Sabanci University Research Points System (Sona)

Guide for Students – Fall 2026

The Research Points system (Sona) is jointly run by the Psychology Programme in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and the Marketing Programme in the Business School. It gives students the chance to earn bonus points for certain courses, in return for participating 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 you about 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 ('Research Points') in return for your participation. Similar systems exist in the best psychology and behavioural science programmes around the world.

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. *Your 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, this might mean you already had an account from before: visit the login page, and use the Forgot Password button to reset your password. If this doesn't work, please email Rob Booth at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu, cc'ing your instructor.

The first time you log in, you will be asked to read and accept an ethical agreement, covering your participation in research; you will also complete a short quiz, to make sure you understand the basic rules of the system. Once you have finished this quiz, you can log in any time you want to sign up for studies, view your appointments, and check how many Research Points you have for your courses.

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 haven't already done them.

Each study has an official name. Sona will remember which studies you have done, but please keep your own record of these too. Each study also has a detailed description in the system, please read these carefully as some studies might have additional participation criteria (e.g. women only, or native Turkish speakers only), which could mean you should not participate in them.

Which courses can I collect Research Points for?

These will vary each semester. 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, and if you're a PSY, CONF, FIN, ECON, NS, or CIP student, please email Rob Booth at robertbooth@sabanciuniv.edu. If you're an SBS student, please email Ezgi Özgen at ezgi.ozgen@sabanciuniv.edu, or İpek Nibat at ipek.nibat@sabanciuniv.edu, cc'ing your instructor.

How many Research Points do I earn for each study?

Each study will clearly show its Research Points value in Sona.

Generally, 30 minutes of research participation earns 1 Research Point, but we do things a bit differently for online vs. lab studies:

For *online studies*, where you can complete the whole study online at whatever time is convenient for you, you will earn 0.5 (½) Research Points for each 15 minutes, or part thereof. For example, a 10- or 15-minute study would be worth 0.5 Research Points; a 20- or 30-minute study would be worth 1 Research Point; a 40- or 45-minute study would be worth 1.5 Research Points, and so on.

For *lab studies*, where you must go to a specific place at a specific time to do the study in person, you earn 1 Research Point per 30 minutes or part thereof, plus one extra 0.5 Research Point. For example, a 10-minute, 20-minute, and a 30-minute study would each be worth 1.5 Research Points; a 31-minute, 45-minute or 60-minute study would each be worth 2.5 points, and so on. Lab studies are worth slightly more Research Points than online studies, because

they involve slightly more effort from you, and because you actually meet the researcher, so you can learn more about the research process from these studies.

Research Point values are fixed for each study (you cannot earn extra points by doing the study slowly!). Some studies may have different Research Points values from these, or their Research Points values might be different for different people: these studies will clearly explain their Research Point values on their Sona information pages.

What if I sign up for lab study, but don't show up? OR What if I sign up for an online study, but don't complete it on time?

This is actually a big problem for researchers – sometimes only a small number of people can do a study, so if you sign up but don't do the study, you are blocking someone else from doing it, and messing up the study! So:

If you sign up for a lab study but don't show up for your appointment, you will lose the Research Points value of that study.

If you sign up for an online study but don't finish it before the deadline, you will lose the Research Points value of that study. For example, if you would have earned 2 Research Points for participating in the study, you will lose 2 Research Points if you sign up but don't complete it. *Make sure you understand when the deadline for each study is!*

Obviously, you can cancel your signup before the appointment time or deadline, that is fine, and it is easy to do this 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), as early as you can, to tell them your situation.

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.

Sometimes, an instructor may introduce extra rules for Research Points in their course: for example, they might only accept Research Points from lab studies (not online studies), or they might only accept Research Points from studies which are relevant to that course. Please check your syllabus carefully!

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[1]. *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 platform 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, 13th January[1]. *You must make sure your credits are allocated to the correct courses before this deadline.* We will email you to remind you before your deadline.

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: not taking the study seriously, not paying attention, or not answering questionnaires properly and carefully), you

[1] If you are taking CIP 101, you have an earlier deadline that this: the last day of classes, 31st December.

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 if you participate. There are other studies and bonus homeworks available for our foreign students.

Please note that the Sona administrators' (Rob Booth, İpek Nibat, and Ezgi Özgen) 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.

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

All participants, always, have the right to stop a study at any time, and for any reason, without penalty. You should not be afraid or embarrassed to do this if you feel uncomfortable. Similarly, sometimes technical problems prevent you finishing a study.

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 several days or weeks – may handle this differently, and this will be clearly written in that study's description on Sona.

For lab studies:

If you wish to stop a study, you can do so at any time. Just tell the researcher. You will not be able to do the same study later, because you would know too much about that study. But you will still be able to do other studies as normal.

For online studies:

If you are unable to finish a study, either because of technical problems or because you do not wish to continue, please *email the researcher to let them know* what has happened. If you don't, you will lose the Research Points value of that study (see above), so it's very important that you tell the researcher that you tried to do the study, but couldn't.

If you are unable to finish a study for any reason, please do NOT start the study again. It's very important that you *never do a study more than once*! Instead, just email the researcher and tell them what happened.

I completed an online study, but I didn't get my Research Points yet.

Some studies are set to automatically give your Research Points at the end. Others cannot be set up this way, and the Researchers must manually give your Research Points. Even when a study should give your Research Points automatically, sometimes this process fails.

If you still haven't gotten your Research Points two days after you finished the study:

Please do NOT do the study again! You know too much and your new data might mess up the study! *Never do a study more than once*.

Please DO email the Researcher to tell them the situation. Usually they can fix the problem very quickly and easily. Remember: if you don't contact the Researcher, they might think you haven't done the study at all, and you might lose Research Points.

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. Courses in other programs (e.g. Marketing) may handle this differently, so check your syllabus carefully.

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.

Again: please do NOT do a study if you are not eligible for it! You will lose Research Points, and may be blacklisted. Remember, there are alternative homework assignments available for each study, so if you really can't find studies you qualify for, you can do some homeworks instead.

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

If you have a question about a specific study, please contact the Researcher 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're an SBS student, please email Ezgi Özgen at ezgi.ozgen@sabanciuniv.edu, or İpek Nibat at ipek.nibat@sabanciuniv.edu, cc'ing your instructor.