

UNC Institutional Survey Guidelines

UNCOA-001

Effective Date: November 1, 2011

Office of Assessment

Approved by Robbyn Wacker, Acting Provost and Senior Vice President

I. Introduction

In recent years, the University of Northern Colorado has seen an increase in the use of surveys for institutional planning, assessment, and program evaluation. In addition to surveys conducted for institutional purposes, individual researchers frequently request access to university constituents for research purposes. Although survey methods are often an efficient and effective method of collecting information, overuse of surveys has been shown to contribute to lower response rates, which can affect the validity and meaningfulness of each survey. As the use of surveys for institutional assessment and research purposes has increased, a centralized system for managing their use is needed. These guidelines were created to address a need for more effective management of the use of surveys at the University of Northern Colorado.

II. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to improve the use of surveys for institutional planning, assessment, program evaluation, and research by:

- Providing centralized oversight of institutional surveys;
- Assuring that institutional surveys are consistent with and necessary to support university priorities;
- Improving the quality of surveys being used on campus;
- Reducing the number and frequency of surveys administered to the same individuals;
- Reducing the collection of duplicate information from multiple surveys;
- Promoting communication and collaboration between university programs and administrative units with similar data needs; and
- Ensuring the appropriate dissemination of survey results to internal and external audiences.

III. Scope

These guidelines apply to all surveys of 200 or more university constituents.

Surveys conducted by UNC faculty, staff, and/or students for research purposes only will be eligible for an expedited review (see section V). All other surveys will be subject to full review.

Institutional surveys that are conducted on a regular basis may receive multi-year approval not to exceed five years. In the event that there are substantive changes to the instrument, administration period, or survey population before the five year period ends, these surveys should be re-submitted for review. Examples of these types of surveys include the annual Alumni Survey and the CIRP Freshman Survey.

Surveys that are exempt from these guidelines include the following:

- Research or institutional surveys of fewer than 200 UNC constituents
- Academic degree program exit surveys

- Workshop or service evaluations administered at the time of service
- Course evaluations
- Intake questionnaires used to determine program eligibility or participant needs

IV. Definitions

Census: Survey administered to entire population.

Institutional Review Board: University body charged with approving research involving human subjects.

Institutional Survey Committee: University body charged with reviewing and approving applications to conduct surveys of university constituents. The ISC is co-chaired by the Directors of Assessment and Institutional Analysis or their designees.

Institutional Survey: Survey used to collect data for institutional planning, assessment, and/or program evaluation. This includes surveys used to support external accreditation.

Population: All of the individuals who make up a single group of interest. For example, all first-year students, all international students, etc.

Research Survey: Survey used to collect data for research purposes only. These surveys are not intended to inform policy or decision-making within the institution.

Sample: Group of individuals from a population who will be surveyed.

Sampling method: Process used to determine which individuals will be included in the survey sample.

Survey: Method of collecting data through the use of a standardized questionnaire. Modes of administration include electronic surveys, paper-and-pencil surveys, and telephone surveys. A single survey may be conducted for both institutional and research purposes.

University Constituents: All currently enrolled students, employees, and alumni.

V. Procedure

Individuals or programs wishing to conduct a survey of university constituents with sample sizes greater than 200 are required to submit an application for expedited or full review (see attached Application to Conduct a Survey at UNC) to the Institutional Survey Committee. **Surveys that fall within the exempt category are not subject to review.**

A. Expedited Review (research surveys only)

The application addresses the following criteria:

- Eligibility for expedited review;
- Desired population and sample size for the survey;
- The survey administration method and timeline; and
- Compliance with FERPA and IRB.

Expedited requests will be reviewed by the survey specialist and one faculty member of the Institutional Survey Committee (ISC). Applicants will be notified of their status within five business days upon receipt of the application. Upon approval, the applicant should work with the Office of Institutional Analysis to obtain the survey sample. Applicants whose surveys are not approved will be provided a written statement indicating the reasons for the decision and recommendations for any changes required prior to re-submission.

B. Full Review (all other surveys)

The application addresses the following criteria:

- The purpose of and rationale for the survey;

- The desired population and sample size for the survey;
- The sampling method that will be used;
- The survey administration method and timeline;
- Compliance with FERPA and any other policies regarding the use of institutional data;
- Compliance with IRB if applicable; and
- Plans for disseminating the results (internally and/or externally).

Two members of the Institutional Survey Committee will review all applications submitted for full review. The application will be evaluated based on the following considerations:

- Evidence that the survey will support institutional priorities related to strategic planning, program assessment and evaluation, and/or accreditation;
- Overall quality of the instrument and sampling method;
- Whether the proposed time frame for the survey overlaps with previously approved surveys;
- The extent to which the desired population for the survey has been surveyed during the previous 12 months;
- Whether IRB approval was obtained if necessary; and
- Whether the desired information has been collected by another program or individual during the previous 12 months.

Applicants will be notified of the status of their application within 10 business days upon receipt by the committee. Upon approval, the applicant will receive their requested survey sample from the Office of Assessment either via email or through BearDrive (depending on the student information being provided with the sample), except in cases where they are surveying only individuals who are participants in their program. Applicants whose surveys are not approved will be provided a written statement indicating the reasons for the decision and recommendations for any changes required prior to re-submission.

Applicants submitting institutional surveys must agree to make available a copy of the results and/or raw data to the Offices of Assessment and the Office of Institutional Analysis upon request.¹

C. Census Surveys

Except in limited circumstances, it is typically not necessary to survey an entire population (census survey). Applicants seeking to administer a census survey of all currently enrolled students and/or all employees (research, institutional, or both) should provide a specific rationale for why a census is appropriate. **Census surveys of UNC constituents may not be administered without approval from the Provost.**

D. Additional Requirements

The Registrar is responsible for the review of all student mailing list requests from University-affiliated or non-affiliated groups or individuals. The Registrar has the right to deny the release of any list if it is deemed to be used for a purpose that does not promote the educational functions, business, or programs of the University. Requests submitted for student survey sample lists may be reviewed by the Registrar prior to release of the information. Students who have requested non-disclosure of their directory information will not be included in any mailing lists

¹ Does not apply to research-only surveys.