ERIM Research Participation System (ERPS)

User Manual for Researchers

Last updated: December 2014

For questions, contact the current ERPS administrator
1) Introduction and General Information

This document details the functioning of the ERIM Research Participation System (ERPS), the ERIM participant pool. The document contains general information concerning ERPS, a description of the procedures required by users, and additional relevant information on conducting experimental research at Erasmus University.

ERPS is designed to enable ERIM’s behavioural researchers to benefit from student participation in research studies held at the Erasmus Behavioural Lab (EBL) in return for the granting of course credits. ERPS was established by ERIM in 2007 and it represents a key element of the research environment at RSM and ERIM.

ERPS is designed exclusively for research purposes. No teaching-related activity can be performed using the participant pool. Students will participate in research studies strictly on a voluntary basis. ERPS relies on the involvement of teachers from selected courses willing to give students the possibility to acquire a small part of their course grade via research participation. Students will be offered this opportunity for one course in each of the three terms of the academic year.

More specifically, every term students interested in earning course credits for target courses will be offered the possibility to participate in studies held at EBL and to earn a maximum of 0.4 bonus points contributing towards their final grade. During one term students can participate for course credits in a maximum of two sessions of approximately 30 minutes. Each will contribute 0.2 towards the final grade. In case of experiments lasting 1 hour, participating students will be awarded two course credits (i.e., they will earn 0.4 bonus points from participating in a single experimental session).

ERPS operates between specific research periods because it is dependent on the structure of RSM’s educational programs. During each year, the periods of operation of the participant pool will follow a three-term structure and the exact dates will
depend on the academic calendar. At the beginning of each term the dates of operation of ERPS will be communicated to all ERPS users by the administrator.

2) Infrastructure

Access
ERPS is managed and hosted by software from Sona Systems. The URL is http://erps.sona-systems.com. Students can get to the website using the friendly link http://www.rsm.nl/lab.

Administrator
ERPS requires an administrator, a person with a broad set of responsibilities concerning the participant pool’s day-to-day operation. Any questions concerning the participant pool should be directed to the administrator. The length of this appointment will be one year. (The administrator is always a research staff member.) The email address of the current administrator can be found on the ERPS website.

Account
Each user of the participant pool needs an individual account to be able to log into the system. The individual accounts are created by the administrator upon request from ERIM members. Please note that researcher accounts can only be created for faculty members and PhD students of Erasmus University. In exceptional cases, accounts may be created for research assistants (RA). However, in this case the faculty member in charge has to contact the ERPS administrator and explain the details of the RA’s employment situation and responsibilities. Accounts may be admissible if the RA has a long-term employment contract. If an account for the RA is not granted by the ERPS administrator, faculty members are advised to share their account login information with their RA.

Technical Details
During the planning and administration of studies relying on ERPS for research participants, the software infrastructure of Sona Systems will be complemented with
the existing EBL room booking system and Blackboard. The interaction between these three components is described below.

3) Instructions for Users

The steps required from users during the planning and administration of studies are listed below.

Instruction Manual

Users’ interaction with Sona Systems will be minimal but it is important that users are aware of the system’s functioning to ensure correct usage of ERPS. Users are advised to read the system documentation. This can be downloaded on: http://www.sona-systems.com/support/docs/ems_docs.pdf

ERIM Internal Review Board

Before booking lab space, and creating a study in the Sona System, researchers have to pass the ERIM Internal Review Board’s screening procedure to safeguard the quality and integrity of the research conducted within ERIM. The screening procedure can be found on: http://www.erim.eur.nl/research-support/erim-internal-review-board-section-experiment/

Room Availability

To use ERPS, researchers must first ensure the availability of lab space. The first step is therefore to log on the existing EBL room booking system with your ERNA-account and book lab space for the required days and times (http://ebl.eur.nl). Users are required to follow the guidelines for booking lab space as specified in the EBL lab manual (http://wiki.ebl.eur.nl/Information/EBLinfo-en.pdf). For questions about the room booking procedure, users are advised to contact the lab coordinators. Their contact information is specified in the EBL lab manual.
Study Setup with Sona Systems

Once lab space has been secured, the user will proceed with the creation of a new study in the Sona Systems website. This step entails the creation of a new study (name, abstract, eligibility criteria, etc.) and the selection of time slots that participants can select (see instruction manual for details about this procedure).

Sona Systems allows researchers to set eligibility criteria when creating a new study. Setting eligibility criteria implies that only students meeting the criteria will be able to book a time slot for the new study. Researchers can also enable a filter function in which only students that fit the eligibility criteria can see the study in the list of active experiments.

When creating a new study, the researcher has to provide some information about the study (a title and a general idea of the research area) for the participants. Furthermore, it is necessary to post the code received by the IRB in the respective input field in the study description. Before the study description is finalized and saved, the researcher is advised to also activate the option “Send notification email to administrator”. Then, the administrator will receive an automatic notification about the newly uploaded study. He/she will then check if the study’s description and characteristics are in accordance with the rules of ERPS and approve the study. Without the notification email, it is not guaranteed that the administrator can activate the study timely.

