

# Survey Guidelines

## **Types of Surveys**

### Cross-sectional Surveys

- These surveys are administered to a large group at a particular moment in time. Cross-sectional surveys attempt to uncover participants' responses at a single point in time. In this case, shorter time frames are important so that responses are not influenced by external changes over time
- For example: student perceptions following the completion of the first academic year; student behaviour following a promotional campaign; students' understanding of learning outcomes following an activity

### Longitudinal Surveys

- Longitudinal surveys are designed to assess change over time and therefore must be administered at least twice. They include:
  - Trend study – two groups surveyed at different times to capture change
  - Cohort – a survey administered to the same sample to establish changes within a cohort

## **Preparing the Survey**

### Selecting a Sample

- Simple Random Sample – random selection of participants from a sample
- Stratified Random Sample – random sample selected from a subpopulation (ex: based on year of study)
- Systematic Random Sample – random selection based on a specific ordering of sample selection (ex: every third student on a list of students)

### Surveys can be used to report on:

- Perceptions (satisfaction) – e. g. How satisfied were you with the level of service provided by the Office of the Registrar?
- Behaviours (frequency of) – e.g. How often do you visit the Health & Counselling Centre in a month?
- Observations – e.g. Do you think that our campus is a safe place?
- Learning outcomes – e.g. After participating in this workshop, are you able to articulate the advantages and impact of a diverse society?

### Methods of Administration

- Paper surveys
  - Begins with a captive audience
  - Administrator can be available for questions
  - Limits technology issues
  - Requires data entry
- Mobile surveys (available through CampusLabs)

- Can be administered without wireless connection using mobile app
- Reaches participants at a point of service, or during/after an event
- Limited to multiple choice questions
- Less functionality – cannot do ranking questions or identity collection
- Fast, accurate, flexible in terms of location
- Technology dependent
- Web surveys
  - Data immediately uploaded to system and presented for analysis
  - Ability to send mass notifications of survey which includes targeting non-respondents
  - Not necessarily a captive audience

### **Open-ended versus Objective questions**

**Open-ended** questions allow for respondents to potentially contribute more in-depth answers to questions. However, leaving room for open-ended responses makes it more difficult to compare answers, look for trends and measure responses against each other. Open-ended questions can also cause some respondents to avoid answering the question altogether.

**Objective** questions make comparisons across responses much easier and can make a survey of a large number of people much more manageable. However, respondents are limited by predetermined responses and do not have much freedom to provide the most detailed and accurate response.

### **Improving Response Rates**

- Limit questions and length of surveys
  - Greater attrition occurs at 22 questions or approximately 13 minutes into a survey
  - Remove 'nice to know' questions and eliminate already known information
- Announce a survey before it is being delivered and do so from a familiar source. Invitations should include:
  - A request for help
  - The purpose and the importance of the survey
  - How the survey is relevant, its length, and how results will be used
- Avoid busy times of year - first half of term better than the second half
- Remind students in 2-3 day intervals. Note plateaus in responses.
- Include a statement of confidentiality or anonymity
- Avoid survey fatigue
  - Explore multiple data collection methods
  - Avoid sending multiple surveys at or around the same time