

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE SURVEY ADMINISTRATION PROTOCOL

THE IMPORTANCE OF SURVEYS

A survey is a systematic approach used to collect data about a population (e.g. students, faculty, staff, alumni, employers) by asking them to respond to specific questions related to things like their backgrounds, experiences, opinions, attitudes, and plans. Information can be gathered both quantitatively (e.g. via rating scales) or qualitatively through open-ended questions. When well designed, surveys provide a wealth of meaningful information and insights to guide quality program improvement and future initiatives.

RATIONALE FOR OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION

Academic units and administrative offices at UofL have increased the number of online surveys administered to faculty, staff, and students across the university community. This increase is due, in large part, to the rigorous requirements of both regional (SACSCOC) and discipline-specific accrediting bodies necessitating UofL to administer more institutional assessments (e.g. online course evaluations, Student Perception Survey, Graduating Student Surveys). In addition, the availability of a variety of user-friendly online survey software applications has increased the overall number of surveys that are administered across campus. Offices often compete for the same target populations and time periods for conducting their surveys, and on occasion, surveys have overlapping aims, making them redundant to their audience. The overabundance of surveys causes “survey fatigue”, which results in lower response rates and less useful information across all surveys.

As an institution we must pay greater attention to a) the rationale for and quality design of surveys, b) the coordination of survey administration through one central office to maximize response rates, and c) the meaningful use of results to inform and guide continuous program improvement. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) has been charged by the Provost to serve in this capacity. It is IE’s responsibility to minimize over-surveying and give thoughtful consideration to the need for and timing of surveys. Enhancing the oversight of survey administration serves to help UofL get the most out of survey results.

At times, it may be appropriate for departments/offices to administer their own surveys for reasons of strict confidentiality within their area; in these cases, IE asks that the survey request form is completed to make the office aware of the administration dates and the population. In certain cases, these surveys may be exempt from the requirement of an action plan.

EXCEPTIONS

These guidelines will not apply to the following common survey types and will not need to be submitted for review by the IE office; however, they may still require IRB approval:

- Small-scale “point of service” surveys that occur as a result of participants attending an instructional session, training, meeting, or event.

- Surveys administered by faculty for scholarly research (although collaboration is encouraged for reasons stated above).
- Surveys administered for thesis/dissertation research.
- Surveys administered by students for class projects.

All other surveys will need to be submitted for review by completing the online [survey request form](#).

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Initiating Survey Request

Faculty, staff, and students at UofL interested in conducting a survey of faculty, staff, students, alumni, or employers are expected to consult with the IE office prior to the development and/or administration of a survey. This can be done through the online [survey request form](#). The form will ask for information regarding the purpose of the survey, intended population/sample size, timing of administration, survey questions, how data will be used, and what type of assistance is needed.

Online Survey Calendar

Before selecting a date to launch a survey, consult the [online survey calendar](#) to determine if any other surveys are already scheduled to be administered to the target population. Preventing overlap will help mitigate survey fatigue and will ensure the highest possible response rates across all surveys each semester. The IE office is responsible for maintaining the online survey calendar which includes surveys that will be sent to students, faculty, staff, alumni, or employers and contains information regarding the survey title, population, and administration dates.

Survey Administration Timeline

Before completing the online survey request form, consult the [Survey Administration Timeline](#). The timeline serves as a step-by-step guide regarding the procedures that will be taken by the survey requestor and the IE office before, during, and after the survey administration. The IE office will work closely with the individuals/offices directly associated with each survey request. Please note that due to the large number of survey requests and the time that is needed to make programmatic improvements based on prior survey results, surveys will now be administered on a two or more year basis unless otherwise required.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Some surveys require approval through the [Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Research Office](#). Please be sure to review the IRB requirements to determine if your survey needs IRB approval prior to launch. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is not responsible for IRB applications.

Survey Action Plan Forms

After an office/department has conducted a survey, either the [First Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form](#) or the [Subsequent Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form](#) must be completed within 3 months of the survey closing. The First Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form should be used after the administration of the first iteration of a survey. This form asks for

information regarding the key survey findings and proposed actions for using the survey results (for program/departmental planning and/or improvement). The Subsequent Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form should be used after the administration of subsequent iterations of a survey. In addition to asking for information regarding the key survey findings and proposed actions for using the survey results, this form also asks for a status update regarding the previous action plan. In order to “close the loop,” it is necessary to reflect on the action plan from the previous administration of the survey, to address what, if any, improvements were made, and then create a new action plan to move forward based on the most recent survey results.

IE reserves the right to discontinue future iterations of a survey’s administration until either the First Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form or the Subsequent Iteration of Survey Administration - Action Plan Form has been submitted.

This information will not only serve as documentation for your office/department regarding how the survey results will be used, but it will also assist the IE office in preparing comprehensive reports that are required for SACSCOC accreditation.