

Before data acquisition -- Start MRI Project Spinoza REC

Version 6

Tinka Beemsterboer, Lukas Snoek, H. Steven Scholte

Abstract

Dear researcher,

This protocol gives you the steps to start an MRI project at the Spinoza Centre Roeterseiland.

If you haven't had contact with Steven Scholte or Tinka Beemsterboer, make sure to contact them before completing this protocol.

You can reach us by email:

Steven Scholte: h.s.scholte@uva.nl

Tinka Beemsterboer: t.beemsterboer@uva.nl

If you have any suggestions for improving the workflow, don't hesitate to add comments to the steps in the protocol.

Hope to see you soon!

The Spinoza REC team,

Steven Scholte, Tinka Beemsterboer, and Lukas Snoek

Citation: Tinka Beemsterboer, Lukas Snoek, H. Steven Scholte Before data acquisition -- Start MRI Project Spinoza REC. **protocols.io**

dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.n7udhnw

Published: 05 Apr 2018

Protocol

Ethical Approval

Step 1.

The MRI project should be approved by an ethical committee before running the pilot.

Ethical approval may take some time, therefore it is the first step in this protocol.

Make sure to read the following steps (Under Ethical Approval) before applying for ethical approval.

External researchers starting a project at the 3T MRI scanner of the Spinoza Centre UvA REC, may also request EC approval using the Ethical Committee of Psychology of the UvA. Send an email to lab-fmg@uva.nl and t.beemsterboer@uva.nl to request an account for the website for requesting EC approval. Mention in your email that you want to request EC approval for a MRI project at the Spinoza Centre UvA REC, your name, university, and department.

Go to the website: <https://www.lab.uva.nl/lab>.

Click in the upper right corner on 'Onderzoeker'. Log in and follow the instructions.

Ethical Approval

Step 2.

In order to obtain ethical approval you need to inform the Ethical Committee or Medical Ethical Committee about the screening procedure and procedure for incidental findings.

All subjects at the Spinoza REC need to fill out and sign the following:

- **screening** (English or Dutch)
- **GP information** (English or Dutch)

Note: you can find these documents in the Abstract (upper left corner).

All subjects at the Spinoza REC should be informed about the MRI procedure. The Abstract- tab contains the standard **information folder for MRI** (English and Dutch) research at the Spinoza Centre. You need to include this or a somewhat adapted version (depending on your project) to your Ethical Approval.

The Abstract contains a file explaining the **incidental findings procedure** one needs to follow at the Spinoza REC.

There is also a file explaining the MR screening, this is to help you understand the screening form but not something to include in your EC proposal.

Ethical Approval

Step 3.

Screening

Subjects need to be screened before cooperating in MRI experiments. MRI is a perfectly harmless method for examining the brain, but the static magnetic field attracts metal objects. Therefore, the MROperator needs to preclude the possibility that participants have any metal objects inside or on their bodies. The screeningform is created with consultation of the radiology department of the AMC and is updated with new insights. There is also a document provided by the Spinoza Centre REC-L where each question of the screening form is explained ([Extra info screening](#)). We advise all researchers to pre-screen their subjects to prevent, as much as possible, to have participants showing up and being rejected for the MRI scan. Keep in mind that the MROperator has final responsibility for the screening en safety of the participant.

Ethical Approval

Step 4.

Insurance

The liability insurance of the UvA offers, within the framework of the policy conditions of the insurance, coverage for (non invasive) research provided the Medical Research Act (WMO) set no specific requirements regarding insurance for participants. This coverage includes damage to the equipment and damage to / from the subject and the experimenters. This coverage applies to researchers of the University of Amsterdam and visiting researchers at the University of Amsterdam (employees of other universities and employees of scientific institutes like the NIN). In addition, this insurance also applies for external (possibly commercial) research as long as this is conducted by employees of the UvA. For every claim there is a deductible for the institution of the researcher of 25,000 euros. If however there is an indication of WMO, the responsible investigator must get a separate insurance.

