Rules and Procedures

SSELab

SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY

Tables of Contents

I. Membership

Membership in SSEL is broken down into four categories: full members, affiliate members, student members, and non-members.

- **Full Members:** Those faculty and staff hired/assigned by the university to comprise the core of the SSEL team.
- **Affiliate Members:** Those NYUAD faculty and staff, as well as visiting faculty, who conduct social science experimental research and meet the requirements set by SSEL for laboratory use.
- **Student Members:** Advanced undergraduate (capstone) students and visiting graduate students who conduct social science experimental research and meet the requirements set by SSEL for student use of the laboratories.
- **Non-members:** Faculty and graduate students from other universities who wish to conduct research in SSEL facilities.

II. SSEL Services

A. Physical Laboratory
1. SSEL has two experimental laboratories (Lab A and Lab B), each with 24 shielded desktop machines. The laboratories are divided by a movable "soundproof" wall and they can be combined into one large laboratory.
2. When using Lab A, subjects should be told that the experiment is being conducted in A6-013A; when using Lab B, subjects should be told that the experiment is being conducted in A6-013B.

B. Virtual Laboratory
1. NYUAD hosts SSEL's virtual servers which enable us to run softwares for online experiments.
2. For online experiments, SSEL hosts the following softwares:
   a) oTree
   b) zTree Unleashed
3. We also offer assistance with other online experiments softwares upon request.

C. Portable Devices
1. SSEL has portable devices (tablets and laptops) which can be used for lab-in-the-field experiments. See Section XI below for details.

III. Requirements for SSEL Services Usage

A. **Approval form:** all experimenters who want to conduct experiments using the SSEL services must submit an approval form. We have two forms: one for online experiments and one for laboratory experiments. This form must be approved by the director of the lab, prof. John Wooders.

B. **Human Subjects Certification:** all experimenters who use the SSEL services must complete the CITI certification program for human subjects research (the modules for social and behavioral research). Once certified, a PDF of the certificate must be either added to the approval form or emailed to the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator. This will be added to the SSEL IRB protocol before conducting research at the lab.

C. **Human Subjects Approval:** NYUAD IRB has granted blanket approval for lab experiments carried out in the SSEL laboratory using the SSEL Human Subjects Protocol described below (in Section III, Part D). For any experiments that are not covered by the approved SSEL IRB protocol, researchers must submit their own proposals to the NYUAD Human Subjects Committee and receive approval.

D. **SSEL Human Subjects Protocol:** all experiments using SSEL services must satisfy the following protocol:
   1. Subjects must make one or more decisions. If more than one decision is made, the exact number of decisions must be known, or if it is not known, then the stopping rule/end condition must be known.
   2. Subjects are told if their payments are dependent on their own decisions or if the outcome also depends on the decisions of others. If it depends on the decisions of others, then the way in which subjects are grouped is also explained to them.
   3. Subjects are told what information is commonly known and what is private. That is, if a subject receives a piece of experimental information in private, all subjects know that others may have such private information.
   4. If subjects make decisions in a practice round, those decisions do not affect their final payoffs, and all subjects know this.

E. **License(s) for Experimental Software:** all experimenters are responsible for obtaining their own licenses for experimental software, where needed. So far, SSEL supports only the following softwares: zTree, zTree Unleashed, oTree and ORSEE. By default, Qualtrics is also available to all NYU members.

F. **Testing:** all experimenters must schedule a pilot session prior to the experimental session with the Technical and Operational Coordinator. This is to ensure that everything runs smoothly on the day of the experimental session.

G. **Assistance:** SSEL staff members should assist in running experiments at the SSEL labs. If extra help is needed, experimenters are responsible for securing their own assistance in conducting experiments at the labs. Researchers may contact the

undergraduate Student Research Assistant affiliated with SSEL and ask for their assistance.

H. **Subject recruitment:** SSEL uses ORSEE to recruit human subjects, however we can also offer support with connecting experimenters to other crowdsourcing platforms such as MTurk, Prolific etc. See more information below (Section VII).

