Questionnaire Design Considerations

While it may seem easy to create a survey or questionnaire, creating a useful survey requires attention to detail and a clear purpose. Attendees of this session will learn important considerations when asking demographic, Liker-type, and open-ended questions in their surveys. Attendees will work on their own survey through guided assistance while also preparing their own results statements.

Session attendees will learn how to:
- create a survey.
- test a survey to increase validity and reliability.
- avoid design flaws when creating a survey.

Planning a Survey?

Some questions to ask include

- What do you want to measure exactly?

- What questions do you intend to answer with this data? What might your results statements look like?

- What is the anticipated use of the survey results? Who in the organization will find this information useful?

- What is the population of interest?

- Will it be a random or convenient sample? How many respondents are needed?

- Will this survey be used at more than one point in time (i.e., longitudinally)?

- What type of instrument will be used (e.g., published or locally developed)?

- How will the survey be pilot tested?

- What is the data collection timeline?

- How will the survey be implemented/distributed?

- Will respondents be incentivized or compensated for participation?

Survey Design

- Make surveys topics consequential to your audience. Activate a pre-survey messaging plan.

- The shorter/simpler, the better. Use concrete language.

- More specific references and questions will yield more specific responses.

- If demographic information is needed, ask last.

- Use words and phrases the respondents will understand easily. Complete sentences can reduce confusion.

- Avoid double negatives and double barrel questions

- Use skip- and design logic to simplify the survey experience.

- Start with simple, then complex questions. Hook them early.

Questions Types

- Yes/No

- Choose All That Apply

- Rankings

- Rating Scale

- Choose One

- Open-ended

Pilot Testing Your Survey

- **Validity Testing:** Ask colleagues with professional background in the survey topic to review the instrument

- **Alpha Testing:** Ask 4-7 likely respondents to complete the survey. Inquire about their survey experience.

  - What was the point of this survey?

  - Where were points of confusion in the flow and within items?

  - At what point did they become bored or distracted?

  - What might make this survey more engaging?

- **Beta Testing:** Pilot test with 10% of your desired response total (not to exceed ~30)

  - Look for non-response, reliability, and use preliminary results to pre-prepare your assessment report.

- Make all needed changes and retest along the way.

Increasing Response Rate

> Avoid over-surveying populations.

> Coordinate pre-messaging efforts (the survey is coming!) and ready post-announcement reminders.

> Make surveys consequential to respondents. Why should they care? Incentives may not matter.

> Tell respondents how the results will be used.

Response Rate Cont.

- Ask respondents for help or advice. Convey respect, always.

- Explain how with the help of past respondents, important actions were taken. ("be like these wonderful people")

- Inform participants that response opportunities are limited.

- Make the survey experience easy and convenient. Remove barriers.

The TQA
A Three Question Assessment

❧ What ideas did this presentation generate for you?

❧ Did you learn something today that might help you perform your job better.? Please describe.

❧ What could be changed about this presentation to make it more helpful or effective?

References

⤳ Dilman, D., Smyth, J., & Christian, L. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

⤳ Henning, G. W. & Roberts, D. (2016). *Student affairs assessment: Theory to practice.* Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

⤳ Spector, P. E. (1992). Summated rating scale: An introduction. Series: *Quantitative applications in the social sciences. 7(82)*. Sage Publications.