

NUMBER: Upstate

SECTION: Division of Planning, Institutional Research and Metropolitan Studies

SUBJECT: Internal and External Survey Administration

DATE: November 4, 2013

REVISED:

Policy for: USC Upstate

Procedure for: USC Upstate

Authorized by: USC Upstate Cabinet—2013.11.5

Issued by: Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning

I. Policy

This policy applies to any internal or external entity intending to gather information from University faculty, staff, students or alumni.

USC Upstate regularly participates in a variety of surveys of students, faculty, staff, and the larger University community in an effort to collect data necessary for accountability and planning efforts. With the increase in survey requests from both internal and external individuals and agencies, it is necessary to define a policy and procedure for their administration. This document provides coordinated guidance regarding survey planning, creation, and distribution in an effort to:

- Minimize duplicate surveys;
- Maximize the response-rates for critical University surveys;
- Encourage appropriate survey methodology and design;
- Eliminate confusion regarding confidentiality/anonymity of responses;
- Standardize survey formatting; and
- Minimize survey fatigue by limiting the number and timing of surveys to specific groups.

For the purpose of this document, a survey is defined as a request to individuals for data or opinions via mail, telephone, e-mail, and/or other technology or person-to-person modalities. The coordination of University survey initiatives is the responsibility of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance and the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning in the Division of Planning, Institutional Research, and Metropolitan Studies. *(Surveys related to students' personal or course-required research or faculty's personal or tenure-related research do not need approval through the Office. Surveys of this type cannot be branded with the USC Upstate logo and must clearly indicate that the University is not affiliated with the endeavor.)* If there is any question whether an assessment tool falls under this policy, please contact the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance for guidance.

II. Procedure

Survey Approval

All surveys and requests for surveys, whether developed by faculty, staff, students, or external constituents and regardless of intended scope and audience, should be routed through the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance in the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning for review. Approval is necessary for all surveys, although the Director does not necessarily determine the content. In the approval process, the Director will consult with departments who may be impacted by the survey (i.e., University Communications; Dean of Students; Academic Affairs, etc...) and consider the following criteria, with primary importance given to alleviating the burden on the target groups and the significance of the survey to the University's planning and assessment programs.

- Timing of the survey;
- Design of the survey, including formatting, scope, and mode of delivery;
- Extent to which multiple surveys can be combined; and
- Extent to which extant data from other sources meets the requirements.

This approval does not replace necessary approval by the USC Institutional Review Board (IRB). It is the requestor's responsibility to obtain approval from the USC Institutional Review Board (IRB). (<http://orc.research.sc.edu/irb.shtml>)

Survey Design

The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning can help design survey tools to meet the needs of campus constituents. In the case of surveys that are expected to provide useful information to the University or one of its departments, design and creation assistance is included in the scope of the Office's duties. All question wording and survey formatting becomes the property of USC Upstate and can be used for other surveys as appropriate. Assistance with surveys that are not expected to provide information useful to the University or one of its departments (i.e., surveys related to students' research or faculty tenure research endeavors) is also available through the Office and can be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Survey Distribution

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance, in consultation with appropriate administrators who will potentially be impacted by the survey (i.e., University Communications; Dean of Students; Academic Affairs, etc...) will determine whether the survey should be distributed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance, the originator, or not at all via traditional communication methods (mail, email, person-to-person, telephone). In the event that the survey's distribution is limited, survey links can be posted on the USC Upstate social media sites at the discretion of University Communications. Regardless of the mode of dissemination, in-house surveys must be created and distributed using software provided by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning unless otherwise authorized by the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance.

III. Timeline

Review, approval, design, and creation of surveys will be completed as quickly as possible, although a variety of factors play a role in the process including the length of the survey, the number of revisions, and the workload of the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning. Every effort will be made to work within realistic time constraints. A 10-item survey can likely be developed and ready for distribution in 48-72 hours while a survey containing 50 items and more intricate methodology may require two weeks or more. Please keep this in mind when developing a distribution schedule.

IV. Results

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Use of Results

All surveys administered by any Upstate office or individual are presumed to be anonymous. If the survey is not anonymous, it must contain the statement: "This survey is not anonymous: individuals can be identified together with their responses."

Anonymous means that survey responses cannot be connected with information that might identify respondents. Respondents who choose to include identifying information (such as their names) in their responses forfeit claims of anonymity.

Confidential means that survey responses can be connected to information that identifies survey respondents. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance is the only person capable of associating responses with respondents. The Director will not release identifying information without the written consent of respondents. All requests for identifying information *must* be reported by the Director to the Chancellor and to the Faculty Chair.

The results of a confidential survey will be reported only in aggregate, ensuring that identification of respondents is impossible. Respondents who choose to include identifying information (such as their names) in their responses forfeit claims of confidentiality.

All data obtained through surveys becomes the property of USC Upstate and can be used to inform decision-making outside the original scope of the survey.