I. **Financial Support:** all experimenters are expected to secure their own financial support for subject payments. See Section XII for information on securing financial support.

J. **Citation:**

1. Any research and/or teaching conducted using laboratory facilities in any way must be acknowledged and cited as such. A suggested citation format is:

    "This research was conducted at the Social Science Experimental Laboratory (SSEL) at New York University in Abu Dhabi in Month(s)/Year."

2. Kindly cite the softwares you use in your experiments. Here are the softwares SSEL supports:

    a) oTree

    Daniel L. Chen, Martin Schonger, Chris Wickens. 2016. "oTree – An Open-source Platform for Laboratory, Online, and Field Experiments". Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance, 9: 88–97.

    b) zTree Unleashed

    Duch, M. L., Grossmann, M. R. P. and Lauer, T. 2020. "z-Tree unleashed: A novel client-integrating architecture for conducting z-Tree experiments over the Internet". Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance, Volume 28, December 2020, Article 100400.

    c) zTree

    Fischbacher, Urs. 2007. "z-Tree: Zurich Toolbox for Ready-Made Economic Experiments". Experimental Economics, 10(2): 171–178.

    d) ORSEE

    Greiner, Ben. 2015. "Subject Pool Recruitment Procedures: Organizing Experiments with ORSEE", Journal of the Economic Science Association, 1(1): 114–125.

IV.   Additional requirements for SSEL Services Usage (Student Members and Non-Members)

A. **Experimental Methods Training:** all students who use the SSEL services must have taken a course in experimental methods in the social sciences taught at NYUAD, NYU NY, or NYU Shanghai and have earned at least a grade of A- in such a course. Alternatively, a student that worked as an SSEL Student Research Assistant can conduct their own experiments if they have worked for at least one semester.

B. **Supervision:** An NYUAD, NYUNYC, or NYU Shanghai faculty sponsor must agree to supervise the experimental project. All experimental sessions conducted by students must be supervised by SSEL staff. Therefore, the timings of these sessions must be coordinated. On rare occasions, with the SSEL director's permission, the faculty sponsor may substitute for SSEL staff.

C. **Human Subjects Certification:** both the student and the faculty sponsor who use the SSEL services must complete the CITI certification program for human subjects research (the modules for social and behavioral research). Once certified, a PDF of the certificate must be either added to the approval form or emailed to the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator. This will be added to the SSEL IRB protocol before conducting research at the lab. For non-NYU researchers and those at universities not affiliated with CITI, alternative certification may be acceptable. The researcher should contact the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator for advice and consultation on an appropriate substitute.

D. **Subject payments:** All subject payments made by students must be supervised by SSEL staff. On rare occasions, with the SSEL Director's permission, the faculty sponsor may substitute for administrative personnel.

V.   Booking the laboratories

All experimenters may book the labs up to one month in advance by emailing the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator. The experiment must already be approved and all requirements must be fulfilled before any sessions are scheduled.

A. **For the physical lab:**
   1. If the experiment is conducted using ORSEE subject pool, the experimenter has to create a new experiment in ORSEE. This will be added to the experiments calendar and ensures better planning for other researchers, as well as it makes the experiment available to subjects.
   2. Times researchers reserve in the labs include setup, the session(s), subject payment, and cleanup. Researchers cannot be guaranteed access to the labs before their reserved slot and must vacate by its end.
   3. SSEL staff must be informed about the session time and date at least one day before in order to be able to assist.

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4. No individual session may be booked to last more than two hours, without special permission. Even with permission, subjects must be made specifically aware of the length of the experiment.

5. As of 9:00 am Friday, any lab times unreserved for the following week may be booked on a first come, first served basis. Researchers who have reached their maximum number of hours listed above may reserve additional time in this case.

6. The SSEL labs must be booked for software testing (pilot) before any official sessions are run.

7. All experimenters may only book the labs between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, Sunday-Thursday. Bookings outside of these times and days must be accompanied by an email from the appropriate SSEL member agreeing to be present.

