



Survey Policy Procedural Manual June 2021

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INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this procedure, a survey is defined as a gathering of information through questionnaires, interviews, etc., to make inferences about or predict the behavior of a population. The Office of Institutional Research & Decision Support (IRDS) will serve as the Ball State University's survey support unit. All surveys intended for distribution to any members or prospective members of the Ball State community (e.g., applicants, students, faculty, staff, board members, and alumni) must adhere to the procedures described herein. IRDS support is encouraged but not mandated for (a) faculty-supervised survey research that contributes toward students' academic progress, (b) evaluation of an event by participants, (c) feedback from clients at the point of service, or (d) forms used to collect information for administrative purposes (e.g., scheduling). The Ball State University (BSU) process applies to all surveys that do not require IRB approval.

Support by IRDS to administer a survey is not a substitute for a review by the Office of Research Integrity (OIR). If a survey research project is subject to review by the OIR, approval is required before it can be administered within the University. Regardless of the method used, all surveys must be approved by IRB before the survey can be administered, except those specifically exempted by this procedure.

PROCEDURES

The Support Process from The Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support

Once approved, individuals and offices conducting a survey that is supported by this survey procedure must provide the information listed below:

1. Description of the survey project, including the purpose and intended use of results;
2. Specific population receiving the survey;
3. Method of survey distribution (e.g., online or hard copy, via email, in class, at event, etc.);
4. Timeframe for administering the survey, including beginning and end dates;
5. Description of any planned incentive program for respondents;
6. Current draft of the survey and all invitation and cover letters;
7. Evidence of IRB approval (if necessary); and
8. approval from the Survey Review Committee.

Survey administrators must submit the above information to IRDS at least two weeks before the start date of the survey. If a recurring survey has been supported in an earlier year, it will be necessary only to submit information about the proposed administration dates. Surveys supported in prior years but which have been significantly changed must be re-approved. It is recommended that individuals and offices wishing to administer a survey consult with the Director of Office of Research Integrity, the University Survey Review Committee, and IRB before submitting a survey proposal to ensure that there is no duplication of effort.

Survey Support Process

1. The Survey Review Committee will review the survey information and respond to the proposal. The Survey Review Committee will review the survey based on the following questions:
 - a. Has the Institutional Review Board approved the project (if necessary)?
 - b. Has the Director of the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the University Survey Review Committee the project?
 - c. What actions are being taken to ensure the confidentiality of the responses? (If under the ORI Does Not Apply)
 - d. When will the survey be conducted? What is the optimal timing to ensure it does not compete with other college surveys and activities?
 - e. How will the results be used? (If under the Office of Research Integrity Does Not Apply)
 - f. Will the findings be disseminated to appropriate audiences? Who will have access to the information, and will it help them make better decisions as a result? (If IRB Does Not Apply)
 - g. Can the proposed survey be combined with other planned surveys?
 - h. Are there other data available that will allow the survey to be avoided?

Guidelines for Conducting a Survey at Ball State University

All surveys conducted at BSU should adhere to the following guidelines.

1. The Rights of Respondents
 - a. The survey form must include “contact information” (i.e., name, email address, telephone number) should the respondents have any questions about the content of the form or about the use and/or publication of survey results.
 - b. All participants must be notified that their participation is voluntary.
 - c. Respondents must be notified before starting the survey if the data collected will not be anonymous.
 - d. Respondents must not be subjected to any more than minimal risk.
 - e. If survey data or analyses include academic or contact information for students, you may be subject to Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. Non-public student data can be used without the student’s consent by college employees for “legitimate educational” purposes, provided the data are not reported in such a way that individual students can be identified. All other users must receive written consent from the students to access non-public student data.
 - f. Surveys that request individual health information may be subject to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)
 - g. A summary of results should be made available on request to persons who completed the survey.

