

Psychological Science Accelerator Study Capacity Policy

Initial draft:

Patrick S. Forscher, Charlie Ebersole, Nicholas Coles, Chris Chartier

Reviewed and suggested edits:

Neil A. Lewis, Jr.

Revision history:

2020-11-10: Ratified by vote of the PSA

2019-11-27: Initial draft

Table of Contents

PSA Resource Management	3
Guiding principles	3
Overview of the resource management process	4
Resource Capacity Reports	5
Data Collection Capacity Report	5
Administrative Capacity Report	6
Who gets the reports	7
Study Capacity Decisions	8
Measuring the PSA's study capacity	8
Calls for special submission slots	8
Submission slot decisions	9
The study capacity announcement	10

PSA Resource Management

The Psychological Science Accelerator's most precious resource is its people. These people form the labs that collect data for PSA projects and occupy the administrative roles that coordinate this data collection capacity.

This document outlines a set of principles to guide how the PSA thinks about its human and other resources to make study capacity decisions. We also outline a set of processes for study capacity decisions and how these processes relate to the resource management principles.

Guiding principles

The principles guiding how the PSA manages its resources stem from the PSA's overall guiding principles (see <https://psyarxiv.com/785qu/>). These principles are intended to maintain study rigor while simultaneously respecting the autonomy of PSA members.

The principles that guide resource management decisions are threefold:

1. ***Studies should be adequately resourced to ensure their goals are met.*** This follows from the PSA's overall guiding principle of rigor. This principle implies that the PSA needs to accurately assess its current resources (both in terms of data collection capacity and administrative capacity) so that it can make study selection decisions that are in line with its resources.
2. ***Member rewards should be commensurate with member contributions.*** PSA members contribute their time, energy, and resources to the PSA. In return, they receive a wide array of rewards, including publications, knowledge, enhanced reputation, money, and personal satisfaction. The PSA seeks to keep member rewards commensurate with contributions. This principle flows indirectly from the PSA's overall guiding principle of diversity and inclusion, as the intent of this principle is to ensure that requests for member contributions do not have a disproportionate impact on specific subgroups of members (for example, members with more pre-existing resources who are therefore more equipped to take advantage of opportunities with no monetary compensation).
3. ***Members should have input into decisions about the studies that receive PSA resources.*** This follows from the PSA's overall guiding principle of decentralized authority. This principle implies that decisions about how to use PSA data collection and administrative capacity should either be made democratically or by representatives who are accountable to PSA members.

Overview of the resource management process

The general study capacity management process reflects the three principles outlined in the previous section.

Study capacity decisions are the ultimate responsibility of leaders who are accountable (via elections) to PSA members – namely the PSA **upper-level leadership** (the Director and Associate Directors). The upper-level leadership make study capacity decisions on a yearly basis. Capacity decisions are guided by two reports: (1) a **PSA data collection capacity report**, which describes the PSA's general and specialized data collection capacity, and (2) a **PSA administrative capacity report**, which describes the PSA's ability to meet the administrative needs of its studies through study coordination and other activities.

The purpose of preparing reports rather than leaving this information in databases to be accessed on-the-fly is to ensure **transparency** (people who are not members of the PSA do not have unlimited access to the PSA database), **comprehensiveness** (by avoiding the reliance on limited, on-the-fly database access decisions), and **efficiency** (by avoiding duplication of effort). Moreover, formal reports can serve as the basis of decisions that require significant lead time.

Information on the membership's data collection capacity should inform decisions about study feasibility. These feasibility decisions include:

- (1) Decisions by PSA upper-level leadership about the PSA's study capacity;
- (2) Decisions by researchers who are preparing study proposals to the PSA but wish to know whether a given proposal could be feasibly undertaken by the PSA network;
- (3) Decisions by the Study Selection Committee during feasibility review;
- (4) Decisions by a study leadership team about study timelines.

The upper-level leadership formalizes its study capacity decisions in the form of a **study capacity announcement**, which is posted on a yearly basis in a public location (e.g., the psysciacc.org website). The upper-level leadership also has the ability to narrow the *kinds* of studies that the PSA will accept, provided there is a *compelling reason* to do so. If the upper-level leadership plans to accept a more narrow *kind* of study, they will announce this decision in the study capacity announcement, along with a justification that outlines the benefits and costs to the PSA and its members.

Resource Capacity Reports

The resources of the PSA are evaluated and monitored through two annual reports: the **data collection capacity report** and the **administrative capacity report**. Once available, these two reports can inform decisions of relevant stakeholders that hinge on the availability of PSA resources – including and especially the upper-level leadership’s study capacity decisions.

Both reports can have a variety of content, draw on a variety of data sources, and take a variety of forms. Despite this flexibility, both reports should meet some minimum requirements. To adequately meet these requirements, the report preparers may need to draw extensively on the PSA’s member database. To ensure that the database is up-to-date and to allow adequate planning for the coming year, the PSA may wish to conduct a drive prior to the reporting deadlines to encourage PSA members to update their profiles.

We describe each report and its minimum requirements below.