8. SSEL members have priority in booking the physical lab.

B. For the virtual lab:

1. SSEL hosts two servers with softwares for online experiments, namely oTree and zTree Unleashed. Each server can be used by only one researcher at the time and therefore it must be booked in advance.

2. All experimenters must complete training with the Technical and Operational Coordinator before getting access to any of the servers.

3. Upon training completion, the experimenter will be given credentials to access the servers. Step-by-step documentation is also available.

4. Experimenters are not allowed to move or remove any folders/files from the SSEL servers. They should do strictly what they are instructed to.

5. Experimenters must not run an individual session for longer than 10 days without permission.

6. Experimenters may run experiments at any time as long as it is booked.

7. SSEL members have priority in booking the virtual lab.

VI. Subject Recruitment

A. Standard Subject Pool (NYUAD)

1. SSEL uses ORSEE to form a subject pool. Approved members will get experimenter access to ORSEE if they have followed the requirements.

2. Before recruiting, the laboratories must be booked in accordance with the terms mentioned in Section V.

3. Experimenters are responsible for recruiting subjects for their experiments via ORSEE. Assistance can be sought from the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator and/or the Human Subject Research Manager. Recruitment

invitations must be sent out **at least** 24 hours prior to the scheduled experiment.

4. Experimenters may only contact subjects using recruitment emails that have been approved by the IRB. These will be the automated ORSEE emails.

5. All SSEL members and affiliates are requested to advertise the SSEL subject pool to their students at the beginning of the semester. Students should be reminded that registration and participation are in no way connected with class performance. Participation will not affect their grades and vice versa. Faculty will also not necessarily know whether or not a particular student has participated.

6. Experimenters are only allowed to use Consent Forms approved by the IRB. The only customizations permitted without seeking separate IRB approval are names and the time/date/location of the experiment. The consent form can be obtained from the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator or the SSEL Human Subject Research Manager.

7. Experimenters are required to keep an attendance sheet.

B. **Non-standard Subject Pools**
1. If you are interested in recruiting non-standard subjects, please ensure that you contact the Human Subject Research Manager well in advance of your planned experiment(s).

2. Visiting subjects who do not ordinarily have access to campus, may resume provided that all safety and visitation measures are followed as per the [NYUAD Return to Campus Guide](#).

3. Researchers must adhere to the following steps for bringing visiting subjects to campus:
   a) All visitors must show the green pass on the Al Hosn app to the Public Safety officer, which shows a valid vaccination or Department of Health exemption and valid negative PCR test.
   b) All visitors must submit to a temperature check.
   c) The researchers ("Residential hosts") need to ensure the Campus Visitor Registration form is submitted at least one working day before visitors' arrival.

4. For online experiments, you can opt to choose other recruiting platforms, such as MTurk, Prolific etc.

VII. **Programming Experiments**

A. Researchers are responsible for programming their own experiments or obtaining their own research assistants.

B. SSEL staff are available to provide assistance to SSEL members and faculty affiliates, where possible.

C. zTree is the official programming environment of the SSEL physical lab. oTree and zTree Unleashed servers are set up for online experiments.

D. Installation of other software on lab computers must be approved by the SSEL Director and coordinated with the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator. Support and assistance with other programming environments is not guaranteed.

E. Please check in with the Technical and Operational Coordinator if you need another software version for the supported softwares than the existing ones.

VIII. Laboratory Fees

A. SSEL members, SSEL affiliates, and NYUAD student members may use the labs free of charge, provided they meet all of the earlier conditions.

B. NYU alumni may use the labs, subject to the following fees:
   1. Recruiting: AED 3 per subject
   2. Use of lab: AED 30 per hour
   3. Two assistants to run a session: AED 100 per hour
   4. Programming assistance: negotiable

C. Other non-members may use the labs, subject to the following fees:
   1. Recruiting: AED 6 per subject
   2. Use of lab: AED 60 per hour
   3. Two assistants to run a session: AED 200 per hour
   4. Programming assistance: negotiable

IX. Cancelation Policy

A. Lab bookings may be cancelled free of charge, provided that no subjects have yet been invited to the session.

B. For lab bookings cancelled after subjects have been invited, a cancellation notice must be sent to all recruited subjects. No penalty will be assessed to the researcher, but any subject who shows up is still entitled to the AED 30 voucher show up payment. For sessions involving those outside the NYUAD community as subjects, there must still be compensation for travel.

