

## Survey Design

So, you want to design a survey but are not sure where to start? Congratulations! This handout should provide some of the groundwork for putting a questionnaire together, including some of the more common pitfalls that may occur.

### Getting Started:

- **What are the goals or objectives of the survey?** You should be able to clearly state the goals of your survey, including why the information is being collected, the type of information that is being sought and how the results collected will be used.
- **Know your audience.** It is important to know who will be taking your survey. A survey designed for administration to students will be very different from a survey designed to be administered to employees at the college. Even when designing surveys to be distributed to adults, a good rule of thumb is to keep survey language at an eighth grade reading level.

### Survey Considerations:

- **Introduce yourself.** Providing a brief description at the beginning of the survey lets respondents know a little bit about why the survey is being given, who is collecting the information, and how the information may be used. It sets up the context to anyone completing your survey, as well as providing the person that ability to choose not to participate.
- **Set Expectations.** Let respondents know up front the length of time they may be committing to in taking your survey. A one page survey, with ten items or less, should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the types of questions used – a good length for a quick opinion survey. Generally, a questionnaire should not be longer than 15 to 20 minutes, unless the respondent is being compensated for their time.
- **Maximize responses.** Group similar items together and organize the survey to have a logical flow. Multiple questions to cover each objective are a good idea, but do not ask too many questions or your respondents will get fatigued and likely abandon the survey.
- **Give Thanks.** You should thank the individuals completing your survey at the end, to let them know you appreciate their willingness to participate.

### Question Considerations:

- **To the point.** Keep questions short and easy to read. Try not to ask about more than one objective in each question.
- **Give me an answer.** Questions should be easy to answer. Make sure than answer choices do not overlap and that you have provided all possible answer choices for close ended questions.
- **Don't ass-u-me.** Avoid questions that may lead your respondent to give a certain answer or questions that assume the person is familiar with the topic you are questioning him/her on. Provide context for your questions, without biasing the respondent.