

Survey Recruitment and Administration Policy

Category: Administration and Governance
Responsible Office: Office of Institutional Analysis
Responsible Executive: Provost

Date Established: to be determined
Date Last Updated: 11/22/24

SUMMARY

This policy helps minimize survey/email fatigue and oversampling of University at Buffalo (UB) students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni by managing the quantity and scheduling of survey invitations to these audiences and identifies specific permissions needed by survey authors to conduct surveys with UB constituents.

POLICY STATEMENT

The University at Buffalo (UB, university) is committed to ensuring that surveys are methodologically sound and of good quality; promote inter-departmental awareness and cooperation; minimize survey fatigue and collection of duplicate data or pre-existing data; ensure appropriate methods of recruitment, distribution, and use of survey results; and maintain a thorough and accessible record of survey tools and findings. Survey fatigue, the decreased willingness to participate in surveys, is a constant concern because reduced response rates compromise the usefulness of any data collected.

Survey Administration

All surveys, regardless of sample size, must undergo review to be scheduled on the UB Major Survey Calendar, and must adhere to the following:

Approval Requirements

- Surveys will, in general, be approved on a first-come, first-served basis. Surveys of an institutional-nature (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement, SUNY Student Opinion Survey, UB Next) hold highest priority, followed by college/school-wide surveys, and then all other surveys.
- All surveys administered by UB units and distributed to a combination of 500 or more students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni, as well as all surveys conducted by external entities, must first be approved by the University Survey Review Group.
- All surveys conducted by individuals or organizations outside the university and distributed to any number of UB faculty, staff, and/or alumni must first be approved by the University Survey Review Group.
- Survey authors must submit the following information to the University Survey Review Group
 - Completed Survey Request form
 - Final version of the survey instrument
 - Narrative of all email invitations and reminders (if applicable)
 - Documentation of approval by the UB Human Research (IRB) (if applicable)

The survey request form and all supporting documentation must be submitted online at [OIA Survey Form weblink – *place holder*]

Survey Administration Time Period

- Surveys involving current undergraduate, graduate, or professional students are prohibited during:
 - End-of-term course evaluations
 - Windows of final exam weeks
 - Windows of institution-wide surveys designated by the University Survey Review Group
- Current UB students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni will not be asked to participate in more than one survey reviewed by the University Survey Review Group by email at the same time.
- Surveys that are reviewed by the University Survey Review Group cannot have an administration period that overlaps with another survey that surveys the same population, that has already been scheduled.

Survey Construction

- Survey authors should ensure that questionnaires are designed following best practices.
- Survey authors should use an individuals' preferred/chosen name and pronouns when requesting participation when possible and in compliance with the U B [Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy](#).
- For surveys where the use of student email addresses has been approved, the email addresses must be placed in the BCC: field for any mass mailings.
- Survey authors using university email addresses to request the participation of UB students and/or faculty in surveys must obtain consent from the University Survey Review Group; failure to obtain approval may result in a violation of the federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UB policy.
- Those conducting surveys and sending email invitations to UB students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni requesting their participation may send a maximum of three (3) emails (one initial email and up to two subsequent reminders).

Survey Sample

- Requests to sample total populations or to sample more than 33% of the desired UB population will be allowed only rarely and must first be reviewed by the University Survey Review Group.
- Requests for sample populations must include a statistical or logical justification of the sample size.

Survey Results

- Survey authors are encouraged to share results through executive summaries posted online, presentations, or publications to communicate to future survey invitation recipients the impact and use of data collected through surveys.

Exceptions

- Exceptions to the frequency of administration and/or emails may be approved if deemed necessary by the University Survey Review Group.
- Surveys administered by UB units exempt from University Survey Review Group approval include:
 - Institutional or organizational elections
 - Institutional Analysis survey projects fulfilling state or federal requirements.
 - Satisfaction surveys, user surveys, or program/event evaluations administered one time or on an ongoing basis that (a) are administered only to individuals who have already used a given service or attended a specific program/event; and (b) are not administered to non-users or non-participants
 - End-of-term course evaluations
 - Institution-wide surveys designated by the University Survey Review Group (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement, SUNY Student Opinion Survey, UB Next)

BACKGROUND

The proliferation of surveys to University at Buffalo constituents raises concerns such as student privacy, protection of human subjects, and questionnaire fatigue from over-surveying the same groups or distributing multiple surveys at the same time, which may conflict with large, institutional surveys.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all internal or external entities that want to implement surveys to UB students, faculty, staff and/or alumni.

Academic research conducted by faculty or students and surveys conducted by students as part of an official UB course assignment are subject to this policy only if the projects involve soliciting 500 or more total UB students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni as participants in a survey or as recipients of an email invitation requesting their participation in a survey.

DEFINITIONS

Survey - Any instrument or questionnaire administered online or via paper that seeks to collect information on outcomes, attitudes, expectations, opinions, and/or preferences and is intended for distribution to UB students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni.

Survey Sample – A subset of your target population

RESPONSIBILITY

Units Administering Surveys

- Complete the Survey Request Form.
- Share survey results, as appropriate.

University Survey Review Group

- Review and approve survey requests.
- Approve survey exceptions, as appropriate.
- Maintain the UB Major Survey Calendar.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Individual	Phone	Email
Office of Institutional Analysis	Melinda Whitford	716-645-3732	mmr6@buffalo.edu
Student Life – Assessment and Research	Alexandra Bitterman	716-645-0991	aflawson@buffalo.edu

RELATED INFORMATION

University Links

Access to Student Information, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Policy
[Access to Student Information - Administrative Services Gateway - University at Buffalo](#)

Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy
[Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns \(Revised\) - Administrative Services Gateway - University at Buffalo](#)

University at Buffalo, Research and Economic Development, Human Research (IRB)
[Human Research \(IRB\) - Vice President Research and Economic Development - University at Buffalo](#)

University at Buffalo, Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) – Survey Recruitment and Administration Policy (online) *{placeholder}*

Forms

University at Buffalo, Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) – Survey Request Form (online) *{placeholder}*

Related Links

State University of New York Compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Document Number 6600

[Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\), Compliance with \(suny.edu\)](#)

U.S. Department of Education – Protecting Student Privacy

[Home | Protecting Student Privacy \(ed.gov\)](#)

U.S. Department of Education – Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO)

[Student Privacy Policy Office - Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development: U.S. Department of Education | U.S. Department of Education](#)

State University of New York Implementation of Preferred Name

[172-01-1-SUNY-wide-implementation-of-preferred-name-and-gender-identity.pdf](#)

State University of New York Chosen Name and Pronoun Policy Announcement – June 2022

[6-8-22 Chosen Name and Pronoun - SUNY](#)