C. Relevant SSEL personnel must be informed of the cancellation.

X. Subject Payments

A. As per current NYUAD regulations cash and petty cash payments are not allowed.

B. Due to these restrictions, SSEL experiments are to be paid in vouchers. Please purchase the vouchers first and then ask for reimbursement from finance. See more in Section XII.

C. All recruited subjects who arrive on time are entitled to a show up payment worth AED 30, whether they are used in the session or not.

D. Subjects who arrive more than five minutes late are not entitled to a show up payment.

E. Subjects should earn at least (an average) AED 100 per hour of participation, inclusive of the show up payment.

F. In the event that a session fails due to a software failure or mistake by the experimenter, all subjects are entitled to the show up payment and additional compensation. This additional compensation is the expected amount subjects would have earned in the experiment, pro-rated by how long the session ran, before it crashed.

G. In the event that a session has to be cancelled before it begins, on account of a system failure, power outage, or other problem outside the control of the experimenter, subjects must be notified as soon as possible. Any who still show up for the experiment are entitled to a reduced show up payment of AED 15 and are permitted to sign up for future sessions via ORSEE.

H. If a session is cancelled after subjects have been invited because the experiment cannot or does not need to be run for other reasons, a cancellation notice must be sent to all recruited subjects. Any subject who shows up is still entitled to the AED 30 show up payment. For sessions involving those outside the NYUAD community as subjects, there must still be compensation for travel.

I. Payments can be created either on spot or sent to subjects' email addresses after the experiment. Please complete the subject payments within 24 hours from the start of the session.

XI. Laboratory Rules

A. Experimenter's Folder

Upon approval for the experiment, every experimenter will be allocated a folder with their name in SSEL's Google Drive Experimenter's Folder. Here, we will keep track of all the experiments experimenters run.

1. The Technical and Operational Coordinator is responsible for creating the folder and adding relevant files such as experimenter's CITI certificate, relevant documentation, etc.

2. The experimenter is responsible for updating the information in their experiment folder. This includes:
   a) The instructions of the experiment
   b) Complete the designated excel sheet with information about the experiment such as date and time of the session, duration of the session, number of participants in the session, dropout rate etc.

      c) Upload an attendance sheet of the human subjects

B. Physical Laboratory

1. SSEL allows full capacity for in-person experiments.
2. The experimenter must arrive in a lab no later than 30 minutes before the session is scheduled to begin.
3. SSEL personnel are not responsible for providing/distributing consent forms, receipts, or instructions.
4. The experimenter must be ready to seat subjects 5 minutes before the session is scheduled to begin. They must have a list of recruited subjects and check in subjects as they arrive.
5. The experimental session may not begin early, unless ALL recruited subjects have arrived.
6. Signed and dated consent forms must be collected from all subjects before the start of the experiment.
7. At the end of the experiment, subjects' payment must be handled privately. A voucher must be generated and sent to the subject via email.
8. After payment, the researcher is responsible for making sure the labs are in a clean and orderly condition. Desks and devices must be disinfected. If used, the white board should also be cleaned.
9. Experimenters aren't allowed to move or delete any files/folders from the server. Moreover, experimenter's files/folders should be placed only in the allocated folders.
10. Data should be immediately copied from the server to a USB drive or other removable/cloud storage.
11. The supervising researcher is responsible for making sure that the room is secure, before leaving the labs.
12. **Due to COVID-19 regulations experimenters and subjects must:**
        a) Wear CDC approved masks at all times;
        b) Adhere to the social distancing rules of minimum 1-meter apart
        c) Contact our lab as soon as possible in case they develop any of the COVID-19 symptoms within 2 weeks (14 days) after the participation in the study and upon positive COVID-19 test result.