Liability

The Spinoza Centre REC-L advises all users to have a personal liability insurance.

Ethical Approval

Step 5.

Weekly and monthly quality control

The Spinoza Centre REC-L does a weekly and monthly quality control of the MR scanner to maintain good quality of the scans. If any irregularities are noticed they are solved by the Spinoza Centre REC-L, and if necessary by Philips Healthcare. If we find that it may have influenced previous scans sessions, the Spinoza Centre REC-L contacts the researcher about this. During the weekly check we

perform the Philips system wide quick check, make a recording of the basic sequences with a phantom (and perform subsequent data-analysis to determine the behavior of the sequences) and run through a checklist to ensure that the stimulus material and the rest of the center are in working order. During the monthly check we recalibrate the system to ensure that the operation specs are always close to the optimal. We further perform more complete diagnostics, for instance on each of the 32 channels of the headcoil.

User Agreement

Step 6.

The PI of the MRI project completes the User Agreement.

If we did not have contact yet about pricing etc., please contact Tinka Beemsterboer or Steven Scholte.

The budget holder of the project completes and signs the contract.

Before signing a contract, make sure to read the [UserPolicy](#)

Send the contract to t.beemsterboer@uva.nl.

Calpendo

Step 7.

Apply for a calpendo User Account.

The *PI and all other researchers, research assistants and interns* of the project should apply for a user account in Calpendo.

Go to the link <https://spinozarec.calpendo.com>.

Calpendo is the Calendar and user registration system used by Spinoza REC. Apart from booking registrations, Spinoza REC uses Calpendo to register Scan, Safety, Eyelink, EEG, GSR, EMG, fear conditioning and TMS certification, badges and BHV.

Calpendo

Step 8.

The PI of the project applies for a project in Calpendo.

After the user accounts have been approved, the PI of the project can apply for a project in Calpendo.

Please follow the following workflow to request the project:

- In Calpendo press Projects, **Create Project**;
- Choose for **Project Code** the unique short name for your experiment as specified in the contract;
- **Upload the protocol** as known by the Ethics Committee, at Protocol
- In **Project Resource settings** choose the Resources needed for the project.
Include the number of hours per resource and the costs per hour for use of the MRI scanner as specified in the contract.
- **Users**: add all users of the project who have permission to manage MRI bookings for the project.
- **Safety**: set true at the stimulus equipment that will be used for the project.
Note that the researcher of the project needs a certificate for using the Eyetracker, TMS, EGI and electrical stimulator.
For more information about certification on stimulus equipment, contact Tinka Beemsterboer.

Calendar Templates Bookings Projects Search Admin Help		
Cancel Save		
	Short project Title	
Project Code	Short project Title	
User Agreement	Completed and send an user agreement ▼	
Ethics Committee Code	2001-EXT-45	
Type	MRI Project	▼
Status	Requested ▼	
Owner	TinkaUser (T Beemsterboer)	▼
Description	Describe your project here	
Start	6 Sep 2017	
Finish	20 Sep 2017	
Department	FMG ▼	
Protocol	Choose File	No file chosen

Project Resource Settings		
Users		
Proposed Sequences		
Comments		
Approvals (for administrator use only)		
Safety		
Project Groups		

Resource	Cost Per Hour	Maximum Total Hours
3T MRI	250	20
Cancelled MRI Bookings		
MOCK/NPO DS.04		

Choose resources...

Calpendo

Step 9.

Send an email to Tinka Beemsterboer (t.beemsterboer@uva.nl) once you have requested a project

in Calpendo and mention which stimulus equipment (as described in the Safety tab) you intend to use.

MRI Data export

Step 10.

Apply for a storage folder.

In order to export MRI data from the scan computer, you need access to an 'fMRI Projects' (for researchers affiliated with the UvA FMG) or 'Dropbox' (external researchers) folder on our data-server.

Instructions:

- UvA FMG researchers ([link](#))
- External researchers ([link](#))

How to access the dropbox FTP-server is explained [here](#).

Introduction Meeting

Step 11.

