Guidelines for Facilitators

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Introduction

This document contains a quick reminder of the aims and approach of the repliCATS project, followed by a guide to the role of facilitators during the Discussion and Round 2 assessment, including before, during, and at the end of the face-to-face workshop. This should be read alongside the repliCATS Guide to Round 2, which contains information and advice for all participants in these phases of the expert elicitation.
The repliCATS project

The University of Melbourne repliCATS team elicits expert judgements about the replicability of research claims in the Social and Behavioural Sciences through an online platform using the IDEA protocol. Judgements are aggregated into measures of reliability and the reasoning used is analysed. IDEA (“Investigate”, “Discuss”, “Estimate” and “Aggregate”) has been found to improve judgements under uncertainty. More information about the repliCATS project is contained in the Plain Language Statement and on the repliCATS website.

The IDEA protocol

This protocol, developed at the University of Melbourne, has been found to improve judgements under uncertainty. IDEA stands for “Investigate”, “Discuss”, “Estimate” and “Aggregate”, the four steps in the process of this elicitation.

As used in the repliCATS project, the IDEA protocol will involve participants:

1. Independently Investigating the claim, providing their personal judgement on the replicability of the claim, and commenting on their thinking.

2. Seeing the judgements of the rest of their team, the aggregated judgement and all of the comments that have been made and having a facilitated Discussion with the group. This phase can resolve uncertainties, and investigate evidence and thinking.

3. Providing a revised Estimate and describing how their thinking has changed.

The repliCATS team will use an Aggregate of the group judgements as the final assessment of the replicability of the research claim.

More information on the IDEA protocol can be found here.
Guidelines for facilitators

Before the workshop

Please allow some time to read through the journal articles in your group’s set. Pay particular attention to the specific claim within each article that your group is being asked to evaluate. If you do not yet know the claims for the group you are facilitating, please contact repliCATS-contact@unimelb.edu.au as soon as possible.

Some articles will be long and potentially difficult to understand, and the relationship between the specific claim under assessment and the evidence offered isn’t always the straightforward match we’d like it to be. It won’t take you long to work out which claims are likely to be ‘difficult’ for the group, and which will be relatively easy. If you have a sense of this before the workshop, it will help you manage the discussion time needed for each claim. We do not expect facilitators to be a definitive expert, or to know the answer to all questions about the articles. Sometimes it is better to be an outsider to the domain when facilitating.

Look through the training materials for participants. This shouldn’t take long, as we’re trying to keep the training burden for participants low. If you have access to the repliCATS platform, log in and have a practice. If not, contact repliCATS-contact@unimelb.edu.au. There will be repliCATS team members on hand during the workshop to answer any technical questions. However, the more familiar you are with the platform, the more smoothly your group will run.

At the start of the workshop

Recording. The repliCATS team would like to record the discussions in each group. However, we do need consent from all group members. All group members should have completed a consent form which indicates whether they are comfortable being recorded. However, please ask your group if they agree to the conversation being recorded. If anyone is at all uncomfortable about being recorded, we will not record that group. Emphasise that this can be for any reason, and will not be a problem. If everyone is happy with being recorded, please start the recorder and leave it in the centre of the table. If anyone changes their mind, and wants to pause recording at any stage, or stop it entirely, that’s ok. Otherwise, leave the recorder running – only stop it for any long breaks (eg lunchtime). If you find you haven’t been given a recorder for your group, don’t delay the start of your discussions, but please check with a repliCATS team member at the earliest opportunity.

Please note that recording discussion should not be seen as a substitute for making in-platform comments. Please encourage your group to also add comments on the platform.

Check in on the group.

1. Check whether the group members have all completed their demographic surveys. At the very least they must have completed the consent form.

2. Find out how familiar group members are with the articles relating to the group’s claims. The repliCATS team will do our best to ensure that all members are at the same stage, for example, all having completed Round 1 judgements prior to the workshop.

3. Give the group some ground rules for discussion, and the time that is available per claim.
Set a timer. With a substantial number of claims to get through in a limited time, facilitators will need to keep to a schedule. It may be useful to set a timer for each claim, e.g. through an app on your phone. We have allowed approximately 20 minutes per claim for discussion, we recommend allowing:

- 5 minutes for participants to review the claims and estimates of the group in silence (i.e. prior to discussion),
- 10 minutes for discussion,
- 5 minute quiet time for individuals to revise their estimates.

During the workshop

Before each claim: Note the start time of each claim on your running sheet. Please clearly articulate the claim id and round before each discussion e.g. “Claim JA2 Round one”. This will be very helpful for the purposes of the transcription of the audio. Similarly, if you could clearly articulate the Question number for each discussion in Round 2 e.g. “Question one”.

Facilitating discussion. Please make sure you have read the document Guidelines for Discussion and Round 2, which provides guidelines for good discussion e.g. “Encourage quieter individuals to discuss their views” and “Ask questions about extreme values that is the very low or very high estimates that look different to the rest of the groups' responses”.

Interesting discussions. We do not expect you to take notes during discussions. However, if you could indicate on your running sheet any discussions that you thought were particularly rich or interesting. (You could just circle or put a star next to the claim on the sheet.) This could be for any reason – because the discussion was detailed, there was a significant difference of perspective, or concepts were discussed in a novel way, for example. By indicating this to us, you will help us to identify which questions to analyse first in the audio.

At the end of the workshop

Recorders. At the conclusion of each day, switch off the recording device (if used) and make sure it is handed back to a repliCATS team member.

Follow-up interviews. Let the group know that members of the repliCATS team may contact them about follow-up interviews. Participation in these is completely optional.

Future involvement. Reiterate that the repliCATS project is ongoing, and we want participants to continue to be involved, e.g., by setting up their own groups to assess claims.

Thank the group. The repliCATS team are highly conscious that this project involves a lot of time invested by our participants. We hope that the project is interesting, and that participants will learn from it. However, we are grateful for the time that people are putting in – please express this gratitude to the group.

And thank you to you! We especially appreciate the extra effort you have put in by agreeing to be a facilitator.

Key contacts during the workshop

Technical problems: Felix Singleton Thorn felix.singleton@unimelb.edu.au
Complaints or code of conduct breaches: Hannah Fraser hfraser@unimelb.edu.au
General non-urgent enquiries: repliCATS-contact@unimelb.edu.au