

UNC SURVEY POLICY AND PROCEDURES – September 23, 2021

In recent years, the University of Northern Colorado has seen an increase in the use of surveys for institutional planning, assessment, program evaluation and individual research (e.g., individual faculty, student research). 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 and research purposes has increased, a centralized system for managing their use is needed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide coordinated guidance regarding survey creation, distribution, and analysis for institutional surveys (e.g., institutional planning, assessment, program evaluation) and surveys constructed for the purpose of academic research as defined by the Common Rule (UNC employees and students only). This policy is intended to: a) protect the community members' privacy, b) monitor survey frequency to avoid survey fatigue, c) ensure the safety of data collection and usage, and d) avoid duplication of questions and data.

The process strives to:

- Provide centralized oversight of institutional and individual research surveys.
- Prioritize the distribution of surveys that benefit the broader interest and goals of the University as a whole.
- Promote good survey design, sampling, and administration that conforms to methodological best practice.
- Reduce survey fatigue and unnecessary survey proliferation.
 - Reduce the collection of duplicate information from multiple surveys.
 - Reduce the number and frequency of surveys administered to the same person to no more than 2 surveys per semester with rare exception at the discretion of the Provost or President.
- Promote communication and collaboration between university programs and administrative units with similar data needs.
- Ensure the appropriate dissemination of survey results to internal and external audiences.
- Ensure that survey research is done ethically and respects our community members' time and attention.
- Comply with state and federal privacy mandates (e.g., FERPA, Colorado Privacy Act) as well as with IRB privacy and data security requirements under 46 CRS 45 as well as UNC institutional policy.
- Direct faculty, staff, and students seeking to survey UNC constituents only for academic research purposes to the appropriate office (ORSP) for advertising their research studies

DEFINITIONS

Anonymous Data Collection: When data are recorded so that information can never be linked to the subject who supplied it.

Assessment: As defined by Marchese, 1987, "Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development".

Confidential Data Collection: When data are recorded with a link that can be used later to retrieve the user's identity, but respondents are provided assurances that this linkage will not be publicly communicated.

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

Institutional Survey: Survey used to collect data for institutional planning, assessment, program evaluation, and/or accreditation.

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

Research: As defined by 45 CFR §46.102 "Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge".

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. Effective, August 30th, 2021, UNC will no longer provide email addresses for research surveys. To support faculty research, ORSP provides a webpage for [Current Studies Seeking Volunteers](#) and a link to this webpage will be included in UNC's Around Campus and UNC Today newsletters.

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

Sampling method: Process used to determine which individuals will be selected from the population of interest and included in the survey sample.

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

Survey Administrator: Individual responsible for the creation, distribution, and oversight of a given survey.

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

POLICY

SCOPE

This policy applies to all surveys of 100 or more university constituents. Surveys will be reviewed by leadership for approval. Unless exempted (see limited exemption scenarios listed below), individuals and offices wishing to conduct a survey covered by this policy must first gain approval from their relevant Vice President. For full population surveys, Provost must also approve. Researchers external to the UNC community will not be permitted to conduct unsponsored survey research at UNC.

Surveys of the Entire population

Except in limited circumstances, it is unnecessary to survey an entire population.

Applicants seeking to administer a survey of all currently enrolled students, faculty and/or staff (research, institutional, or both) should provide a specific rationale for why surveying an entire population is appropriate and necessary. **Surveys of entire populations of students, faculty and/or staff may not be administered without approval from the Vice President in charge of the area wishing to conduct the survey and the Provost.**

Coordination with the Institutional Survey Calendar

Institutional surveys will receive priority when coordinating the calendar. The following timelines for IRE are based on the need to coordinate with all institutional and academic surveys with 100 or more university constituents:

1. Surveys with a sample of 100-299 recruits will require 2-3 weeks of coordination time.
2. Surveys with a sample of 300-499 recruits will require 4-6 weeks of coordination time.
3. Surveys with a sample of 500 or more recruits will require 12 weeks of coordination time.

To ensure surveys can be accommodated, coordination with the institutional survey calendar must be completed.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Through informed consent, respondents must be informed that their responses will be collected: neither confidential nor anonymous, confidential, or anonymous. Respondents must also be informed that their participation is voluntary. If email addresses, login credentials or other personally identifiable information is captured as part of the survey completion process, confidentiality of the data must be guaranteed by following procedures as outlined in the survey application.

All surveys must comply with the:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
- Colorado Privacy Act
- Belmont Report's Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research and
- American Association of Educational Research Code of Ethics.

DATA SECURITY

The individual conducting the survey is responsible for managing the obtained survey data. Survey results can only be presented in aggregate form and released data must not contain any identifiable respondent information. When presenting survey results, survey administrators are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of respondents.

Additionally, by accepting the authorization to administer the survey, individuals understand and acknowledge that they have an obligation to use the data compiled responsibly, ensuring that data is not redistributed to parties inside or outside the UNC community, unless clearly detailed when requesting survey approval. Violation of these obligation may impact the approval of future requests. No survey responses may be stored, hosted or collected on any technology platform that UNC does not maintain as part of its network. All data collected under an IRB protocol must follow security parameters outlined within the protocol, including relevant storage, encryption, and destruction of data.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

IRB review will be required if the purposes of the survey fall into the realm of academic research. If you are unsure whether your survey requires IRB approval, please see UNC's IRB website. Survey approval through UNC's IRB does not denote approval for distribution to UNC constituents unless the survey is deemed exempt from this policy.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

Surveys are not to be sent via email attachment as email is not a secure medium for confidential information. Online surveys are to be created in the UNC-approved survey tool. UNC supports one university-wide survey tool with multiple user accounts. Survey data collected through the approved survey tool is encrypted and hosted in a secure data center.

USE OF INCENTIVES (gift cards, cash or prizes with a cash value exceeding \$50)

Please contact the Office of Finance and Administration for incentive usage guidelines as there may be tax and financial aid implications.

SANCTIONS

Written notification to the responsible party's supervisor and President's Cabinet Representative will occur if personnel administer surveys that violate this policy. Policy violators will need clearance from their President's Cabinet Representative before they can submit future survey requests.

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.

All surveys covered by this policy must comply with ADA standards of accessibility.

EXEMPTIONS

Though the following surveys are exempt from seeking survey approval, *the distribution of any survey to more than 100 constituents must be executed in coordination with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and the institutional survey calendar.*

- Surveys of fewer than 100 UNC students, faculty, and/or staff.
- Surveys involving the collection of data from persons who are not, or have not been UNC students, faculty, staff, or alumni
- Institutional surveys such as NSSE, FSSE, SSI, etc.
- Faculty-driven classroom surveys meant to assess teaching and learning
- Employee evaluation surveys
- Academic degree program exit surveys
- Workshop or service evaluations administered at the time of service
- Course evaluations
- Surveys conducted within one classroom or course
- Surveys conducted within the membership of a student organization, committee, working group, or academic department
- Intake questionnaires used to determine program eligibility or participant needs
- Other types of data collection efforts, including web-based questionnaires/polls function as registration/RSVPs for events or activities, web-based elections, and focus groups/interviews (e.g., requesting contact information)