Schedule an introduction meeting.

Spinoza REC offers the possibility to have a meeting with Tinka Beemsterboer, Lukas Snoek and Steven Scholte to discuss the project. To set up a meeting, email Tinka Beemsterboer (t.beemsterboer@uva.nl).

Examples of what to discuss during the intro meeting

- Choice of scan sequences
- Set-up of the experiment
- Information about our automated preprocessing pipeline and quality control (see also step 13)
- MR-course for the MR-operator
- Safety certification of assisting researchers
- Planning of the project
- Access to the Spinoza Centre (*all researchers and research assistants get access to the Spinoza Centre, either on your UvA card or a badge provided by the Spinoza Centre REC*).
- Expectations and questions from both parties

We strongly advice to make use of this oppurtunity and prepare accordingly, because it is our experience that small details, which are easily overlooked, often result in failed pilots and the loss of valuable scanning time.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 12.

Schedule and prepare for running a pilot.

We strongly recommend running a pilot session with an experienced subject.

In the next section, we'll outline a checklist with things to think about before running a pilot session.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 13.

Make sure to have a working paradigm that waits for the first start pulse of the scanner

With each BOLD-MRI volume (excluding dummy scans), a trigger is sent to the stimulus computer. These enter the system as the letter **t** (a keyboard response). Make sure your paradigm doesn't start until it registers the first keyboard **t** response.

The following stimulus programs are installed on our stimulus-computer:

- Presentation (for which we offer technical support)
- E-Prime
- Matlab (Psychtoolbox)
- PsychoPy
- (For other programs, contact Tinka Beemsterboer for the possibilities)

The way to set up registration of external triggers in Presentation:



Select Use response button event:



Select Use fMRI (on the right side of buttons) after you selected the letter **t**:



If the setup was successful, you should see '**Keyboard: T**' at Button.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 14.

Make sure your experiment interfaces properly with the response buttons of our button boxes.

Check the image below for the mapping of the buttons to the registered responses on the stimulus-computer (e.g., a response with the left index finger of the left hand will be registered as a keyboard **e** response).

We also offer the use of the MRI compatible mouse and joystick. Let us know when you want to use these.



Prepare the Pilot

Step 15.

Decide on the specific scan sequences that you want to run.

We advise you decide on which and how many sequences you want to run, including structural scans (T1-weighted, T2-weighted), functional scans (EPI-based), diffusion-based (DWI) scans, and fieldmap scans (e.g., B0-based phase-difference fieldmaps or 'top-up' fieldmaps). Also, calculate the duration of the scans with regard to the duration of your paradigm/tasks.

If you intend to use other sequences than the basic sequences, let us know in time so we can set this

up before the pilot (ideally, in the introduction meeting).

Prepare the Pilot

Step 16.

Decide on whether to use our Preprocessing Pipeline and QC pipeline offered by Spinoza REC

Info about [BIDS](#)-format and the Spinoza BIDS converter tool

In order to run the QC and/or preprocessing pipelines ([MRIQC](#) and [fmriprep](#), respectively), we need to convert the raw data from the scanner to the [BIDS](#)-format.

The BIDS-format is a specification of the format and naming of files associated with neuroimaging experiments. We have developed a tool ([bidsify](#)) that is able to automatically convert MRI data and associated files from our scanner to the BIDS-format, such that we can use the aforementioned pipelines.

Our **BIDS-conversion tool** works, in principle, with all standard scans in our repository (i.e., it doesn't work with custom sequences) *given that you've given the correct names to your scans*.

During the pilot, the MR-operator will help you with the correct naming, but the responsibility for correct naming lies, ultimately, with the researcher.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 17.

Folder structure in BIDS (in case you want to use the automated preprocessing or Quality Control Pipeline).

Not using the preprocessing of qc pipeline? Skip this step!

