Middle Georgia State University

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

SURVEY GUIDE

This guide intends to provide you with clear directions and information pertaining to the institutional survey process, OIRDS role in survey management, and to learn more about survey best practices to obtain reliable and valid results.

The Office of Institutional Research and Data Strategy (OIRDS) **consults** with units across MGA regarding institutional administrative survey design and administration, including wording of questions, survey length, data collection methodology, target audience selection, and data analyses.

OIRDS surveys are internally initiated assessments that collect data from a super-set audience across MGA (which includes faculty, staff, and students) to support planning and decision-making directly related to strategic priorities, unit plans, and accreditation efforts.

Institutional Surveys are assessment instruments used to support institutional planning and decision-making related to university strategic priorities, annual unit plans, and accreditation purposes. Surveys are inclusive of questionnaires, ballots, polls, assessments, and evaluations, regardless of the method used to administer the instrument, if the request includes surveying one or more broad populations or targeting specific subgroups of the MGA community (students, faculty, staff, etc.).

Departmental surveys that are limited in distribution are not included in the policy definition, and therefore this guide. Examples of surveys that are excluded are course evaluations, class surveys, informal polls (e.g., meeting times), and customer service feedback forms.

Given the high volume of survey requests, it is OIRDS' responsibility:

•   To provide the requestor with **alternative data collection methods** if appropriate (Microsoft Forms)

•   To streamline the survey process, which can mean **consolidating similar surveys** (i.e., similar audience, data, and/or timeframe)

•   To **establish an appropriate timeline** to administer the survey depending on its scale and target population

•   To **provide units with the resources to manage the survey in the long-term** to meet continuous improvement efforts

Survey Best Practices: Planning & Design Checklist:

The checklist addresses survey planning and design topics that follow best practices to help you achieve higher responses and obtain more representative data. Please contact institutional.research@mga.edu with any questions.

1	Name & Purpose of the Survey	What is the name of the survey? How will the information be used? What questions are you trying to answer?
2	Survey Length	How many minutes will it take for a respondent to complete the survey?
3	Activity Dates	A. When do you prefer the survey launch and close? B. If your preferred dates cannot work, what are alternate dates for the survey launch & close? C. When do you need the results?
4	Communication Plan	How do you plan to advertise this survey in order to maximize response rates from the target population?
5	Incentives	If respondents will be compensated in any way, what is your plan for incentives and how respondents will be awarded and funded?
6	Target Population & Details	Who are you trying to survey? Freshmen, Seniors, Graduate Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and/or Other?
7	Data Use & Stewardship	A. Will the data be used for any of the following: Accreditation, Program Review, Assessment, Campus Improvement, Departmental Improvement, Personal Research, Institutional Research, and Regional/National Survey? B. What will you do with the information after you analyze the data? With whom will the results be shared? Is there a plan for reporting out the results? C. Will individual faculty/staff/student data be shared with an organization or individual outside of MGA? D. How and where will you store the results?
8	Administration Cycle & History	A. Frequency (As-needed, every term, annually, every other year, other)? B. Has the survey been administered at MGA before? If yes, when and what were the previous findings?
9	FERPA Compliance	Are you aware of FERPA policies?

Tips for a Better Survey

Activity Dates:

Fall term is often the best time to survey students and faculty. Spring term is packed with benchmarking surveys for these two populations.

Otherwise, the best times to survey students:

- After drop/add and not during mid-terms
- For Fall term, before Thanksgiving
- For Spring term, before Spring break

For more information, please review MGA's Academic Calendars

Things to consider before writing your survey:

- Have a clear objective in mind
- Keep your survey short and sweet
- Ask only questions that will help you meet your goal
- Ask one question at a time
- Order of questions matter
- Keep your questions clear and simple
- Ask direct/specific questions
- Make sure you cover all possible answer choices
- Focus on using closed-ended questions (multiple choice or checkbox questions)
- Don't ask leading and/or biased questions
- Stay away from asking double-barreled questions (Example: asking someone to rate the quality of your product and support.)
- Avoid yes/no questions, if possible
- Use open-ended questions sparingly
- Be consistent with the formatting
- Beware of acronyms (don't use acronyms without an explanation of what the acronym means)

Always preview your survey before you send it. Take the survey yourself to see how it flows and checking for mistakes.

Ongoing Survey Operations

Please note the following surveys that OIRDS routinely administers and/or supports.

Professional Advisor Survey July to June

Stop-Out Survey August to September

Registrar Satisfaction Survey Fall semester and then Spring semester

Student Experience Survey December to March

Stop-Out Survey January to February

NSSE Survey February to June