The study is only visible to participants after it has been granted approval by the administrator. The rules that studies in the ERPS system need to follow are outlined below. They are intended to guarantee that all uploaded studies have equal chances to attract participants.

- **Credits**: The researcher has to follow the credit-allocation rules outlined above. One research session is 30 minutes long and compensated with 1 credit (equal to 0.2 bonus points). Researchers are obliged to make sure that the research session is indeed 30 minutes long. If their actual study is too
short, other researchers (e.g., colleagues) have to be asked to contribute studies to make sure that the session length is 30 min. In exceptional cases, researchers may be allowed to create studies that grant 2 credits for a lab session of 60 min. Importantly, the researcher has to justify the necessity of a 1-hour session by providing an extensive description of the study design for the administrator (e.g. study design, time required by each task, etc.). The administrator is free to deny approval for a 1-hour session based on this information.

- **Language Requirements**: ERPS will include students from both Dutch and International undergraduate programs so it is important that, when setting up a new study with Sona Systems, ERPS users specify language requirements to avoid scheduling students who cannot complete the experiment.

- **Rewarding Participants** When writing the study description, it is not allowed to portray the study as more attractive by advertising a short length or offering any kind of monetary (payments, participation in lotteries) or material (prizes, candy, food) compensation. If researchers want to give monetary rewards, they are advised to use the paid pool Euro Pool ([http://eur.nl/euro](http://eur.nl/euro)) to recruit participants.

**Informing Students**
The beginning and end of each term will be announced by email to the students. This opening (e.g., closing) notification invites students to sign up for studies. Furthermore, one general reminder to log on ERPS and see what studies are available for course credits will be posted by the administrator in the middle of each term.

**Recording Participation**
It is very important that great care is placed in ensuring perfect record of the course credits awarded (see note in Section 4 below). Moreover, at the end of the study
researchers should provide students with a written receipt as a proof of their participation. A template for the written receipt can be found in section 7 of this manual.

**Awarding Credits**

At the end of the study researchers must award course credits to participants by updating the course credit record in Sona Systems. It is advisable to update and record the student’s participation on a daily basis.

**Debriefing**

Finally, researchers must debrief participants on the nature of the study they participated in. For ethical reasons (for studies involving some sort of deception) and for guaranteeing the educational benefits of research participation, it is vital that participants of all experiments are debriefed shortly after the completion of the study. Ideally this should be done in person immediately after the completion of the study. Alternatively, the debriefing can be done via email. It is very important that the debriefing provides educational feedback but the decision on the exact nature of the feedback is left to the researcher (ERPS users are referred to the APA Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Subjects: [http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~raulin/ethics.doc](http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~raulin/ethics.doc)).

**4) Researcher’s Responsibilities**

The researcher is wholly responsible for assigning course credits to research participants. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for the smooth functioning of the participant pool that researchers pay their utmost attention to ensure that all research participants are awarded the correct number of course credits.

It is therefore also very important to provide all participants with a written receipt as proof of their participation. In case something has gone wrong with the credit administration and students did not receive the course credits they were entitled to,
individual students will have a proof of their participation to show to the system administrator. The administrator will then make sure the credits get assigned.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to **ensure a fair process for students**. Use of the participant pool is not allowed for studies lasting longer than 60 minutes. Researchers with specific requirements in terms of study duration and compensation that are not compatible with the ERPS System are kindly invited to use the EURO Pool.

### 5) Checklist for Researchers

- Researchers need an individual account to be able to access the website this account is available from the ERPS administrator.

- All researchers are required to read the manual provided by Sona Systems ([http://www.sona-systems.com/support/docs/ems_docs.pdf](http://www.sona-systems.com/support/docs/ems_docs.pdf)) before using the website.

- The study must have passed the internal review board’s screening procedure before lab space can be booked.

- Before posting the study in the system, book the required lab space.

  - Provide study description for the students
  - Specify language and eligibility criteria
  - Await approval email by administrator

- Researchers are responsible for recording session participation and course credits. It is very important that researchers take this task seriously.
Researchers are responsible for providing students with a written proof of their participation in the study.

Students must be debriefed after participation. This can be done in the lab at the end of the session or immediately after by email.

6) ERPS’ key features

- ERPS is hosted by Sona Systems at the URL: [http://erps.sona-systems.com/](http://erps.sona-systems.com/)
  Students use the friendly link [http://www.rsm.nl/lab](http://www.rsm.nl/lab)

- ERPS is designed exclusively for research purposes.

- Students can participate in a maximum of two sessions per term for course credit. Each session awards 0.2 bonus points added to the final grade and should not be longer than 30 minutes.

- In exceptional cases, the participant pool can be used for studies that last up to 60 minutes. In this case, students will be awarded two credits (0.4 bonus points) for participation. The duration of the experimental session hast to be justified by the study design.

- You cannot mention money or other monetary incentives in the study description.

- For studies lasting longer than 60 minutes, the ERPS pool cannot be used.
7) Proof of participation template

Experiment Participation Receipt

Date: .................................................................
Experiment Name: ...................................................
Number of Credits..................................................
Student Nr: ............................................................
Student Name: ....................................................... 
Experimenter: 