



OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Survey Policy and Guidelines

I. Rationale for Survey Policy

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) receives a large number of survey requests each year. The University's survey policy aims to:

- A. Protect human subjects in all research.
- B. Protect the privacy of St. John's students, faculty and/or staff.
- C. Make sure surveys result in actionable data that are used to advance the University's Mission.
- D. Ensure that all surveys use best practices in data collection and comply with external regulatory requirements for data use.
- E. Monitor survey frequency and reduce "survey fatigue."
- F. Maximize survey response rates.
- G. Minimize conflict with large, institutional surveys.
- H. Reduce costs due to survey duplication.
- I. Ensure data security and integrity.

II. "Survey" Definition

For the purposes of this policy, a survey is defined as the gathering of information through questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups to make inferences about a population or segment of a population. This policy applies to surveys that are administered by St. John's University personnel and students.

III. Scope of Policy

The policy applies to:

1. Surveys Originated Within the University:

This Policy applies to all unsolicited paper, web-based, e-mail, telephone, or face-to-face questionnaires administered by University personnel or students to any of the following constituent groups: students, faculty, alumni, staff, prospective students, parents/guardians of prospective students, and formerly enrolled students.

2. **Surveys Originated Outside of the University:**

Surveys of St. John's students, faculty, alumni, and staff by external parties or third-party vendors will be prohibited except in cases where a member of the University community is a research collaborator. Written requests for exceptions to this Policy may be made to the Office of Institutional Research; please contact Veronica Cava, Ph.D. at cavav@stjohns.edu.

This policy does not apply to:

1. Course evaluations
2. Surveys administered by students as a part of required coursework and data use is limited to a specific single-course project.
3. Learning outcomes assessments conducted by schools/colleges with the University (e.g., program assessment, such as the type done as part of academic accreditation.).
4. Electronic collection of information required for employment, matriculation, or graduation.
5. Surveys administered by academic departments for the purpose of assessment or student outreach.
6. Faculty surveys of students for instructional purposes (i.e., the results will not be published or otherwise disclosed.).
7. Institutional elections.
8. Questionnaires and similar surveys that are used to examine individuals' reactions to a course or a training session or for a similar limited purpose.
9. Surveys/evaluations sent only to persons who have used a University-offered service or attended a specific University program/event.
10. Surveys sent by voluntary associations to their own members (e.g., registered student clubs or service groups.)
11. Surveys sent to members of a voluntary e-mail list.

IV. **Survey Process:**

A. **Consult with OIR** to ensure University Standards are met for survey approval:

1. What is the purpose of the survey?
2. Does it align with the University's [Mission](#)?
3. Does it align with the University's strategic priorities?
4. If applicable, does the proposed research comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ([HIPAA](#))?
5. Is the proposed survey appropriate for the intended target population?
6. Have you received IRB approval? (Supporting documentation must be provided.)
7. Is a survey the proper type of assessment to use?
8. Are there any standardized instruments or nationally benchmarked surveys that might already provide adequate data?

9. Are there any similar surveys already in progress at the University?
10. Is there sufficient time in the survey cycle to accommodate the proposed survey?
11. Are there any costs or additional resources needed to administer the proposed survey?
12. Is the investigator able to assure proper data integrity and data security?
13. Will data be accessible by any third-party vendors, external institutions, or external government agencies as part of the study?

B. Complete Survey Request Form – Complete 2 months in advance of anticipated survey start date; requests completed with less than 2-month advance notice may not be approved, especially if there is a scheduling conflict with previously approved surveys.

C. OIR Review. Survey requests will be approved based on:

1. Content and quality of the survey instrument
2. Overall appropriateness of the research design.
3. Prior IRB approval (if needed).
4. Number of requests to survey the same population during the academic semester of the request (maximum number of survey requests for any constituent group will be limited to **2 per semester**).
5. Proposed dates of survey administration: surveys should not be administered during vacations, holidays, final exams, or course evaluations. **Please note that survey approval is not guaranteed.**
6. Survey requests must be submitted to OIR by **August 15** (Fall semester administrations) or by **December 7** (Spring semester administrations.)

D. Finalize Survey Design and Timeline with OIR – Some Survey Specifics:

1. What is the survey format: online, e-mail, paper, in-person, other?
2. Do you have pre-existing questions or does OIR need to help you develop appropriate questions?
3. Will an incentive or other prize be offered for participating in the survey? If yes, all prize terms and conditions must be clearly stated and included as part of the survey application.

E. Survey Administration

1. Survey administrators must adhere to St. John's policies for handling data:
 - a. Since St. John's University students, faculty, alumni, and/or staff will be surveyed, any resulting data will be considered the property of the University.
 - b. Since survey data are considered property of the University, there is an expectation that data will be shared appropriately with the University community.

- c. Survey administrators must store data securely and use data only for the designated and intended purposes. Data may not be used for the purpose of contacting survey participants for personal or professional gain or for any purpose that is not directly and explicitly related to the approved research goals.
- d. Respondent survey data must be kept confidential. Data that are shared through paper, electronic, or verbal reports must not include personally identifiable information, such as name, X-Number, or Social Security Number. Please see the University [guidelines](#) on using and protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
 - a. **Note:** Researchers should refrain from reporting data with small cell sizes if it could potentially reveal information about an individual person.
- e. Survey data containing participant names, identifying information, email addresses, or other confidential information must be saved and stored on computers or drives that belong to St. John's University.
- f. Group email advance letters, survey invitations, and non-respondent follow-ups must conform to the university [E-Mail Policy](#).
- g. When the survey process is completed, data should be disposed of [properly](#).
- h. Any email lists used for survey administration should not be redistributed or used for any other purposes without the authorization of OIR.

F. Survey Analysis – Things to Consider:

1. Simple analyses can be done using Excel with Pivot Tables; many users have enough expertise in Excel to consider doing these types of analyses on their own. OIR can provide raw data files for users who prefer to do these or other types of analyses.
2. More advanced statistical analyses will require the use of a statistical software package such as SPSS. Part of the survey approval process is determining who will be doing the analysis. OIR has extensive experience in doing advanced statistical analyses for both internal and external surveys and will advise you on the most effective means of interpreting the data collected.
3. If OIR will be doing the analysis for your planned survey, the timeline will be determined during the survey approval process.



NOTE: If you have additional questions after reviewing the “Survey Policy and Guidelines”, please contact Dr. Veronica Cava at cavav@stjohns.edu.