Data Collection Capacity Report

The data collection capacity report should be prepared by the Assistant Directors of the Community Building and Network Expansion Committee, who may collaborate with and delegate responsibilities to whoever they wish. The primary function of the report is to fully describe the capacity of PSA members to collect different kinds of data. The report should also describe how this data collection capacity varies across important characteristics of PSA membership, especially geographic region.

The report has three minimum requirements:

- (1) **The report should describe the total general data collection capacity for the upcoming PSA reporting year.** “General data collection capacity” is defined as the total number of participants (without any special characteristics) accessible for general studies (i.e., studies that don’t require specialized equipment other than an internet-enabled device). The total number of participants accessible for general studies will serve as one of the starting points for the PSA’s yearly study planning process.
- (2) **The report should describe PSA member characteristics that could influence specialized data collection capacity for the upcoming PSA reporting year.** “Specialized data collection capacity” is defined broadly as any type of data that has more restrictive requirements than the definition provided for “general data collection capacity”. Some examples of member characteristics that could affect specialized data collection capacity include: access to money to compensate participants, connections to businesses or organizations that provide access to rare, hard-to-reach populations (e.g., ethnic minorities, people within specialized professions, people with specific clinical

diagnoses), and access to special data collection equipment or software (e.g., specialized survey software, EEG caps systems, eye trackers). The specific characteristics the report describes can vary year-to-year, but the report should, at a minimum, provide some sort of assessment of these characteristics.

- (3) **The report should provide some breakdowns of how general and specific data collection capacity varies across important member characteristics.** Given the PSA's emphasis on cultural and geographic diversity, one of these characteristics should be geographic region. This ensures that upper-level leadership, study proposers, and other relevant stakeholders can adequately plan studies that draw on non-Western labs.

Administrative Capacity Report

Data collection capacity is not the only constraint to the PSA's ability to conduct studies. This ability is also constrained by its *administrative capacity*, which is required for the successful coordination of studies, execution of studies, and ensuring study adherence to PSA policies.

Administrative capacity is determined by the availability of paid or volunteer labor. The PSA's upper-level leadership (the Associate Directors and the Director) are ultimately responsible for overseeing this labor; hence, the upper-level leadership are ultimately responsible for drafting the administrative capacity report.

Like the data collection capacity report, although the content, data sources, and format of the administrative capacity report can vary from year-to-year, the report should meet three basic requirements:

- (1) **The report should describe the number of administrative hours available for the upcoming PSA reporting year for each PSA role.** We define "PSA role" as a job that develops, supports, and/or implements PSA policies. The definitions of these roles may evolve over time as the PSA develops new policies, so before listing the administrative hours available for each role, the report should also develop a list of the current roles necessary to develop, support, and/or implement PSA policies. Examples of possible administrative roles include "Reviewer", a person tasked with providing reviews for a given batch of PSA study proposals, "Project Monitor", a person tasked with monitoring a project's timeline and policy adherence, and "Data Manager", a person tasked with overseeing issues related to a study's datasets.
- (2) **The report should describe the compensation available to pay for administrative hours.** Because PSA members occupy administrative roles for a variety of reasons, the available compensation described in this section need not solely consist of money. However, this section should describe the money that is available, if any.

- (3) **The report should describe breakdowns of the potential administrative labor pool by important member characteristics.** The exact characteristics used to create these breakdowns can vary from year to year, but the characteristics should be selected with an eye toward facilitating an evaluation of whether member contributions are commensurate with member rewards. Characteristics that might facilitate such evaluation include job category (academic vs non-academic), career stage, gender, ethnicity, and world region, among other possibilities.

Who gets the reports

After the preparation of the two reports, they should be delivered to the full PSA upper-level leadership. The upper-level leadership will solicit comments from the PSA membership and revise the reports in light of the comments. Some form of the revised reports (with summary data, if necessary to protect confidentiality) should be made public on or before the release date of the year's **call for studies**.

Study Capacity Decisions

The PSA's upper-level leadership – the Director and Associate Directors – have ultimate responsibility for deciding the PSA's study capacity in a given year. Using the two resource capacity reports, the upper-level leadership lays out their study capacity decisions in a **study capacity announcement**, which shapes the year's call or calls for studies.

In this section we give the broad outlines of the study capacity decisions that lead to the study capacity announcement. In particular, we describe how to measure study capacity, the considerations that go into this measurement, and the minimum requirements of the announcement.

Measuring the PSA's study capacity

The basic unit of measurement of the PSA's study capacity is the **study submission slot**. A study submission slot is an in-principle commitment for the PSA to run one study from among the pool of study submissions received in response to a particular study call.

Study submission slots come in two varieties:

- (1) **General submission slots.** These study submission slots draw from the general study submission pool, and as such have no special requirements or evaluation criteria outside of those laid out in its general study submission policies.
- (2) **Special submission slots.** These study submission slots add extra requirements or evaluation criteria beyond those that exist for general submission slots. Studies submitted to a special study submission slot must meet the extra requirements and criteria for that slot (detailed below) *in addition to* the PSA's general requirements and criteria. For example, the studies submitted for a particular slot could require that the studies be on a specific topic or use a particular research method.