- h. Respondents must be informed if the data or survey results will be published or distributed, including whether individual responses will appear in the published results.
 - i. In some circumstances, data may be confidential and may not be publicly available to the respondents. Any such limitation should be made clear to respondents when the participants decide whether or not to participate in the survey and within the report itself. When restrictions apply, publication and/or presentation of survey results must honor all federal, state, and University restrictions.
 - j. If subjects are promised anonymity and a login is required to access the survey (e.g., student IDs), the researcher must ensure that login information will not be collected and stored in a way that it can be connected to survey results.
 - k. All surveys should clearly identify the researcher [which is the group or person who is conducting the survey.]
 - l. The use of the name “Ball State University” on a survey instrument or cover letter suggests an official survey being conducted by the University. If you plan to use the name on your survey, you must have approval from the appropriate individuals or offices (contact IRDS for assistance).
 - m. Information from surveys conducted by administrative offices, faculty committees, and other college committees is the property of BSU. The researcher, department, unit, or committee responsible for conducting the survey must be consulted before releasing and distributing the survey’s findings.
 - n. The use of mass emailing lists to promote or distribute a survey to BSU faculty, staff, or students is limited to official surveys approved by the BSU administration. Appropriate individuals or offices must first approve these surveys. Please contact the IRDS for more information
2. Confidentiality
- a. Personally identifiable information should be collected only as required in relation to the expressly stated purpose of research or a project. Personally identifiable information includes student_id, first name, last name, and date of birth, either singly or in any combination.
 - b. The use of prizes or other incentives to encourage participation typically requires the collection of personal information from the respondents (i.e., name or email address). If the respondents have been promised anonymity, collection of this information may appear to be a violation of the promise. Two methods are typically used to circumvent this apparent conflict:
 - i. Respondents can be assured that their participation and responses will be confidential but not anonymous. In this sense, “confidentiality” means that none of the information collected can be associated with a specific individual.
 - ii. A double-blind procedure is developed in which a second party ensures that the analyst does not see any personally identifiable information.

3. Data Security

- a. The person conducting a survey is responsible for managing and releasing the data collected. Raw data from surveys are typically not shared with people outside of BSU except under special circumstances (e.g., a data-sharing consortium). If survey data are shared, (a) its use should conform to Ball State University's Information Technology Policies¹, (b) the data should not contain any information that will identify a respondent, and (c) its release must be approved by the appropriate Data Steward.

In addition, if survey data are released to BSU students for a class project, the student must sign an acknowledgment to not share the data.

- b. If an off-campus site hosts the survey, the researcher is responsible for the security and privacy of the data. Thus, the investigator should ensure that the external host system provides security in both data transfer and storage (e.g., disassociation of responses from the ISP address, SSL encryption, and firewall and intrusion prevention technology).

4. The Office of Research Integrity

The researcher and the University may incur legal liability if the treatment of survey recipients is unethical, if data resulting from your survey are misused, or if any part of the survey violates certain protected rights of individuals. Survey researchers should be aware of their responsibilities and make every effort to protect the rights of survey recipients.

The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) approval is required if the findings from the survey are to be used for any purposes other than data collection about campus programs, practices, curricula, or outcomes for use solely by the University. Students and faculty using surveys to conduct academic research must contact ORI.

Generally, the results of academic research are reported through outside publications or presented in forums that include individuals outside of the University. If your results will be published (including via the web), ORI requires that you submit your survey instrument and research design for review before data are collected. Please note that dissemination of results in any public form beyond BSU (this includes posting on the BSU website) must receive prior to the Office of Research Integrity approval.

If a survey research project does not qualify as exempt under the Office of Research ORI standards, the proposal must proceed through the formal ORI approval process and will require additional time for review. If you are unsure whether or not your survey requires an under the ORI review, consult the Office of Research Integrity webpage². IRDS may also request that a researcher submit a survey for review by the ORI before it is administered. Once ORI approves the administration of a campus survey, IRDS will accept the under the ORI protocol in lieu of the college's survey application.

¹ [Information Technology Users' Privileges and Responsibilities v.3 \(policytech.com\)](#)

² [Human Subject Participation - Office of Research Integrity | Ball State University \(bsu.edu\)](#)