

Sabanci University Research Points System (Sona)

Guide for Students – Fall 2020

The Research Points system (Sona) is jointly administered by the Psychology Programme in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and the Marketing Programme in the School of Management. It provides students with the chance to earn bonus points for certain courses in return for serving as participants in staff research projects.

What do I get from participating in research projects?

We at Sabanci University teach psychological and behavioural science; an important part of this is teaching methods and approaches to behavioural research. We think an excellent way to learn about the research process, and about behavioural sciences in general, is to experience real, cutting-edge research. This is why we offer you course points in return for your participation. Similar systems exist in most world-leading psychology and behavioural science programmes around the globe.

How do I use the Research Points system?

You can find the system online at <http://sabanciuniv.sona-systems.com>. This system can work in both English and Turkish. If you are registered for one or more Research Points courses, you will receive an email with your login details soon after add/drop finishes. *You password for Sona is different from your usual SU password.* If you haven't received your login details within one week of add/drop finishing, please email Rob Booth at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu, cc'ing your instructor.

The first time you log in, you will be asked to change your password for security reasons. You will then be asked to read and accept an ethical agreement, covering your use of the system. Once you accept this agreement, you can log in any time you like to sign up for studies, view your appointments, and check your Research Points earnings for each course.

The system is very easy to use. It knows which courses you are registered for, and it knows which studies you have already done (it even remembers these from previous semesters), so it will only offer you studies if you are eligible to participate in them.

Each study will have an official name. Sona will remember which studies you have done, but please keep your own record of these too. Each study will also have a detailed description in the system, please read these carefully as some studies might have additional participation criteria (e.g. females only, or native Turkish speakers only) which would disqualify you from participating.

Which courses can I collect Research Points for?

These will vary each semester. PSY201 and PSY202 will usually be in the system, and there will usually be other courses too. Your syllabus will tell you if your course is in the Research Points system. Sona will also know which courses you are registered for. If you believe there is a mistake, please email Rob Booth at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu, cc'ing your instructor.

How many Research Points do I earn for each study?

This varies between studies. Each study will clearly show its Points value in Sona. Our usual credit rate is 1 point per 30 minutes or part thereof: for example, a 10-minute, 20-minute, and a 30-minute study would each be worth 1 point; a 31-minute, 45-minute or 60-minute study would each be worth 2 points, and so on. Point values are fixed for each study (you cannot earn extra points by doing the study slowly!). Some studies may have different or variable point values: these will clearly indicate their point values on their Sona information pages.

What if I miss my appointment?

Our studies are often run by our students volunteer assistants, i.e. people working for free. We get very unhappy about people wasting their time! So, *if you sign up for a study but don't show up for your appointment, you will lose the Research Points value of that study.* So if you would have earned 2 Research Points for participating in the study, you will lose 2 Research Points if you miss your appointment. *This includes signing up for, but not completing, online studies.*

Obviously you can cancel your signup before the study is due to happen, that is fine, and is easy to do in Sona. Some studies have cancellation deadlines: if Sona doesn't let you cancel your

appointment, please email the Researcher running your study (you can learn who that is from Sona) to tell them you can't come.

Please note that health reports do not protect you from these missed-study penalties. The penalties are there to protect our assistants' time, it's a basic politeness issue. If you're not dead, you can pick up your phone and cancel your signup!

How many Research Points can I earn for each course?

The amount of Research Points you can earn, and how these Research Points are then converted into course points, is different for every course. Please check your syllabus.

Please note that extra Research Points collected for a course, above the maximum allowable for that course, will not be counted. It is your responsibility to keep track of how many Research Points you have, by checking your Sona account.

Can I choose which course I earn Research Points for?

If you are registered for more than one Research Points course, you can choose which course to credit when you sign up for each study. You can also change which course each study's Research Points are allocated to at any time up to 17:00, the last day of final exams for that semester. *It is your responsibility to make sure your Research Points are correct before the end of semester: we will not check them.*

Note that the Research Points for one study cannot be divided among more than one course. The Sona software simply cannot do this. Most studies are only worth one or two Research Points, so this is not normally a problem.

