

CUBES Lab Basics

The University of Queensland Centre for Unified Behavioural and Economic Sciences (CUBES) Laboratory is located on level 2 of the Colin Clark Building (#39) at room 209.

The UQ CUBES lab is managed by the School of Economics (SoE) and is available for booking by all staff members and postgraduate students affiliated with UQ's [Centre for Unified Behavioural and Economic Sciences](#). The lab's research scope covers experimental research in the social sciences, such as economics, psychology, management science, and political science.

The lab contains 48 computers plus an instructor machine. The desks contain dividers, which can be used to separate participants during the running of an experiment.

If you are interested in participating in an experiment, you can [sign up here](#). If you would like to use the lab for your research, please read the details below. For more information, please contact the Laboratory Manager, Zachary Breig, at z.breig@uq.edu.au.

Rules for Laboratory Use

All researchers who conduct an experiment at UQ CUBES lab must adhere to the following rules:

- The lab is available for booking by staff members and postgraduate students affiliated with UQ CUBES for conducting experimental research. Members of UQ Staff that are interested in becoming affiliated with CUBES may contact Professor Lionel Page at lionel.page@uq.edu.au.
- Subject to availability, researchers not affiliated with CUBES may use the lab for a bench fee of \$1000/day or \$500/half-day. GST will be added if payable. If booked for a half-day, the cut-off for entering or vacating the lab is noon. This fee includes access to the lab as well as to the subject pool but does not include any assistance with programming or running of the experiment. Researchers affiliated with CUBES are encouraged to put a \$1000/day bench fee in externally funded research grant applications or consultancy bids whenever possible.
- All researchers using the laboratory agree to abide by the principles widely accepted by experimental economists (see Friedman and Sunder, 1994).
 - o In particular, experiments must not contain deception (explicitly lying to the participants).
 - o Standard practice in economics is to appropriately incentivize the decisions subjects make by implementing those decisions, at least with some chance. While this may not be practicable or relevant for every study, researchers should endeavour to make it very clear to subjects which decisions affect their final payoffs and which are unincentivized/purely hypothetical.

- The required ethics clearance must be obtained prior to running any experiments. Evidence of such clearance must be provided to the laboratory administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au) before the study is approved in SONA.
- Participants should be paid \$25 per hour or more on average and must be guaranteed a minimum of \$10 per hour. Registered participants who show up but are turned away by the researcher (i.e., as 'reserve' participants for a fixed-number session) must be paid \$10.
- Subjects should be given the option to be paid either in cash or with a bank transfer. Researchers can deviate from this (e.g. paying *only* with bank transfers or paying with gift cards), but these different payment rules must be advertised very clearly in the "Payment" section of the Study Information on SONA.
- All researchers using the laboratory agree to protect the reputation of the laboratory to its subjects. This implies that experiments should start on time and finish on time. Advertised SONA timeslots for which participants have been invited should be scheduled carefully to match the approved booking times. Approved timeslots should not be cancelled, nor should the advertised time/venue be changed. To prevent this from happening researchers should take all possible care (e.g. run test sessions and pilots) prior to recruiting subjects. Deviations from these principles jeopardise the credibility of all experimental data and as such will not be permitted.

How to Run a Study

Creating the Study

The CUBES lab uses the online software SONA to manage experiments. All researchers affiliated with UQ who wish to run experiments must create a SONA researcher account. Please send a request to the lab administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au) and include your UQ ID. After approval, you can create a SONA account [here](#).

Please familiarise yourself with the SONA documentation, which the lab administration officer will send to you once your account is approved, before creating your first experiment/study in SONA. You can also watch the [SONA video tutorial](#) or contact the lab manager (z.breig@uq.edu.au).

Within the SONA web interface, researchers can create *studies*, which is the interface name for an experiment. The study must be approved before subjects can be recruited. After creating the study, email the lab administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au) to ask for the study to be approved.

