

School of Psychology

Protocol for visual psychophysics

Ethical approval number ERN_08-734

Notes on using the protocol

What is covered

The protocol only covers experiments on normal adults using methods that fall into the following description.

“Participants will view images via either a standard computer monitors, a pair of such monitors or a Clinton Monoray monitor. The latter has higher than normal luminance for a monitor but does not approach the luminance levels experienced in every day life. Participants will view the monitor(s) with both eyes, with one eye covered or through a pair of stereo shutter goggles. Some images will be viewed via a mirror. Images may be presented briefly or for prolonged periods and may comprise moving or flickering repetitive patterns. Other images will comprise natural scenes or objects and pictures of people’s faces. These may also move or be presented in a flickering format. Participants may also be asked to ‘feel’ virtual haptic stimuli using PhantomTM (or similar) force feedback arms. These devices are either held like a pen or the participant inserts a finger into a thimble. These devices resist attempts by the participant to move their end effector through simulated surfaces, thus enabling the participant to feel the surface. However, the forces applied by these devices are very small and represent no risk to participants. Finally, observers may also be asked to view real images presented within a specialist lighting stage that can produce both point source and diffuse lighting. This lighting will be achieved using high brightness LED that are bright enough to cause discomfort after prolonged, direct viewing. However the LED’s will never be viewed directly and the maximum luminance seen by the participants will be no more than that produced by room lighting.

Having judged some aspect of the stimulus participants will make responses using a range of devices including computer keyboards, computer mice, and specialist built button boxes.

Experimental sessions will typically last 20 minutes but may extend to 60 minutes. Participants may be asked to complete many sessions over an extended period or may undertake several short sessions in a row with short breaks between sessions. Some experiments will take place in darkened rooms. Participants may be asked to place their head on a chin rest.”

The Luminance levels produced by monitors and light sources must either be below harmful levels or viewed indirectly so as to reduce the luminance to harmless levels. Haptic devices may be used so long as they are incapable of producing harmful forces.

You may collect questionnaire data (eg demographics, experience ratings) alongside a psychophysical study so long as the data is of a non-personal nature. The protocol does not cover questionnaire only studies.

Specified Participant restrictions

The protocol does not allow you to test people with known neuropsychological disorders or epilepsy. Participants must be over 18. The consent form must warn those who suffer from migraine that there is a small risk that visual stimuli may induce an attack. But they may still be tested.

Specified Materials

Consent form

All participants should complete a consent form *closely* modelled on the one provided at: <http://www.vision.bham.ac.uk/technotes/index.htm> . This must explicitly confirm that consent has been given and must be signed by both the participant and the experimenter.

Information sheet

All participants must be given a separate information sheet modelled on that provided at: <http://www.vision.bham.ac.uk/technotes/index.htm>

Recruitment sheet

Recruitment sheets / information should be modelled on that found at <http://www.vision.bham.ac.uk/technotes/index.htm> but may well contain more information.

How do apply to use the protocol

1. Complete the ethical self-assessment form at:

<https://www.intranet.bham.ac.uk/rcs/saf.shtml>

2. Complete section 1 to 6 of the ethical review application form:

https://www.intranet.bham.ac.uk/rcs/documents/application_for_ethical_review_form.doc

Clearly indicating your intention to use operate within protocol number ERN_08-734.

3. If you were named on the original protocol application you may now proceed to test participants. If not the ethical review team will check that you are eligible to use the application with the School Ethics Committee.

Amendments

If the protocol is close to meeting your needs but there is something extra that you need to be covered you may apply for an amendment. The ethical implication of the amendment will then be assessed. See instructions for amendments at:

http://www.rcs.bham.ac.uk/staff/researchers/Renewal_and_amendment_of_AER.shtml