Institutional Research and Testing
Step-by-Step Web-Based Survey Guidelines

1. **Requesting a survey / general information**

   The staff in the Office of Institutional Research and Testing (IRT) will assist you in creating a survey to meet your needs for program assessment, assessment of services, and benchmarking. We do not administer personal research oriented surveys. To understand your needs and coordinate your survey with other projects, we ask you to read the rest of this document and complete a survey request form. Please remember that the entire process from creation of the survey instrument to data analysis will take several weeks, therefore you need to contact our office well in advance of your expected completion date.

2. **Survey design**

   You know, better than us, what questions you want to ask on a survey. The survey design process must begin with you taking sufficient time to think about the objectives of the survey and the types of information you want to collect. Some simple thoughts to keep in mind when designing your questions are:
   a. Will the questions I have in mind provide me information that I can act upon?
   b. How would I react to the question being asked? Is it offensive or unclear? Can I think of a way somebody could read the question and misinterpret it?

   Surveys explicitly or implicitly associated with the IRT by titles, footnotes, or presence on our web site, reflect on the reputation of the IRT office. Therefore, we reserve the right to make final decisions about survey design (e.g. question wording, response scales) and graphical formatting.

3. **Piloting the survey**

   Prior to distributing any survey, we request that you "pilot" the survey with a small group of employees or student workers. Ask the pilots to complete the survey and note any uncertainties they have about the meaning of survey items. They may also find formatting, grammar, or spelling errors. This provides one more opportunity to identify and correct misleading questions or other survey problems before distribution, when it is too late to correct.

4. **Population sampling**

   All sampling for surveys conducted at Baylor should normally be performed by the IRT office to minimize the number of times a person is surveyed each year. Once a student, faculty, or staff member is used in a survey sample, the non-sampled population of students, faculty, and staff is used to draw future samples until there are too few individuals remaining to provide a representative sample of the population. We, then, start the process over.

5. **Survey cover text and incentives**

   As the client requesting a survey, you should write the cover email. The email should explain to prospective respondents why they are being surveyed in a concise and friendly manner, and invite them to complete the survey. We can provide you with

samples. Our office will insert a standardized paragraph that guarantees the confidentiality of respondents at the bottom of each email.

Incentives, if any, for completing the survey should be mentioned in the original email – for example, cash prizes, gift certificates, or other desirable items can be offered as incentives that will be awarded to one or a number of randomly selected respondents.

6. **Survey timing**
The timing of your survey is crucial to the success of the survey. Obviously you would not want to send out a student survey during spring break or finals week. Our office will work with you in selecting the most appropriate time period to administer your survey.

7. **Survey approval**
Prior to sending your survey out, approval from the appropriate administrator must be obtained in order to survey students, faculty or staff. We will provide you with the administrator's contact information and the link to your survey. You will need to provide the administrator with the survey link and the cover text for your email invitation. The IRT office must receive proof of approval before the survey invitation is sent out. An email from the appropriate administrator is sufficient proof of approval.

8. **Survey distribution and reminders**
When surveys are administered from our office, they will be distributed from the email address, institutional_research@baylor.edu. Reminders will be sent at about 1 and 2 weeks after the original distribution. Surveys can often be completed in approximately 4 weeks from the initial invitation to participate.

9. **Analysis**
The IRT office can provide you with the raw data to complete your own analysis or provide you with an analysis of the data. A brief executive summary along with appropriate tables or charts will be provided if we complete the analysis. Please note that any analysis of the data provided by IRT will be distributed to you, as well as your supervisor, Michael Matier (Senior Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness), and other appropriate administrators.

10. **Use of results**
We believe that surveying is a poor use of university resources if the results are not used effectively. We encourage you to publicly share information about actions taken as a result of survey research, as we believe that individuals are more likely to respond to future surveys if they see the information they provide is being used.

11. **Request a Survey**
When you are ready to request a survey, please complete the Survey Request form.