

FAQ – UNC Institutional Survey Guidelines

1. Why does UNC need guidelines for institutional surveys?

In recent years, UNC has seen an increase in the use of surveys for institutional planning, assessment, and program evaluation. In addition to institutional surveys, individuals frequently seek to survey UNC students and employees for research purposes. Although surveys can be an efficient and effective method of collecting information, overuse of surveys contributes to lower response rates, which can affect the usefulness of each survey. As the use of surveys at UNC has increased, a centralized system is needed to ensure that students and employees are not over-surveyed.

2. What is the purpose of the new guidelines?

The institutional survey guidelines are intended 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 institutional 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 institutional survey results to internal and external audiences.

3. To whom do these guidelines apply?

The guidelines apply to any UNC student or employee seeking to survey 200 or more UNC students, employees, or alumni.

4. Are there any exemptions?

Surveys that are exempt from these guidelines include the following:

- Research or institutional surveys of fewer than 200 UNC constituents (students, employees, or alumni);
- Academic degree program exit surveys;
- Workshop or service evaluations administered at the time of service;
- Course evaluations; and
- Intake questionnaires used to determine program eligibility or participant needs.

5. What is the approval process for administering an institutional survey?

There are two processes: one for surveys that are for research purposes, and one for institutional surveys used for assessment, planning, and evaluation purposes.

6. Why are there two different processes?

For research surveys, the review process considers three issues: (1) the survey sample; (2) the administration method and timeline; and (3) compliance with FERPA and IRB. The purpose of the review process for research surveys is to minimize the number of surveys being administered to the same individuals within the same timeline.

For institutional surveys, the review process is expanded to consider additional issues including (1) the purpose of and rationale for the survey; (2) compliance with FERPA, IRB, and any other policies regarding the use of institutional data; and (3) plans for sharing the results. Institutional surveys will be evaluated based on the following considerations:

- Evidence that the survey will support institutional priorities related to planning, assessment, evaluation, and/or accreditation;
- Overall quality of the instrument and sampling method;
- Whether the proposed timeline 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.

7. How long does the approval process take?

For research surveys, the approval process will take five business days. For institutional surveys, the approval process will take ten business days.

8. If my survey is not approved, what are my options?

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 submission.

For research surveys, reasons for not granting approval include the following: (1) issues related to the sample; (2) issues related to the proposed timeline; and/or (3) failure to show proof that IRB approval has been attained.

An institutional survey may not be approved based on the reasons described for research surveys. In addition, an institutional survey may not be approved due to (1) issues related to the quality of the survey; (2) failure to show a need for the survey; and/or (3) if the data sought are already available from another source (e.g., a recent survey administered by someone else on campus, institutional data, etc.).

Applicants will have an opportunity to address concerns raised during the review process and re-submit the application upon revision.

9. Who conducts the review?

The Provost will appoint an Institutional Survey Committee, co-chaired by the Director of Assessment and one additional member, who will be responsible for conducting reviews. The ISC will be comprised of faculty and staff with experience and expertise in survey methods and design. Research surveys will be reviewed by one of the co-chairs, and institutional surveys will be reviewed by two members of the committee.

10. What if I want to conduct a census survey?

In most cases, a random sample of the desired population will yield better results than a census. Applicants seeking to administer a census survey of all enrolled students and/or all employees will need to provide a specific rationale for why a census is necessary. Census surveys may not be administered without approval from the Provost.

11. After my survey is approved, how do I obtain the contact information for my sample?

Once a survey has been approved, the applicant may request contact information for the survey sample from the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Complete details about this process will be provided when the survey has been approved.

12. Where can I find more information?

Questions can be directed to Kim Black, Director of Assessment, at kim.black@unco.edu or 351-1102.