



The Social Science Experimental Laboratory based in the Said Business School

GUIDELINES AND RULES FOR CONDUCTING AN EXPERIMENT IN OXLAB

Background	2
Guidelines	2
<i>OxLab</i>	2
<i>Prior to any experiments</i>	3
Rules	3
<i>Ethical Review</i>	3
<i>Consent</i>	4
<i>Deception</i>	4
<i>Recruitment and Payment</i>	4
<i>Data storage and privacy policy</i>	5
<i>Presence during experiments</i>	5

OXLAB GUIDELINES

Background

OxLab was founded in 2007 by Helen Margetts (Oxford Internet Institute) and Nir Vulkan (Said Business School) using a grant from the University of Oxford's Fell Fund. Since inception, over 15 series of experiments have been run in OxLab for SBS and OII faculty. In addition to strictly controlled laboratory experiments, two quasi-field experiments were run where subjects participated remotely through custom-built OxLab software. The lab is currently funded by a generous grant from the Said Foundation.

Guidelines

Researchers are reminded that although they are the primary decision maker in their experimental subject of choice and design, they are not only representing themselves – but the good name of the Said Business School, the Oxford Internet Institute, and the greater Oxford University community through their research. It is then essential that researchers adhere to the guidelines below in order to make sure their methodology, recruitment and procedure are all of the ethical and professional level that is expected from our university.

All research that takes place must be based upon the *Data Protection Act 1998* that is required to underpin all forms of data collection and provides the basis of the following rules and guidelines. The act provides specific rules that must be adhered to in order to legitimately conduct any form of data collection. More information of this act can be found at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/Acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1.

The two guiding principles of the act are:

- **Transparency:** All participants in OxLab research must have a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of any data collection they are part of.
- **Consent:** Participants in any OxLab research must express their clear consent for this data to be collected and must be given the opportunity to opt out of any subsequent use of the data gathered.

OxLab

The lab is located at the Said Business School Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1HP. At present the lab has 20 workstations (with the potential to bring in more if required). The layout of the lab makes possible both experiments where there is no contact between participants, and experiments where contact can be an experimental factor.

OxLab has an associated subject pool, which is jointly run by the Oxford Internet Institute and Said Business School. The pool has a substantial sample base – which has a good demographic mixture. This makes selected types of populations possible for use in experiments, e.g. when only non-student, women, aged 20-50 are wanted. The lab team

OXLAB GUIDELINES

continues to actively recruit participants and make sure listed potential subjects are likely to show up for experiments - using a system of feedback from previous experiments.

Prior to any experiments

Step 1- is to submit any ideas of potential experiments to the OxLab team – at this stage if requested they will help you to formulate an appropriate methodology for your experiment. If help is not required to plan your methodology, a full description of your proposed methods must be submitted for review.

Step 2- Ethical clearance is needed. Please see the section on ethical review for details on how this can be achieved.

Step 3- Either through your own programmer, or one provided by OxLab - a suitable interface for your experiment must be created and tested.

Step 4- The lab based in the Said Business School must be booked. The OxLab research assistants will help you in this, but the experimental dates must be verified before any recruitment is initiated.

Step 5- Unless otherwise stated (e.g. a special sample group is required) recruitment occurs through the joint OII and Said Business School OxLab database. The research lab assistants will again assist you with this.

Rules

Ethical Review

As with all Oxford University research that involves human participants, any experiment undertaken at OxLab will be subject to an ethical review. The Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) has set up an ethical review procedure which is more thoroughly discussed on their website: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/>

The application forms can be found and submitted there.

In addition any potential experimenters must also provide a clear description of their proposed research to the members of OxLab - in order for their approval to be given for an experiment to be run in the OxLab facilities.

Please send these or any questions about potential experiments for the attention of either of the Principal Investigators, Professor Helen Margetts or Professor Nir Vulkan at oxlab@oii.ox.ac.uk

OXLAB GUIDELINES

To ensure the proper protection of participants' rights is maintained- all experiments are bound to the rules beneath:

1. Participants must have the right not to participate or discontinue participation in any experiment at any point before or during an experiment.
2. If they choose to leave they must not suffer from any sort of penalty and are not required to give any explanation.
3. All participants must remain free to leave the lab at any point.
4. If for any reason any adverse reactions or events take place during an experiment this should be reported, in writing, immediately to the OxLab team. The report must include all specifics of the event, including date, time, location and action taken in response.

Consent

Written informed consent must be obtained from all participants before participating in any experiments. A list of expected participants will be provided by the OxLab team before the experiment is scheduled to take place. Research must be transparent and clear with participant's receiving appropriate information as to the nature of the study before it commences.

If any participants are under the age of 16 (which is not possible under normal circumstances of using the OxLab database for recruitment) informed consent must be given by their parent or acting guardian- with the relationship between the adult and child being clearly stated. If young people (defined as between 16-17) take part in experiments it is advised that consent from their guardian is also sought.

Deception

To maintain our good reputation of honesty - deception is not allowed at any stage of the recruitment process, instructions and explanations given to participants, and any financial compensation participants receive for taking part.

Recruitment and Payment

Unless stated and agreed upon during the preliminary planning stages of the experiment participants should be recruited through the OxLab database. As noted before the OxLab research assistants will help you in this stage of preparation.

OXLAB GUIDELINES

All subjects who sign up for and arrive on the correct day and time must receive an appropriate ‘show-up fee’ even if they do not participate in the experiment. This must be agreed upon in the planning stages and participants must be made aware of this ‘show up fee’ and the potential they may not take part in the experiment in the recruitment stage.

Any incentives or relative payoffs awarded above the additional ‘show up fee’ must be agreed upon with the OxLab team prior to the actual running of the experiment.

No negative payments are allowed- if this is possible due to the experimental design there must be a procedure in place, which means the participant receives at least the agreed basic ‘show up fee’.

All participants must sign a receipt clearly indicating the amount they received (including participants who are paid solely for showing up). The experimenter must save these receipts. OxLab will provide the receipt forms.

Data storage and privacy policy

All data collected at OxLab must be kept confidential.

Data must be stored appropriately in order to keep the identity of all participants protected.

Data collected must only be used for the scientific purposes of the original research proposal.

All researchers must be aware of the 1998 Data protection act- and its specifics on how personal data is to be collected and stored. For further details please visit:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/Acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1

Presence during experiments

Although throughout all experiments run in OxLab, the lab assistants will be present, it is essential that you, the investigator is present as well, in order to answer any questions relating to the experimental design and implementation.

OXLAB GUIDELINES

Acknowledgements

Both the team based at the Said Business School and the Oxford Internet Institute are grateful to the Fell Fund for enabling OxLab to be founded and the Said Foundation for its continuous support of the OxLab project. We hope we can create a facility that will be used by many of our colleagues over the years to come, reflecting the increasing role and importance of experiments in the social sciences.