

Policy Title: Survey Guidelines

Date Issued: February 20, 2023

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**Responsible Executive: Assistant Vice Provost
for Institutional Research**

**Responsible Office: Office of Institutional
Research**

Survey Guidelines

Policy Statement

The Office of Institutional Research maintains the approval process for surveys of Baylor faculty, staff, and students, in order to ensure that surveys are conducted effectively and within the guidelines of the University.

Reason for the Policy

The purpose of this process is to:

- Coordinate the timing of surveys with other demands such as required training and academic activities
- Ensure that survey research is conducted ethically and protects the identities of respondents
- Promote high-quality practices of survey design, sampling, administration, and dissemination of results
- Verify that the survey complies with University and IRB guidelines and law (including FERPA)
- Reduce survey fatigue for Baylor faculty, staff, and students

Individuals/Entities Affected by this Policy

This policy is intended for all entities who seek to survey populations of Baylor faculty, staff, and students.

Exclusions

The following common survey types do *not* need to be submitted for review and approval (unless they are on a specific topic identified below):

1. Survey Guidelines

- Survey instruments designed to evaluate specific programs or campus services by contacting program participants or service users at the conclusion of the program or service.
 - Class projects surveying students only within that class.
 - Surveys to fewer than 100 Baylor students.
 - Surveys conducted for the purposes of academic research by Baylor faculty, staff, or students. The Office of Institutional Research does not assist with the administration of surveys for this purpose.
- Data collection efforts within the membership of committees, working groups, or departments for topics such as web-based questionnaires/polls that function as registration/RSVPs for events or activities, web-based elections, focus groups/interviews, and administrative data collection (e.g., requesting contact information).

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Office of Institutional Research if there are questions about whether or not a project is exempt.

Related Documents and Forms

University Policies and Documents

[Technology Usage Policy](#) (BU-PP 025)
[Survey Request Form](#)

Other Documents

Qualtrics Terms of Use Statement
 Texas Senate Bill 212

Forms and Tools

Forms and tools are available at [baylor.edu/ir/index.php?id=868574](https://www.baylor.edu/ir/index.php?id=868574).

Contacts

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Office email/web site
Policy Questions	Office of Institutional Research	254-710-2061	https://www.baylor.edu/ir/
Appeals to USCC Decisions	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Institutional Effectiveness	254-710-7591	https://www.baylor.edu/vpue/

2. Survey Guidelines

Responsibilities

Office of Institutional Research	The Office of Institutional Research maintains the approval process for surveys of Baylor faculty, staff, and students and coordinates with the USCC to review and approve surveys.
University Survey Coordination Committee	The USCC are charged with overseeing surveys of Baylor faculty, staff, and students, and providing guidance for groups requesting administration of a survey.
Office of the Provost	Surveys of faculty are subject to review by the Chief of Staff to the Provost or their designee.
Human Resources	Surveys of staff are subject to review by the Associate Vice President of HR Operations and Solutions or their designee.
Student Life	Surveys of students are subject to review by the Vice President for Student Life or their designee.

Principles

Baylor faculty, staff, and students are frequently asked to participate in surveys administered by parties ranging from outside agencies to internal population surveys from administration, faculty conducting research, and students running opinion polls.

Approval Process for Surveys

Baylor faculty and staff requesting to conduct a survey to be administered to Baylor faculty, staff, or 100 or more students should complete and submit a [Survey Request form](#), attaching a copy of the survey items if available. All surveys on topics identified below should be submitted for approval. This includes surveys administered by departments as well as those that will be administered through the Office of Institutional Research. Survey requests should be submitted at least **four weeks** prior to the proposed start date of the survey. This time frame allows for survey review and approval, construction and testing of the survey instrument, and collecting sample populations.

