

Surveys Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) To establish a framework for the orderly and effective use of La Trobe University surveys of staff and students (including graduates and prospective students).

Preamble

(2) As a means of informing continuous improvement and assisting with planning, La Trobe University will gather primary data to maintain databases, assess the quality of its processes and procedures and elicit the perceptions of a range of stakeholders using survey methods.

General

(3) Other than exclusions from this Policy, internal surveys that are not formally approved using these procedures are not to be administered at La Trobe University.

(4) As part of the approvals process, consideration will be given to the time of year in which the survey would be administered, and the population it expects to target. Either of these aspects may need to be revised before the survey can be conducted.

Section 2 - Scope

(5) All campuses;

(6) All programs and courses;

(7) All staff, former students, enrolled students and potential students.

(8) NOTE: Human ethics approval is required for research projects involving surveys of staff and/or students of La Trobe University undertaken as part of staff or student research, before an application can be made under this Policy.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(9) The University will

- a. use institutional surveys for data collection for the purpose of informing strategic planning and quality improvement;
- b. prioritise and coordinate the administration of internal surveys to reduce duplication and manage the frequency with which staff and students are asked to participate; and
- c. coordinate access to the LTU electronic survey software.

(10) Surveys not approved under this Policy and according to the Survey Procedures are not to be administered at the University.

(11) Surveys must be conducted in compliance with government privacy and other relevant legislation including University policies and guidelines relating to privacy and human ethics, and the internet code of practice. All data collected in the surveys must be non-identifiable.

Section 4 - Procedures

Exclusions

(12) Key surveys such as student feedback on subjects and teaching, and graduate surveys are excluded from the requirement for approval under the Survey Policy, but are required to be included on the calendar of surveys.

(13) Minor student projects and research surveys approved by the University Human Ethics Committee (UHEC) and not using electronic survey software are also excluded, and not required to be included on the calendar of surveys.

Register and Calendar of Surveys

(14) To assist the University community in designing and planning surveys, the University will publish on its website:

- a. A register of approved surveys
- b. A calendar of approved surveys

Survey Sponsors

(15) For institutional surveys collecting data to inform planning or continuous improvement and/or requiring the resources of the Data and Performance Analytics (DAPA), the survey sponsor should be a member of the Senior Executive Group of the University.

Consideration by Sponsor

(16) Prior to submitting a proposal to conduct a survey, the Survey Sponsor must prepare or review the Survey Application Form and consider whether (and how) the proposed survey demonstrates clear links to specific item(s) in the La Trobe University strategic or operational plan.

Use of Incentives

(17) Incentives intended to enhance response rates should be used with caution as there is little evidence to suggest that they increase the numbers of useable responses.

Analysis and Use of Results

(18) The approval process will require information on the plans for analysis of responses and their use in informing strategy or continuous improvement. Insufficient clarity about this element of the survey ensures that it will not gain approval.

Application to Conduct Surveys

(19) Proposals to conduct surveys must be submitted by the survey sponsor to the Office of the Director, Data and Analytics on the Survey Application Form which can be accessed by emailing surveys@latrobe.edu.au

Use of University Databases

(20) If the survey requires use of University staff or student databases to create the sampling frame, the application must be approved before approaching Human Resources or Student Administration for access to databases.

(21) Approaches to these Divisions without prior approval of the application will not be considered.

(22) For approved institutional surveys that are to be administered by the DAPA, access to databases is available to the DAPA.

Timeline for Survey Request

(23) Applications to administer surveys should normally be made no less than six (6) weeks before the desired commencement of the survey.

(24) A response to an application will be provided within three weeks.

Process to Review Applications

(25) With respect to institutional surveys, once the application is received, additional information will be prepared, including whether:

- a. The information sought already exists
- b. A separate survey is required or the information sought can be obtained through the addition of items to an existing or proposed survey
- c. A suitable instrument already exists
- d. The survey instrument content, format and mode of delivery are appropriate to stated aims and expected outcomes
- e. The timing, mode of delivery and target population for the application of the survey are appropriate
- f. Proposed feedback to participants is appropriate
- g. Similar data from other organisational units that can be used for comparative analysis is available.

(26) An evaluation of the resources required and the applicant's preferred timing to administer the survey will also be considered.

Process to Gain Approval to Conduct Surveys

(27) If the survey does not relate to the strategic plan or inform continuous quality improvement, and the resource and timing implications or over-surveying of the target population prevent the DAPA from supporting it, the application may be declined at this point.

(28) In other cases, after the initial analysis of the survey request, it must be reviewed and rated for alignment with strategic priorities or continuous quality improvement outcomes.

(29) Based on this assessment, a decision to proceed or not will be made by the Director, Data and Analytics, in consultation with other staff as appropriate.

Prioritising Surveys

(30) Surveys will be considered for approval based on certain constraints.

(31) External and internal student outcome surveys including graduate surveys, UES, the student feedback on subjects and teaching such as SFS and SFT, and those in support of University strategic and operational plans will have priority over all other surveys.

(32) Decisions to approve surveys will also take into consideration the frequency with which the target population has been approached.

Administrative Data Used for Research Purposes

(33) If data collected for administrative purposes is subsequently used for research purposes, UHEC approval should be gained for this purpose by the data custodian.

(34) As informed consent is specific to the possible use of the data, a statement should be included on the consent form to indicate the potential uses of the data. The statement could take the form 'This survey is designed for administrative purposes and quality improvement. Results may also be used for research, subject to UHEC approval'.

Provisions for Students with Vision Impairments

(35) Where survey software is being used, since no current survey software caters for people with visual impairments, special provisions should be made for access by those with visual impairments.

Section 5 - Definitions

(36) For the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Survey: a method of collecting information where a sample of subjects drawn from a population is studied to make generalisations about the population.
- b. Census: a survey where the entire population is sampled.
- c. Institutional Survey: A survey conducted on behalf of the university to inform strategic planning and quality improvement.
- d. Non-identifiable data: Data that have never been labelled with individual identifiers or from which identifiers have been permanently removed, and by means of which no specific individual can be identified.
- e. Data custodian – The individual who is responsible for the data once collected.

Status and Details

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| Responsible Policy Officer | Anthony Perera Director, Data and Analytics |
| Author | Katerina Speer |
| Enquiries Contact | Data and Performance Analytics |