Booking the Lab

Researchers can submit booking requests to the lab administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au) up to eight weeks in advance subject to the following conditions:

- During any weekday, a user can make a request for advanced booking for the next eight weeks, starting from the Monday of the following week, and such requests will be processed on a “first come first served” basis. However, for such advanced bookings, a user cannot reserve the lab for more than 3 days for a particular week.
- Once a week has started, that is, starting from 9am, Monday, users can send in requests for booking the lab for any days in the following week for running experiments or in the current week for testing purposes. The restrictions stipulated in the point above do not apply for such short notice bookings.
- Users may book the lab for non-research purposes (e.g. teaching). However, bookings for non-research purposes of the lab will only be accepted occasionally.
- Lab bookings must include time to set up the experiment and clean up afterwards. We recommend reserving at least one hour for set-up and clean-up. Thus, an experiment that is scheduled to run from 1 PM to 3 PM requires a booking from noon to 4 PM.
- If the laboratory is not reserved, then normally it will be available for software testing on a first-come-first-served basis. However, researchers are strongly encouraged to reserve the lab in advance with the administration officer to keep a record of the lab’s usage for experiment activities.

Researchers affiliated with CUBES are normally given swipe card access to the lab. If the user is a student of an affiliated researcher a request for swipe card access should be requested from the lab administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au).

Setting up Timeslots

Once the study has been approved and the lab has been booked, the researcher can schedule timeslots in SONA. Timeslots are how subjects find out about the study. Researchers are strongly recommended to create timeslots by the Friday before the study because subjects receive an email over the weekend informing them of upcoming studies.

After the Session

After each session, researchers should:

- Finalise payments
- Report in their SONA study those participants who actually participated in the experiment and those who did not show up. Participants who cancel by sending an email prior to the session should be classified as “excused”, while those who simply don’t show up should be classified as “unexcused”. Participants who were paid the show-up fee but did not participate should have their enrolment cancelled so that they can sign up for future timeslots of the same experiment.
- For each session, email the lab administration officer (econexp@uq.edu.au) (1) the total number of participants, (2) average payment, (3) number of no shows, and (4) number of show-up fees given. These should be sent no more than one week after each session.

Online Studies

SONA allows for the creation of online studies. This should only be used when the researcher wants to use the UQ CUBES Subject pool. The process for setting them up differs for synchronous (e.g. everyone logs into Zoom at a particular time) and asynchronous (e.g. subjects must complete a Qualtrics survey by some defined end-date).

Synchronous studies should be set up as a “Standard (lab) study” on SONA. It should be made very clear in the study description that the study will take place online. Subjects should also be informed of how payments will be carried out. SONA allows you to designate a “Study URL”, which is where you should put the link to the meeting. Because subjects do not need to travel to the lab to participate in these studies, the “Show-Up Fee” for synchronous online studies can be \$5.

Asynchronous studies can be set up as an “Online External Study” in SONA. Researchers are strongly recommended to review the SONA documentation to determine exactly how these studies work.

Software and IT Issues

The lab is equipped with all software that is standard on UQ devices. This includes internet access and browsers such as Google Chrome.

The lab is equipped with the software z-tree. However, z-tree requires that every individual researcher obtains his or her own personal license (which is free, see <https://www.ztree.uzh.ch/en/support.html>). A pre-condition for conducting experiments using the z-tree software installed in the lab is that the user has obtained this license from z-tree, and it is the responsibility of the user to satisfy this licensing requirement prior to using the facilities at UQ CUBES lab.

If researchers plan to use software that does not exist in the lab, they must notify the laboratory manager and ensure that the software is installed in the computers in the lab before inviting subjects to participate in an experiment. It is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure that the necessary software is installed.

For assistance with IT problems when using the lab, researchers should contact directly the UQ ITS Help Line on +61 7 336 56000 or on itsupportdesk@its.uq.edu.au. A brief email should also be sent to the laboratory manager after completing the session describing the IT issue to enable them to monitor any recurrent issues.

Complaints and violations

Complaints regarding the use and operation of the laboratory should be sent via email to the laboratory manager. Complaints regarding the laboratory manager should be sent via email to UQ School of Economics Director of Research.

In case of a violation of the guidelines, the laboratory manager is expected to raise the issue with the responsible academic. If the problem is not resolved, the laboratory manager is obliged to inform the SoE Director of Research.

The laboratory manager has the right to restrict access to the laboratory to any party that systematically violate the guidelines thus undermining the reputation of the laboratory. Appeal against an access restriction decision can be made to the SoE Director of Research.

These guidelines should be applied in addition to and subject to compliance with all UQ Policies and Procedures.