The restrictions added to special submission slots mean that these slots draw from a more restrictive pool of potential submitters. For this reason, the PSA prefers to issue general study submission slots. However, it will consider adding special submission slots if someone can demonstrate that the PSA has a **compelling reason** to do so. There is a compelling reason for a special submission slot if (a) the special slot would advance the PSA's core values; or (b) the PSA would receive resources (such as funding) in exchange for the special submission slot that would itself help the PSA advance its core values.

Calls for special submission slots

The upper-level leadership will publicly solicit proposals for special submission slots before drafting the study capacity report. Anyone can submit a proposal for one or more special submission slots. These proposals should, at a minimum, outline the “compelling reason” for accepting the proposal (advancing the PSA’s core principles and/or providing the PSA with resources), the *minimum* and *maximum* number of studies that should be accepted for these slots, and the new study submission requirements and/or criteria that would apply to these slots.

The upper-level leadership will evaluate these proposals on four criteria. Members of the upper-level leadership should recuse themselves from the evaluation process in cases of clear conflicts-of-interest. The evaluation criteria include::

- (1) **The “compelling reason”.** As outlined above, “compelling reason” can mean that studies submitted for the special slot would advance the PSA’s core principles and/or that accepting the special submission slot would provide the PSA with extra resources. Extra resources can be cash, grant money, or in-kind resources such as labor. If such resources would be provided in exchange for one or more special submission slots, the proposal should thoroughly and completely outline the form these resources would take.
- (2) **Strictness of the extra requirements or evaluation criteria.** In general, extra study requirements or criteria will both result in a smaller pool of submitted studies and will add administrative burden that the PSA will need to absorb. Thus, all else being equal, the PSA prefers fewer requirements and criteria; the more a proposal adds, the more the “compelling reason” needs to compensate for this addition.
- (3) **Minimum and maximum requested studies.** Studies allocated to special submission slots take away capacity that could otherwise be devoted to general submission slots. All else being equal, the PSA prefers to devote capacity to general submission slots. Thus, the more studies requested for a given special submission slot proposal, the more the “compelling reason” needs to compensate for this request. This is especially true if the proposal requests a high *minimum* number of studies. In general, the PSA can more easily accommodate proposals where the requested minimum is low or even zero.
- (4) **Consistency with PSA core principles.** As mentioned in the first criterion, the “compelling reason” for proposing a special submission slot can be that such a slot would advance PSA core principles. However, upper-level leadership should *also* scrutinize each proposal to ensure that the proposal is not *inconsistent* with PSA core principles. Reasons for inconsistency include, but are not limited to, the following: the proposal gives undue decision-making power to an outside entity (subverting the PSA’s principle of *decentralized authority*); the proposal is too focused on the concerns of Western researchers and research participants (subverting the PSA’s principle of

diversity and inclusion); the proposal asks the PSA to only share the study's results with the proposer (subverting the PSA's principle of *transparency*).

Submission slot decisions

Based on the two study capacity reports and the call for special submission slots, the PSA's upper-level leadership decides the number of general submission slots to grant in a given year. This number should be interpreted as the maximum number of general studies the PSA will accept in a given year. Decisions about general study slots should be guided by the principles that guide PSA resource management (adequate resourcing of studies, balance of member burden and reward, member input). The decision is ratified through a vote of the upper-level leadership; the decision passes with a majority in favor. Decisions that are not ratified on the initial vote are subject to discussion and revision until the decision passes.

In addition, each member of the upper-level leadership reads and discusses the special submission slot proposals received during the year's call. Any member of the upper-level leadership may nominate a proposal for closer consideration; any proposals that receive no nominations will not be considered further.

A nominating member of the upper-level leadership presents their reasons for nominating a given proposal to the other members of the upper-level leadership, after which the group discusses these reasons. Based on this discussion, the PSA's Director can reach out to the proposer to negotiate modifications to a proposal's terms (e.g., making the evaluation criteria more broad, extra money to make the reason for acceptance sufficiently "compelling", etc).

Following this negotiation, the upper-level leadership votes on a given proposal; the proposal passes with a majority in favor. If the proposal does not pass this vote, it is dropped from consideration for that year.

The study capacity announcement

The upper-level leadership formalizes its capacity decisions in a **study capacity announcement**, which is made public prior to the PSA's call for studies. The study capacity announcement has two elements:

- (1) **General submission slots for the coming year.** The number of submission slots should be interpreted as the *maximum number of general studies the PSA will accept for the year*. This announcement of general submission slots should also give some reasoning for the number of slots, ideally by referencing the data collection capacity report and the administrative capacity report.
- (2) **Special submission slots for the coming year.** Each batch of slots should be accompanied by the batch's "compelling reason", the extra requirements or evaluation

criteria that apply to the batch, and the minimum and maximum number of studies the PSA will accept for these slots. In general, the maximum number of studies will equal the number of special submission slots; however, the minimum should have been specified in the batch's proposal.