Subject Pool Policies and Guidance

Updated guidance that has been distributed by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) related to the use of subject pools for recruitment of participants. The guidance document can be found on the OHRP website at: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/correspond/SonaSystems20100108letter.html

As indicated in the letter from OHRP, it has been their determination that the penalty function within the SONA Systems violates requirements of Federal Regulations 45CFR46 related to voluntary participation. Specifically under 45CFR46.116(a)(8) the regulations indicate that participation in research must be voluntary and refusal to participate cannot involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Based on our interpretation of the Guidance we have determined that the following options are applicable to research conducted at Arizona State University:

1) Students who show up for scheduled appointments are awarded credit for experiments in which there is a credit option whether or not they choose to participate in the study once details of the experiment are explained to them. There can be partial credit allocated.

2) Students who do not show up for a scheduled appointment cannot be penalized. OHRP would consider that a penalty was imposed if the student was required to earn an additional research credit, thus increasing the credits required for that student.

3) Students who fail to show up for a scheduled appointment could have a decrease in the number of credits that can be earned through participation in research for a particular course, provided such students can still earn the required number of credits by substituting an alternative non-research activity that involves a comparable amount of time and effort.

Example: Assume that a student was scheduled for an appointment to participate in a study that would reward the student with 1 research credit toward the 5 credits required for the student (or 5 credits that translate into extra credit for a course). If the student does not show up for a scheduled research appointment and has not cancelled, a department could have a policy that allows the student to earn only 4 more credits through research participation but must provide the student with the opportunity to earn the 5th credit through an equally demanding and educational alternative (e.g. critique of a research article).

Researchers should contact the IRB by phone (480) 965-6788 or by email research.integrity@asu.edu with any questions concerning the issue of research credits and subject pools.