Survey Checklist

- Define the purpose of the survey as precisely as possible and write the objectives down.
- Review previous surveys/data to inform questionnaire design and hypotheses.
- Formulate research questions and hypotheses—what is it you want to learn by conducting the survey and what are your hypotheses?
- Check with Institutional Review Board to see if approval is needed.
  - Institutional improvement? No IRB
  - Results published/presented (generalizable knowledge?). Yes IRB
- Define the survey population? (i.e., undergrads, grads, alumni).
- Are oversamples of certain population subgroups necessary to ensure sufficient cases for analysis?
- Draft questions and circulate among stakeholders. Consider text follow-ups if ratings are negative.
- Offer incentives, if possible. (lotteries, cash, tokens) Best practices-$2 per respondent cash or $1/respondent for lottery prizes. Generally odds of winning more important than large, single prize.
- Create a rough draft of questions/subjects to be included in the survey and have stakeholders review questions; address feedback received.
- Pretest the questionnaire, if possible, on a small group of potential respondents and interview them to get specific feedback on question wording, order, etc.
- Revise draft of questionnaire according to feedback from pretest.
- Draft an invitation to participate letter (see sample in Appendix)
- Send personalized email invitation.
- Define the field period and adopt a tracking plan (when reminders will be sent out, and of what type). IAS recommends tracking nonrespondents and sending reminders to those who have not responded. At least 3 email reminders to nonrespondents are appropriate and sometimes more are necessary.
- Clean and assess the quality of the data.
  - Representative sample?
  - How to handle oversamples.
- Tabulate results using Excel, Mini Tab or SPSS; distribute to all stakeholders.
- Analyze and discuss the results to guide further research and/or the development of action plans to address shortcomings.
- Publicize the results and written reports—if possible it is a good idea to give respondents the option of seeing the results. Celebrate good results; address shortcomings.
Appendix: Sample Letter

[Printed on Institutional Letterhead]

“Announcement” Sample Letter

[Date]
[first name] [last name]
[Address 1]
[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear [student name]:

I am writing on behalf of the University of Virginia to request your help with an important project. As part of a larger program to evaluate the quality of education at UVa, we are conducting a survey of current TK students to ask about their experiences at the University.

You were selected to be part of this project because you are a first-year student in the School of TK. I know that this is a busy time of year for you, but I hope that you will take just a little time to participate in this brief web survey created by the University’s Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies.

To complete the survey online, please go to the URL below (click on “Current Surveys” and then “TK Survey”). Enter the respondent key that appears at the bottom of this letter, and then follow the online survey instructions. You will need the respondent key to take the survey. If you do not have access to the internet, or prefer to answer the questionnaire on paper, you may request a paper survey by sending an e-mail to iaas@virginia.edu or calling 434/924-3417.

As a token of our appreciation for your participation in this important study, upon receipt of your completed questionnaire, the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies will enter your name in a series of lotteries in which respondents are eligible to win $50 or $25 gift certificates from the UVa Bookstore. The first lottery for 5 $50 gift certificates will be conducted TK date. You are substantially more likely to win a lottery if you respond early. The overall odds of winning a prize are about one in TK.

Your answers will be completely confidential. Your respondent key will be used for tracking purposes only. You will need this randomized alphanumeric code to complete the web survey, but once the field period has ended, the code will not be linked to your identifying information and your responses. Moreover, the results of the survey will be reported in a summary format, so again no one will link you to your responses. Text comments will be reported verbatim, so please do not provide identifying information in your text comments.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important project. If you have any questions about the administration of the survey, please contact the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies at 434/924-3417 or iaas@virginia.edu.

Sincerely,

TK name

Web address: http://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/surveys/

Respondent key: «Resp_key»