

Survey Design Checklist

SRDC Criterion	Guiding Evidence	Key Questions
1. Access to survey	Evidence indicates that the process through which participants are introduced to any survey is extremely important for subsequent engagement. Response rates for students are usually much higher if surveys are embedded within their own programmes of study, rather than seen as additional or institutional. Minimising the number of tasks deemed absolutely essential, before respondents get to the survey, per se, is also crucial.	<p>How is the project embedded within your institution?</p> <p>How will you engage and support members of staff with the project in your institution?</p> <p>Will staff have access to the questions used in the survey?</p> <p>To what extent is the project integrated into the programmes of study at your institution?</p> <p>How will students access the survey (e.g. using an individualised link, an open link or both)?</p> <p>Will any promotional resources be used in your institution? If so, when are they released?</p> <p>Will there be any academic-led promotional activities?</p>
2. Level of student support	The overall visibility of a survey and access to support / discussion with programme tutors and students, pre-test, could be crucial for engagement; especially to ground the process within an integrated subject and curriculum context. Feeling part of a course of study is the foremost starting point for engagement and subsequent academic success. Pre-empting possible benefits and disbenefits could also feature to enhance possible engagement.	<p>Will students have any opportunity to discuss the project before participating?</p> <p>How will confidentiality and consent be managed?</p> <p>Will any approaches be used to encourage participation while the project is open (e.g. reminders)?</p>
3. Incentives	Due to perceived survey saturation, considerable attention has been given to the use and effectiveness of incentives linked to response rates. Evidence shows that response rates improve when providing a clear narrative for how scheme incentives are administered at the outset; usually by using an immediate and guaranteed reward alongside longer-term 'lottery' opportunities. The use	<p>What are the incentives for students to participate?</p> <p>What impact, if any, will the incentives have on student participation?</p> <p>What considerations, if any, will your institution give to the timing of the incentives throughout the project?</p>



	of incentives to re-engage non-respondents can also increase uptake, although there are some ethical and methodological challenges to consider regarding rewarding non-respondents more favourably than original survey participants.	
4. Optimal length of survey	Response rates are linked closely to how long surveys take to complete. Studies show that an optimal time for students to engage in any survey is approximately 13 minutes.	Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and recorded completion time? Will different access arrangement (e.g. online, paper) affect completion time?
5. Timing and possible information fatigue	Targeting first year undergraduate students during the first few weeks of their studies can be problematic, especially during points of induction-related information overload and if mechanisms such as welcome surveys are used. At the time of survey delivery, it is much more productive for response rates if the topic has a high degree of salience for potential participants.	When will the survey open and close in your institution? Is this timing optimal? Will respondents receive any follow-up communication if they partially complete the survey?
6. Question wording and ordering	Evidence indicates that simplicity encourages participation, whilst ordering effect is often given insufficient attention in survey design.	Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and recorded feedback on language and ordering?
7. Survey question formats	There is considerable literature about the implications of questionnaire layouts and how ease of survey navigation for respondents can be pivotal to engagement.	Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and explored various layouts?
8. Reporting and debriefing	Considerable attention needs to be given to motivational strategies for furthering student engagement following completion. This could be monitored formatively and summatively. It may be useful to consider theories of social exchange for possible impact upon engagement within the survey process.	Will students have any opportunity to discuss their results? Will there be a response rate target? If so, who will set the target? How will the survey data be used? Will the project be analysed at different levels (e.g. at an individual level, for specific groups of students, at a programme level, at an institutional level)?

