

Student Affairs

October 2014

Assessment Newsletter



Creating Good Surveys

Surveying is a great medium to collect data and there are several online programs, such as Qualtrics, that can help us create surveys smoothly, quickly, and professionally. However, even with the best intentions we can create surveys that will yield skewed results. So what goes into creating a good survey?

First, a survey should have a clear, specific assessment question and a clearly identified population of interest. The population of interest should be willing to complete the survey, and the assessor should consider the best way to administer the survey: self-administered, online, paper mailed, and in-person are a few common options.

Next, if there is an existing survey that fits the needs of the assessor, that survey should be used. If not, new survey questions will need to be created that are:

1. Simple: easy to understand questions
2. Specific: they request exact feedback on items
3. Individual: only one question in each item
4. Exhaustive: every possible answer choice is provided
5. Optional: if there a sensitive question, make it optional if it doesn't greatly affect your survey
6. Neutral: no leading overtones or loaded questions
7. Balanced: there should be an equal number of negative and positive responses

Finally, the researcher will need to consider the format of the survey and have an expert review the survey. After pilot testing the survey, the researcher can then begin revision.

Leading Questions

Leading questions, such as the one that follows, encourages respondents to answer in a specific way.

Don't you agree that Eastern Illinois University is the best University in Illinois?

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) Neutral
- d) Disagree
- e) Strongly Disagree

In the example, the words "don't you agree" can drive respondents to agree that EIU is the best University in Illinois. These leading questions are often easy to spot, because they contain a negative such as "don't you" or "wouldn't you."

Making a Survey Design Checklist

In *Successful Assessment for Student Affairs: A How-to Guide* (2013) PaperClip Communications suggests questions to consider as you write your survey. A few, but not all, of the suggested questions are as follows:

	Yes	No
Design Preparation		
Did you write down what decision will be made based on the data?		
Do you have no more than 3 main objectives for the survey?		
Does your survey include an introduction explaining the purpose of the study, duration, and incentive information?		
Survey Structure		
Does the survey begin with a closed-ended question?		
Do the questions go from general to specific?		
Do all questions relate to your objects?		
Survey Question Format		
Are the questions simple and concise?		
Did you phrase items in a question format?		
Did you instruct the participants on how to effectively respond to the scaled questions (e.g., Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements...)?		
Survey Administration Logistics		
Have you checked with the Institutional Review Board to see if approval is needed?		
Who will be taking the survey? Have you gained access to that group/email list, etc.?		
Have you revised the questionnaire draft according to feedback from the pilot test?		

Survey Implementation Steps

1. Develop a recruitment plan for the population: Sample size? How will you recruit?
2. Develop a plan for survey results: If sharing with anyone outside of the university, check with the IRB about the need for their review
3. Begin Data collection: Monitor progress of data collection & participant recruitment. If not meeting expectations, how can your plan be revised?
4. Stop Data Collection
5. Analyze Data: What resources on campus can assist data analysis? Faculty, graduate students, academic departments?
6. Develop a report or summary sheet of findings with related recommendations to share with key stakeholders

Join us for the November Student Affairs Assessment Coffees

Date: Tuesday, October 7 & 21

Time: 9 a.m.—10 a.m.

Who: Anyone!

Where: Martinsville Room, MLK, Jr. University Union

Why: To converse with student affairs faculty, staff, and others about general assessment topics as well as discuss or ask questions about your own survey creation or dispersion methods.