

# Guidelines for Survey Administration with SMIE

## Before You Conduct a Survey

Survey research is an effective and thus important means to collect information about the experience of university constituents as well as capture continuous feedback to support decision-making. In addition to administering regular institutional and international surveys, The Office of Strategy Management and Institutional Effectiveness (SMIE) offers its expertise to help departments and units arrive at robust decisions through survey research by designing and conducting surveys directed at members of the AUC community. The following is a guideline to aid you with the process of requesting a survey from SMIE along with tips from the survey design stage following through to analysis and reporting.

Before you submit your [Survey Request Form](#), please make sure to go through the following steps as well as our [Survey Policy](#).

## Survey Purpose & Design

You know best 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:

- **IMPORTANT:** What is the overall purpose of my survey? Is it customer satisfaction, needs assessment, educational outcomes assessment, or something else?
- Will the questions I have in mind provide me information that I can act upon?
- 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?
- Do I want to use close-ended or open-ended question? Close-ended questions often precipitate in a higher response rate, as well as data that are more easily quantified and analyzed.
- How will the data be reported and analyzed?

## Writing the Questions

The goal of writing a question is to develop a query that every potential respondent will interpret the same way, be able to respond accurately, and be willing to answer.

- Do not be vague – be as specific as possible
- Use vocabulary appropriate to the audience
- Avoid objectionable questions/language
- Avoid hypothetical questions
- Avoid leading questions
- Ask only what you need
- Include an equal number of positive/negative answer choices (in the appropriate order)
- Range within answer choices should be concise/tight
- Primary answer vs. all that apply
- Limit open-ended questions
- Open-ended questions should be placed at the end
- Keep it short: maximum of 30 questions
- Instructions should be clear, to the point, and where they need to be

- Use headings/division titles where appropriate
- Keep answers responses structured similarly
- Demographics placement should either come at the beginning or the end of the survey
- Take question order very seriously: general to specific

Surveys explicitly or implicitly associated with the Office of Strategy Management & Institutional Effectiveness (SMIE) by titles, footnotes, or presence on our website, reflect on the reputation of our office. SMIE reserves the right, in consultation with the survey sponsor(s), to edit the survey for purposes of brevity, clarity and/or appropriateness. Further, our office reserves the right to refuse any survey or survey data that does not meet with University standards.

## Piloting the Survey

Prior to distributing any survey, it is recommended that you test the survey by asking a small group 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.

## Survey Invitation Message and Incentives

As the unit requesting the survey, you should write the email invitation message. The message 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, and will consult on your provided message based on our experience and purpose of email. 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, as well as in any follow up or reminder messages – 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.

If you are undecided on whether to include incentives, our office will help you take this decision during consultation.

## 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.

To get an idea on already scheduled surveys for the current academic year, please refer to the Survey Calendar on our [webpage](#).

## Survey Distribution and Reminders

All surveys are administered from our office, where they will be distributed from the email address, [smie@aucegypt.edu](mailto:smie@aucegypt.edu) through SurveyMonkey, our official platform for survey development and deployment. Web surveys are our preferred method since:

- they are inexpensive
- they result in a fast response
- they minimize data-entry errors
- they facilitate email reminders via an authenticated process

- they result in detailed open-ended (e.g. fill-in-the-blank) responses
- they often achieve higher response rates than paper surveys.

Reminders will be sent at about one and two weeks after the original distribution. Surveys can often be completed in approximately four weeks from the initial invitation to participate. Survey duration can be agreed upon depending on the Survey Calendar, and department-set deadlines.

## Analysis

SMIE can provide you with the raw data for you to complete your own analysis or provide you with a report of findings including 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 SMIE will be distributed to you, as well as your supervisor, and other appropriate administrators. Analysis usually takes one to two weeks from the date of survey close, which is when all data collection is concluded and no new responses are being captured.

## 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.

## Additional Resources for Designing and Conducting Surveys

- [Best Practices for Survey Research](#) from the American Association for Public Opinion Research.
- [Conducting Primary Research](#): Tips on getting started, creating unbiased questions, and even collecting and analyzing data. (From Purdue University)
- [Sample size calculator](#) by Creative Research Systems
- [Survey Monkey](#): Online survey website that generates and distributes web-based surveys, in addition to providing basic analysis