Survey Creation

1 Determine the Goals of the Survey

Before writing the survey decide what do you want to learn as a result of this survey.

- Were participants satisfied with the program?
- Did participants master the learning outcomes?
- Should you or your office make changes to an event or program?
- Are all students being served effectively by your office/program?
- Are there gaps in your services and/or offerings?

EXAMPLE

Our office implemented a new career development program. The program began with a lecture on resume writing. The second portion contained a panel of recent graduates who reflected on their job search process. The session concluded with 30 minute networking session between attendees and panelists.

- Did participants find this method effective and helpful for their job search?
- Which was more helpful: the resume advice or the panel?
- Would students have wanted to see panelists with more work experience?
- Were the panelists representative, and did the students find them that way?

2 Free Write

Write all of the questions you want to ask. Do not worry about the wording or following any survey writing rules. Instead, focus on jotting down questions that address the major goals of your survey.

EXAMPLE

Did participants find this method effective and helpful for their job search?

- Are you glad you came to this event?
- Would you recommend this event to a friend?
- After attending this do you think you will have an easier time writing a resume and finding a job?
- Which did you like better: the panel or the lesson on resume writing?
Listening to a long lecture can be boring. Would you have preferred the resume session to be more interactive?

3 Take Some Time Off

Now, step away from the survey. Take some days away from the survey. Once you come back, you may realize that some questions you wrote that you thought were so clear are actually confusing.

4 Rewrite Using Survey Creation Guidelines

ORDER MATTERS

Pay attention to the way you structure the survey. A good rule of thumb is to format your survey following these suggestions below:

- Introduction – Write 2-3 sentences at the beginning of the survey explaining its purpose.
- Beginning – Broad, general questions
- Middle – Specific, more detailed questions
- End – Demographic information (if needed)

Also pay attention to the way you order answer choices. For questions where the choices are measured on a Likert Scale, use the same order for each Likert Scale in the survey. For example, if negative responses (i.e., strongly disagree) are labeled as “1” at the beginning of the survey, they should remain this way throughout the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep Strongly Disagree as a 1 throughout the survey.

Place Neutral or Neither Agree nor Disagree in the middle as a 3.

Choices that do not have values or order should be listed alphabetically. For example, college major or hometown should be listed in alphabetical order.
QUESTIONS SHOULD MEASURE ONLY ONE VARIABLE

Review every question that uses the words: and, or. Each question should only measure one construct or variable. When you lump multiple variables together, it is challenging to interpret the results. In the DON’T example, does the respondent feel confident to write a resume? Conduct a job search? Both? A good rule of thumb is to carefully review questions containing and to make sure the question is clear.

DON’T

After attending this event, I feel prepared to write a strong resume and conduct an efficient job search.

DO

After attending this event, I feel prepared to write a strong resume.

After attending this event, I feel prepared to conduct an effective job search.

CLEAR, CONCISE QUESTIONS

Remove extraneous phrases or words that cloud the meaning of the question. Strive to keep each question to a maximum of 20 words.

DON’T

In your opinion, do you feel that on this campus you are valued as a person by others?

DO

I feel valued as a person on this campus.

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EXHAUSTIVE OPTIONS

Make sure that all possible options are available to the participant. Sometimes options such as I don’t know, prefer not to answer, other are necessary.

DO

What is your household income?

- <$20,000
- $20,000 - $50,000
- $50,001 - $100,000
- >$100,001
- Prefer not to answer
- I don’t know

Some may find questions about income personal.

How did you hear about this event?

- Anchor Link
- Email List
- Poster/Flyer
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Other (please specify)

Not all students know this information.

Which of the following did you experience?

- Arrest
- Injury
- Memory Loss
- None of the above

May need to give a None or N/A option.

There may be options you have not considered.
LOADED AND LEADING QUESTIONS

Surveys should be as objective as possible. The participant should not be able to determine your perspective or point of view. Avoid using words that have negative connotations (i.e., forced, must, require) or imply your opinion.

DON’T

Listening to a long lecture can be boring. Would you have preferred the resume session to be more interactive?

DO

Which of the following was your favorite part of the career development workshop?

- Lecture on Resume Writing
- Panel Discussion by Recent Graduates
- Interactive Networking Session
- Other

For future career development workshops, we may alter the structure. Which of the following formats would appeal to you the most?

- Information Session Only
- Panel Session Only
- Information Session + Panel
- Interactive Speed Dating Networking Session
- Other

5 Share Your Survey with Others

After you have created your survey, share it with colleagues, friends and/or students to ensure that it makes sense to others. You may receive valuable feedback that certain items are hard to understand or interpret when others read them.

Contact Laura Walaszek Dermody, PhD at laura.a.walaszek@vanderbilt.edu for any questions regarding assessment or evaluation.