Every day at 11pm, we will check the export folders (fMRI Projects or Dropbox) corresponding to the currently active experiments at our centre. If we find 'new' data, we will copy it to our server and start BIDS-conversion and QC (and, if desired, preprocessing). In order for our tools to 'find' your data, we expect it to be organized in a particular way. In all cases, we expect that you export the data to a subfolder in your export folder called 'raw'. Then, we expect each subject to get its own subdirectory in the 'raw' directory, with the subject name as folder-name (e.g., *sub-01CON*). Optionally, if you have multiple sessions, each session will get its own subdirectory in the subject-directory, with the session

name as folder-name (e.g., *ses-01*). For example, suppose you plan to scan 20 subjects, each two sessions, and your export folder is called 'fMRI Project ExampleExp'. You should export the data from subject *sub-01_ses-01* to the following location:

fMRI Project ExampleExp

```
└─ raw/
  └─ sub-01
    └─ ses-01
      ├── sub-01_ses-01_T1w.PAR
      ├── sub-01_ses-01_T1w.REC
      ├── sub-01_ses-01_task-Nback_acq-SeqMm3_bold.PAR
      └── sub-01_ses-01_task-Nback_acq-SeqMm3_bold.REC
```

If you don't have multiple sessions, you may export all files directly to the subject-directory, e.g.:

fMRI Project ExampleExp

```
└─ raw/
  └─ sub-01
    ├── sub-01_ses-01_T1w.PAR
    ├── sub-01_ses-01_T1w.REC
    ├── sub-01_ses-01_task-Nback_acq-SeqMm3_bold.PAR
    └── sub-01_ses-01_task-Nback_acq-SeqMm3_bold.REC
```

Note that you cannot create directories within your export folder from the scan-computer; you can use the 'scan-assistant' computer (right of the scan-computer) for that. Then, after 24 hours or so (depending on the desired parameters used in the preprocessing pipeline), we will copy the BIDS-converted data, quality control results, and preprocessing results to your export folder, using the following structure:

fMRI Project ExampleExp

```
└─ raw
└─ bids
└─ qc
└─ preproc
```

Step 18.

Decide on whether to use additional stimulus equipment.

Note: users are not allowed to change the stimulus set-up of the Spinoza Centre REC without approval from Spinoza staff.

If you think additional stimulus equipment or other programs are necessary for your experiment, please let us know.

For example:

- Auditory stimuli;
- PPU (cardiac signal) and respiratory belt. This is free of charge and it is not necessary to book extra time for this;
- Eye tracker;
- EEG;
- Skin conductance;
- EMG;
- Electro-stimulator device (pain stimulation)
- TMS

Ideally, mention if you plan on using extra stimulus equipment during the introduction meeting.

For the use of additional equipment additional training is required. This is mostly done in short courses, depending on the experience of the user. The user may very well be an experienced user already, in this case we only verify correct handling of the equipment and some MRI specifics. This “exam” can be done within an hour and there are no additional costs.

To get experience using the equipment you may consider consulting an experienced fellow researcher.

There are no additional costs for using GSR, EMG, EyeTracker, Electrical stimulation, ECG, PPU, Respiratory belt and auditory system. Electrodes and other accessories are provided and also without additional costs.

The additional costs for the use of EEG are 50/hr if you need to use a cap from the Spinoza Center.

For TMS this still needs to be determined, contact Steven Scholte for more information.

We are happy to give you advice and/or more information about the additional equipment.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 19.

Estimate the time needed for one participant.

Below you find an approximation of the scan time needed per participant depending on the stimulus setup; note that the duration of the scans should include communication to the participant, set up of the scans, shimming and survey scan. Furthermore the time needed per participant is dependent on the type of participants and the experience of the researcher.

- Simple protocol, possibly including PPU and Resp: duration of the scans + 10 minutes.
- With GSR or EMG measurements: duration of the scans + 20 minutes.
- With eye tracker measurements: duration of the scans + 20 minutes

Of course, this estimation may be adjusted after the pilot or during your experiment.

Prepare the Pilot

Step 20.

Read the Protocol on running an MRI pilot at Spinoza REC so that you will be even more prepared for the pilot.

Let us know if you have any questions before coming to the pilot!