C. Virtual Laboratory

1. Server credentials should not be shared with anyone.
2. Any action that could potentially harm the server security is forbidden.
3. No more than one experimenter at the time is allowed to run a session on a server.
4. Data should be immediately copied from the server to a USB drive and/or the experimenter's personal computer.

5. Experimenters aren't allowed to move or delete any files/folders from the server. Moreover, experimenter's files/folders should be placed only in the allocated folders.
6. The server and the used softwares must be properly shut down when the session is over.

D. Portable devices usage

1. Studies outside of the SSEL labs are not covered by the approved IRB protocol. Researchers must apply for and obtain their own IRB approval, before SSEL laptops or tablets can be checked out.
2. Subject to approval, SSEL members and affiliates may check out the SSEL laptops or tablets to conduct lab-in-the-field experiments. Students and non-members may not directly check out SSEL laptops or tablets. A SSEL member or affiliate may check out SSEL laptops or tablets to direct experiments carried out by students or non-members, but the SSEL member or affiliate who checks out the laptops or tablets is personally responsible for their safe return.
3. Experimenters wishing to use SSEL laptops or tablets outside of the laboratories must make a request in writing to the SSEL Director. The request must include the nature of the study, the length for which the laptops or tablets are needed, where they will be taken, how the laptops or tablets will be transported, and all measures the researchers will take to maintain the laptops' or tablets' security. Final approval will not be granted until the researcher has obtained IRB approval for their study.
4. Requests to use SSEL laptops or tablets outside of the laboratories must be submitted at least 45 days before their intended use. Requests made less than 45 days in advance may only be approved if no SSEL experiments have been booked in the labs that require the use of the laptops or tablets.
5. During the Fall or Spring terms, laptops or tablets may not be checked out for periods longer than 10 days. This will ensure that the labs are at full strength for as much of the high demand period as possible.
6. During the January term, laptops or tablets may be checked out for no more than 21 days.
7. Between the end of the Spring term and two weeks before the start of the Fall term, laptops or tablets may be checked out for no more than 30 days.
8. In the event of multiple, overlapping requests to check out laptops or tablets, the SSEL director will collaborate with the researchers to fairly allocate a number of machines to each project.
9. Outside of the laboratories, the researcher who signed out the laptops or tablets must maintain custody over them at all times. When not in the physical presence of the researcher, the laptops or tablets must be kept

under lock and key in a permanent structure, insofar as local conditions allow. Researchers must adhere to the security plan in their request, as approved by the SSEL Director.

10. Before releasing laptops or tablets from the SSEL labs, the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator will verify, in the presence of the researcher, that all machines are working properly. Any existing damage will be noted.

11. Upon return of laptops or tablets to the SSEL labs, the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator will inspect the laptops or tablets for damage, in the presence of the researcher. If damage is discovered, the researcher who checked out the laptops or tablets will be responsible for covering any needed repairs.

XII. Finance

A. Subjects in SSEL experiments are to be paid in vouchers or electronic payments due to MoE restrictions on cash/petty cash.

B. Experimenters are responsible for acquiring, monitoring, and distributing these vouchers / electronic payments either via email.

C. To pay human subjects please purchase the vouchers (or electronically pay participants) and submit the receipts as a reimbursement claim in Concur.

D. Researchers must begin the process of securing their funding at least three weeks before the anticipated start of experimental sessions, if not longer.

XIII. Reporting and Disputes

A. Any disputes about laboratory scheduling or potential overuse should be brought to the attention of the SSEL Technical and Operational Coordinator.

B. Any complaints about human subjects violations should be brought to the attention of the SSEL director.

C. SSEL reserves the right to ban any researcher who systematically violates the guidelines set here from use of SSEL facilities.

XIV. SSEL Contacts

General Enquiries: ssel [at] nyu.edu

Director: John Wooders

- E-mail: jw4725 [at] nyu.edu

Technical and Operational Coordinator: Domnica Dzitac

- E-mail: did233 [at] nyu.edu

Human Subject Research Manager: Sima Basel

- E-mail: sbs9 [at] nyu.edu