

If you belong to multiple courses, you may reassign a credit from one course to another. To do this, simply use the Reassign link that appears when you view your progress. The link appears under the course entry for each item in your progress listing. You may not split a credit between two courses. For example, assigning 2 credits of a 3-credit study to one course, and 1 credit from that study to a different course.

Online Prescreening

You will be asked to take an online prescreen before you use the system. The prescreen is required for every participant. You will earn 0.25 credit for participating in the prescreen.

The prescreen may consist of multiple sections. All questions are either multiple-choice or fill-in (free-entry) answer. At the end of the prescreen, you may have a chance to review and change any of your responses. After you save all of your responses, you may not participate in the prescreen again (unless the administrator has allowed this or deleted your existing responses), so answer all questions carefully.

Frequently Asked Questions

Immediately after I login and click on any menu option, I am taken back to the login page and I see a message that my authentication has expired. What does this mean?

Your web browser is not properly configured to accept cookies. You should turn on cookies in your web browser, try to use a different web browser (for example, switch to Firefox if you are currently using Internet Explorer), or try to use a different computer. Detailed instructions can be found if you go to the site and enter the URL “cookie_help.aspx” in place of “default.aspx” in the address bar of the browser, when you are on the front page of the site.

You can also try to use another computer. Usually the computers in university computer labs are configured correctly.

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 in the study. If it has been some time and you have still not received credit, 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 and principal investigator of the study may see that you have signed up for a study, along with the site administrator. No other users, including other researchers or your instructor can see this information.

How do I change the email address where email notifications from the system are sent?

Provide an Alternate Email address and notifications will be sent there. See the Email Address Options section of this manual for more information. In some cases, this option may not be available.

I noticed that with some studies, I could 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.

I attempted to sign up for a study, and I was prevented from doing so because the study I was trying to sign up for is a disqualifier for another study I am scheduled to participate in. Why is this?

If you have signed up for a study that has disqualifiers (studies you must *not* have participated in to participate in that study), you may not sign up for the studies that are listed as the disqualifier studies. You *are* allowed to sign up for the disqualifier studies if the disqualifier study will take place after the study with disqualifiers. You are also allowed to sign up if you have already participated in (and received credit for) the study with disqualifiers. The easiest way to sign up for both studies is to schedule the disqualifier study at a time later than the study with disqualifiers.