IRB Application Revisions Based on Reviewers’ Concerns

The appropriate amount of extra credit should be awarded. Excessive extra credit could be seen as a manipulation to get some students to participate, primarily those students who would benefit the most from extra credit. This could be seen as using one’s power (the power to assign grades) as a means of recruiting subjects. In the future, please specify how much extra credit will be awarded, or at least provide a range.

I completely agree with you about excessive extra credit being potentially seen as a manipulation or as coercive. In the revised consent form, I have added the following sentence: “The amount of extra credit points will be determined by your professor.” In the psychology department, at the start of the semester and even on their syllabi, several professors inform their students that they may earn extra credit points either for participating in research studies or doing other tasks, such as attending guest lectures and writing summaries of what they learned. The specific amount of extra credit for participating in a study varies by professor. For example, Dr. Meeks may award 5 points to the student’s score on one exam, whereas Dr. Nagurney may award 1 point to the students’ final grade. In order to get a sufficient number of participants, I will have to recruit from several different courses, such that a single statement about an exact amount of extra credit is not feasible. Nonetheless, during my recruitment efforts in specific courses, I will speak with the professor in advance and let the students know exactly how much credit may be earned. Plus, I will make sure to tell them about the alternative, which is also mentioned in the consent form: “If you do not wish to participate but still want to receive equivalent extra credit points, you may choose a segment from a selected article and write a short discussion relating at least two of the following topics: anxiety, stress, blood pressure, music, or academic performance. Your discussion shall be longer than ½ a page but no longer than one full page. This will take approximately 45 minutes at the most which is comparable to participation in the experiment.”

In your study, it appears that identity is confidential; data is anonymous. Please state in consent form that identity will be kept confidential and the subjects’ data will be anonymous.

In the revised consent form, I have added the following statement: “Your identity will be confidential, and your data will be anonymous.”

Not sure why subjects must print name during signup. It seems that the researcher just wants to know how many subjects may come at a given time (since researcher makes no mention of limiting subjects to certain time slots). I worry that, when asked to write their name, some subjects might feel pressure to participate since others will know whether they put their name or not. Perhaps an email address would suffice. However, researcher may seek to increase likelihood of follow-through, which may be associated with having one commit by writing one’s name. If that is the case, I recognize value in putting name down. I encourage researcher to consider this point, but this reviewer will not deny based on this.

You raise two excellent points, regarding them not writing their name and regarding the responsibility of following through. I opted to lean toward the latter, given that I will be setting aside individual study sessions up to 1 hour that may be otherwise wasted if a student was not serious about following through and simply did not show up to the study.

Please change the 1st sentence of the 3rd paragraph from “From this study you will gain insight into how much anxiety affects you during tests.” TO “From this study you may gain insight into how much anxiety affects you during tests.”

I have made this change in the revised consent form.

Please be consistent with regard to first person vs third person (“you” vs “the participant”). I recommend first person, but either is fine.

In the revised consent form, I have made a point of consistently using personal pronouns (i.e., you, your) over “the participant.”

Please state why subject has been chosen to participate.

In the revised consent form, I have added the following statement: “You are being given this invitation because this topic may be relevant to you as a student, and because the professor of your course, in which your participation is being solicited, is offering extra credit for your participation in psychological research studies.”

I did not see language in consent form that informs the subject that he/she has the right to access the results of the study. Please include it not already there.

The revised consent form contains the following statement: “After all data have been collected for this study, by June 1, a written summary of the findings will be posted online at the following address: <http://www.psych.txstate.edu/research/debriefing.php>.” I have also provided my email and Dr. Oberle’s email in case the student would like more detailed information about the study. The student will not actually have access to their particular data, though, because I am taking measures to ensure that all data is anonymous.

It is unclear if in addition to handing out the synopsis, the researcher will thoroughly explain the study and the tests before handing out the consent form. This must be done, so that the participants may get a complete idea about the study.

The revised IRB synopsis contains the following statements: “At the appropriate time during class, I will give a synopsis of the study and read the consent form, which includes an explanation of the study’s procedures and tests. I will then ask student if they have any questions about the study.”

Though I am not an expert in this field, much has been said and studied about the effect of music on reducing stress and increasing concentration. I am not convinced if this particular study will add any new knowledge to an already abundant body of information and if study on humans is needed.

You are correct that much research has been conducted on the effects of music. Many of the studies assess either its general effects at reducing anxiety or its motivational effects, although most of these studies only record self-report measures of anxiety or motivation. The currently proposed study also includes both self-report and physiological measures, as well as measures of performance on the test. Furthermore, based on extensive searches in the PsycINFO and other relevant databases, I could find no study that assessed the effects of listening to varying types of music directly before taking any type of academic-based test.