When is the deadline?

The Research Points system opens soon after add/drop, and closes at 17:00 on the last day of final exams, each semester. *You must make sure your credits are allocated to the correct courses before finals end for that semester.*

Can I save my extra Research Points for next semester?

No. Research Points may only count towards courses in the semester they are earned.

Sona isn't letting me sign up for studies any more. Why is this?

We operate a 'blacklist' policy to protect the quality of our data, and to respect the time of our research assistants, who are often volunteers. If you miss two study appointments in the same semester, you will be 'blacklisted' and unable to participate in studies for the rest of that academic year. *This includes signing up for, but not completing, online studies.* If you decide not to complete an online study, please cancel your signup. This is important because these studies have quotas of students they test, and you will be blocking other students from participating.

Similarly, if you are found to have provided bad data (for example by not taking the study seriously, not paying attention or not answering questionnaires properly and carefully), you will be blacklisted for the rest of that academic year. *This includes completing studies you are not eligible for:* for example if a study is labelled 'Turkish citizens only' or 'native Turkish speakers only' and you are not eligible, you will be blacklisted for participating. There are other studies and bonus homeworks available for our foreign students.

Please note that the Sona administrators' (Rob Booth and Ezgi Akpınar) decisions are final in all penalty and blacklist matters.

Can I earn money instead of Research Points?

This is unusual, but sometimes paid studies will be available. Studies will usually be either for Research Points, or for money; you cannot choose to be paid for a study which gives Research Points. Paid studies will be clearly labelled on Sona.

Our basic rate of pay is 10TL per 30 minutes, or part thereof. As with Research Points, this may sometimes vary for particular studies. If you are not taking any Research Points courses but want a Sona account for participating in paid studies, you can email Rob Booth at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu, but please understand that paid studies are rare.

What happens if I have to stop/drop out of the study?

All participants, always, have the right to stop the study at any time, and for any reason, without penalty. You should not be afraid or embarrassed to do this if you feel uncomfortable. In this situation, you will not be able to participate in the same study again, because you would know too much about that study. But you would be able to participate in other studies as normal.

Stopping studies in the middle will *not* count towards a blacklisting, unless we feel you are doing it dishonestly or inappropriately.

To prevent people abusing this system, we will not normally give you your Research Points if you do not finish the study. Some studies – for example very long studies, where you participate occasionally over a period of weeks – may handle this differently, and this will be clearly written in that study's description on Sona.

What if I don't want to participate in studies?

For Psychology courses, study participation is entirely voluntary. Research Points are bonus points, you can still get 100% on your course without participating at all. Marketing courses may handle this differently, so check your syllabus.

If you wish to earn bonus points but do not want to participate in studies, each study has an alternative bonus homework assignment you can do, worth the same number of Research Points. Please ask the 'PI' (Principle Investigator) of that particular study for details. Each study's PI is indicated on the Sona page for that study. *Note that these homeworks are only available while the study is running, they cannot be completed afterwards.* Since PIs only create these homeworks when students ask for them, *students who ask for a homework but then do not submit anything will be penalised as if they missed an appointment:* they will lose the Research Points value of that study.

What if I don't speak Turkish?

Sona works in both Turkish and English; the two versions are the same. Often, studies will be open to international students as well as Turkish students. However, some studies will only be open for native Turkish speakers: this will be clearly indicated in the study description.

I have a great idea for a study. Can I use the Research Points system to give points to participants in my study?

Research Points are awarded because of participation's educational value. Therefore, Research Points are only available for staff projects. However, many academics are open to working with students on their own projects, so please approach your instructors with your idea. One of us may be able to collaborate with you, or provide other help.

I have a question/problem/complaint. Who do I talk to?

If you have a question about a specific study, please contact the PI for that study: this person will be named on the Sona information page for that study. If you have a question about your course, including how Research Points are counted towards your grade, please contact your instructor.

The Research Points system is primarily administered by Rob Booth of the Psychology Programme. You can write to him at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu. If you are a Management student, it will probably be more useful for you to contact Ezgi Akpınar, at ezgiakpinar@sabanciuniv.edu, who administers the system for Management.