Survey requests are approved by the University Survey Coordination Committee (USCC), who are charged with the oversight of surveys for faculty, staff, and students at Baylor. The USCC will review the proposed survey and provide a response within ten business days of receiving a request form. In addition to providing overall approval to conduct a particular survey, the USCC may return recommendations for changes to the survey request for any of the following:

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- Population: Surveys should be administered to the smallest number of respondents necessary to achieve a high likelihood of statistical validity, taking response rate assumptions based on recent experience into consideration. Unless a population survey has been approved by University administration, the USCC may determine that a survey be administered to a sample rather than the entire population. Surveys will be administered using statistically valid sampling methodology.
- Timing: The Office of Institutional Research maintains a calendar of survey activity. It is possible that the USCC may suggest alternate survey dates in order to limit the number of active survey invitations to groups and to avoid overlap with other key dates. The USCC may also recommend that the survey be postponed or that survey items be added to an existing survey planned in the future to reduce the overall demand on participants. Priority will be given to planned campus-wide surveys as well as those that are required by external agencies. *No climate surveys may be conducted in the same term as the University Campus Diversity Climate surveys.*
- Method of administration: Surveys should make clear to recipients that they are free not to participate, and to give survey respondents the opportunity to see the research results (basic human subjects research considerations). The USCC may recommend that the Office of Institutional Research conducts the administration of a survey to maintain the confidentiality of respondents.
- Survey instrument: Survey items should be written clearly, concisely, and directly addressing the purpose of the survey. The USCC may recommend changes to item language or may remove items that are not appropriate. In addition, demographic items may be removed from a survey if the design is such that those values can be pre-populated for respondents, reducing the number of items within the survey.
- Communications: Group-email advance letters, survey invitations, and non-respondent follow-ups must conform to the [Technology Usage Policy](#) (BU-PP 025), as well as the Qualtrics Terms of Use Statement. The USCC may recommend changes to any of the communications received by participants.
- Dissemination of results: All requests should include procedures to maintain confidentiality of survey respondents. The USCC may recommend changes to the proposed analyses or methods of distribution to ensure confidentiality and ensure accurate interpretation of results. If the results are later used in a publication or conference presentation, the requestor must conform to the guidelines of the Baylor University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research – the official university Institutional Review Board (IRB) – and request IRB approval following USCC approval.

Survey Anonymity and Confidentiality

The Office of Institutional Research regards the confidentiality of survey data to be of utmost importance. For anonymous surveys, the Office of Institutional Research utilizes the “Anonymizing Responses” option. The following is paraphrased from the Qualtrics website:

Anonymizing responses is an effective way to permanently scrub a response of identifying information before saving it in the data.

Anonymized responses gathered with an Anonymous or Individual Link do not include the respondents’ IP address or location data in the results. Additionally, responses gathered with an Individual Link are disconnected from the contact who submitted the response. This option allows for reminders to be sent to those who have not responded while removing the identification of the respondent from the results.

Confidential surveys collect personally identifiable information that may be combined with existing data in Baylor University databases for further analysis.

The Office of Institutional Research does not read the comments submitted on surveys. Therefore, the onus is on those who do read the comments to comply with Texas Senate Bill 212. Further information is available at: <https://www.baylor.edu/bn/news.php?action=story&story=216847>

University Survey Coordination Committee (USCC)

Representatives from the Office of Institutional Research facilitate the coordination of survey approvals. The USCC includes two groups who evaluate survey requests for faculty/staff and students separately. These groups consist of the following membership:

Faculty and Staff Surveys	Student Surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representative(s) from Faculty Senate• Representative(s) from Staff Council• Representative(s) from the Office of the Provost, including the Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity & Belonging• Representative(s) from Human Resources• Representative(s) from Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representative(s) from at least two academic units• Director of Institutional Planning and Assessment• Representative(s) from Student Life• Representative(s) from Marketing and Communications

On certain topics, or when desired, the USCC will consult with the Office of General Counsel. This includes surveys about topics such as discrimination, harassment, diversity, equity, inclusion, criminal activity to include sexual assault, family violence, and other topics on issues that are highly legally regulated.

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After review by the USCC, surveys of faculty and staff are subject to final approval by the Chief of Staff to the Provost for faculty surveys and the Associate Vice President of HR Operations and Solutions for staff surveys. Surveys of students are also subject to approval by the Vice President for Student Life. Decisions of the University Survey Coordination Committee (USCC) may be appealed to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Institutional Effectiveness.