

Guide for Conducting Survey Research

Advisory Committee on Assessment
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
July 2019

Routine surveys of the Earlham College community provide the College with feedback on the experiences of students, faculty, staff and alumni. The Advisory Committee on Assessment and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment are responsible for guiding and coordinating assessment efforts for both academic and co-curricular activities at Earlham. The Committee notes both a proliferation of efforts to survey the whole community together with response samples that may not be statistically reliable. The Committee seeks to address two critical matters pertaining to institutional assessment:

- Several surveys must be conducted on a regular basis for purposes of institutional assessment and accreditation
- The Earlham community is subject to survey fatigue, which leads to low response rates (particularly to emailed surveys) that may result in biased data.

The Committee requires researchers to consult with the Committee about needs for institutional survey research so that the Committee can coordinate these surveys and their timing. With forethought we can reduce survey fatigue, avoid unnecessary redundancy and enhance quality of results.

Schedule of Surveys

Data from these surveys offer analytical support for various planning and assessment activities on campus. A schedule and list of current external and internal instruments used by Earlham College can be found in Appendix A.

Submitting Surveys for Review

Surveys that seek input from students, faculty, employees or alumni must be approved in advance. The surveying office should contact the Advisory Committee on Assessment before the 7th week of the semester preceding the semester of the planned survey.

A survey request form is available at:

[Survey/Data Request](#)

How do I know whether my research is “institutional” or “campus-wide”?

The most obvious characteristic of a campus-wide study is one in which you are attempting to contact all members of a class of individuals. If you are hoping to send out a link via the student, faculty, staff, or employee email lists, then your survey will have to be approved and scheduled according to the timeline above. Attempts to contact members of large groups (such as all athletes, all international students, all first-generation students, etc.) may be subject to the policy as well. Seek approval or waivers from the Office of Institutional Research. As a general rule, if a student subgroup is 15% of the student body as a whole, you need

to seek guidance and approval (or a waiver) from the IR Office first. .

What are alternatives to campus-wide surveys?

- Focus groups
- Random selection of the larger group to solicit participation. (For example, randomly selecting 10% of the student body and sending out emails requesting their participation.)
- Tabling in Runyan
- Putting posters up with the link to the survey request

Are there exceptions to the policy?

Yes, there are exceptions. In some cases, you must consult with the Office of Institutional Research and seek a waiver. In other cases, you can proceed without consultation.

- Course evaluations (no waiver required)
- Surveys/evaluation sent to individuals who have used a given service or attended a specific program or event (seek waiver if targeting students AND the target student group is larger than 15% of the student body)
- Surveys from employees of the College to other employees of the college about something directly relevant to their job (requires waiver)
- Surveys from employees of the College seeking feedback about policy, etc. as relevant to their committee charge (e.g., the Dean search committee asking for feedback about the kind of Dean people want.) In most cases, no waiver is required. Please be aware that feedback is different from assessment. For example, the Assessment committee might seek feedback on a policy recommendation (such as what should be in the 5-year review), which would not require approval. If, however, they wanted to send out a survey to all students assessing student's civic engagement, then they would need to have the survey approved and scheduled.

[Consideration by the Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#)

Since surveys involve human subject participation, researchers must also obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Students conducting research for coursework and all other researchers who are studying human subjects must participate in an IRB training and then submit research proposals to the Review Committee. *Note: Waivers or approval for campus wide surveys should be obtained from the Director of Institutional Research before submitting an application to the IRB.* For more information about the IRB review process, visit: [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#)

Data Storage for Continuity

To assist in continuity and coordination of this information, data from campus-wide surveys should be centrally stored in the IR Office, regardless of which office administers the survey. These results provide for continuity of assessment and information sharing across the College.

Appendix A – Blue highlighted columns show the 2019-20 Academic Year.

SURVEYS administered by the Institutional Research Office													
Survey Instrument	Population	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
Ruffalo Noel Levitz College Student Inventory	First Year Students					CSI (87%)	MYSA (50%)	CSI (89%)	MYSA (48%)	CSI	MYSA	CSI	MYSA
Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ)	Enrolling and non-Enrolling Students		2015 (20%)		2016 (26%)				2018 (30%)				2020
CIRP The Freshman Survey	First Year Students	2014 (86%)		2015 (85%)				2017 (85%)				2019	
NSSE	First Year Students and Seniors		2015 (52%)						2018 (46%)				
HEDS Research Practices Survey	First Year Students and Seniors						2017 (19%)						
HEDS Alumni Survey	Alumni 5- and 6-years out				2016				2018				2020
HERI Faculty	Faculty						2017						2020
SURVEYS administered by other Offices													
Survey Instrument	Population	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
First Destination Survey - CIL, Alumni Office and IR	Graduating Seniors		2015		2016		2017		2018 (89%)		2019		2020
MISO - Information Services - Library	All Students		2015						2018				
NASCE - Bonner	All Students		2015				2017						
Diverse Learning Environments - Diversity Progress Committee	All Students				2016 (34%)						2019		
Campus Climate - Student Life	All Students			2015									
Indiana College Substance Abuse - Wellness and Student Life	Sample		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		

Ruffalo Noel Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI) – The CSI will be administered 30 days before next students arrive on campus beginning in late July. This survey is designed to gather data to develop a profile of each incoming student to assess their strengths and areas for growth. This information will help the College be more proactive in pointing students toward the resources that will help them succeed.

Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ): The ASQ is administered every year at the direction of the Admissions Office. Both enrolling and non-enrolling students are surveyed to learn about factors that affect these students' college choices.

CIRP The Freshman Survey: This survey covers a wide range of student characteristics: parental income and education, ethnicity, financial aid, secondary school achievement, educational and career aspirations, values and beliefs and self-concept. The results provide a comprehensive portrait of the changing character of entering students.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): The survey gathers data about programs and activities provided by the College, related to student learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. This survey provides comparative data from the hundreds of colleges and universities that participate each year.

HEDS Senior Survey: The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium Senior survey is conducted every other year on Seniors during the Spring before they graduate. This survey asks for reflections on the Earlham educational experience and outcomes in terms of immediate plans for the future.

HEDS Alumni Survey: The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium Alumni survey is conducted every other year on graduates 5 and 6 year out. This survey asks about current primary activity, continuing education, reflections on the Earlham educational experience and outcomes in terms of salary and job satisfaction.

HERI Faculty Survey : This survey is designed to measure timely issues that impact faculty and administrators at higher education institutions. These results can be useful in discussion about pedagogy and how it relates to students' experience on campus.

First Destination Survey: The survey was developed at Earlham and asks about new graduates and their first plans after graduation. Data is gathered with a survey just before commencement and then follow up is conducted over the course of the next six months.