

Survey Planning and Design

If you are planning to conduct a survey of students, faculty, staff or alumni, here are some factors that you should consider. Careful attention to addressing these issues will help insure that you will get the most from your survey research. Most of the items on this list are based on Linda A. Suskie's book "Questionnaire Survey Research: What Works?" This list was compiled by and is used with permission of, Ross Moran, director of Institutional Research at Cal State, San Bernadino.

1. What are the objectives of your survey?
2. Do you really need a survey?
 - Would a review of earlier studies suffice?
 - If a similar survey was conducted in the past, would you have a reason to expect different results?
 - Have you checked with Institutional Research about existing data sources?
3. What are the critical questions to be answered by the survey?
4. What additional topic areas will you include?
5. Whom will you survey?
6. Do you need a sample of a group or the entire group?
7. If a sample, how will they be selected?
8. Will this survey be a "one time" study or will it be repeated in the future?
9. How will the results be used?
 - To benefit the University as a whole?
 - To benefit a specific department?
 - To improve instruction?
 - To assist faculty, staff, students, research, and institutes for publication purposes, grants, and theses?
 - (Note: Such projects usually also require the approval of the Institutional Review Board.)
10. Does the Institutional Review Board also need to review the survey proposal?
11. Are the operational definition of concepts that you will use in the survey clear to both the intended respondents and the audience of the survey findings? (e.g., "Campus Climate")
12. Who will review your "final" survey questions?

13. How will you "pilot test" the survey?
 14. Will the survey be anonymous or confidential? (Confidential allows for linking to external data sources which may prove beneficial.)
 15. How much have you budgeted for this survey (both money and personnel)?
 16. How will this survey be administered?
 - Mail - (Campus or US)? Where will you get the addresses?
 - In-class - How will you select the classes? Who will actually administer?
 - Web - How will people be invited to participate?
 17. Will there be a follow-up to non-respondents?
 18. Will there be incentives to encourage participation?
 19. What is the time-frame for this survey? Is it consistent with the academic year schedule?
 20. Who will enter the survey data into a computer?
 21. Who will verify the entered data?
 22. What is the goal of the analysis and reporting the data?
 - Descriptive averages and frequencies for the survey as a whole? and/or
 - Comparisons intended to explain, predict or explore differences between populations of interest?
 23. Have there been earlier studies of relevance to this survey which might form a basis for comparison?
 24. Who will analyze your data?
 25. To whom will you report your results?
 26. Where will your data and reports be archived?
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Source:

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For more information:

Questionnaire Survey Research: What Works? By Linda A. Suskie
<http://www.airweb.org/page.asp?page=88>