III. Protocols for Conducting Student Affairs Research

Why are Student Affairs research protocols necessary?

There are three major offices of research and/or assessment at Duke University with numerous smaller offices, and research/assessment is constantly run out of a variety of departments, both academic and co-curricular. The majority of information collected is about undergraduate students, and without careful coordination of surveying efforts negative consequences will ensue including the following: over-sampling of students; negative student attitudes toward information-gathering efforts; low response rates to surveys; and reduced effectiveness of research and/or assessment efforts.

The protocols that follow allow the various offices of research and/or assessment at Duke University to carefully coordinate the sampling of Duke undergraduates to protect students from being over-surveyed. These protocols facilitate communication among researchers to ensure the best timing, surveying environment, and response rate possible.

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Protocol</th>
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<td><strong>How do we define research?</strong></td>
<td>“Research is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon under study.” With an emphasis on systematic, good research starts with a clear question to be answered. Information can be collected either quantitatively or qualitatively. <strong>Quantitative</strong> information collection focuses on answering the question of interest with numerical analysis, as with multiple-choice or Likert-scale survey questions. <strong>Qualitative</strong> information collection focuses on word responses, such as from open-ended survey questions, archival documents, interviews, and focus groups.</td>
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<td><strong>What research question do I want to ask? And/or What information do I want to gather?</strong></td>
<td>Contact the Office of Assessment &amp; Research (AR) in Student Affairs. AR will provide resources and assistance, from the initial discussion and planning stages to actual implementation and results analysis and will coordinate research samples and timing of the study with the Office of Institutional Research and other research and assessment entities at Duke.</td>
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<td><strong>How many individuals should I sample?</strong></td>
<td>Always sample the smallest number of students possible for your research. The exact number depends on the type of analyses you plan to run and how much statistical error you are willing to allow. The Office of Assessment &amp; Research will provide assistance in calculating appropriate sample size.</td>
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### Who is the population with whom I will be working?

**Required:**
- If you are planning a project where a large (>100) and/or random sample of Duke students (undergraduate or graduate) will be invited to participate, you should be aware of Duke's survey guidelines ([http://info.studentaffairs.duke.edu/info/policies/univ/Survey%20Guidelines.html](http://info.studentaffairs.duke.edu/info/policies/univ/Survey%20Guidelines.html)) and you must contact the Office of Assessment & Professional Development at the initial planning stage of your study. The Office of Assessment & Research will facilitate coordination of your study with other research and assessment offices in terms of both the sampling and timing.

If you are planning to gather information from the following populations – employees within your department or a small student population that you have regular contact with and can easily recruit -- coordination of research on an institutional level is not necessary, though the Office of Assessment & Research would still appreciate communication of ongoing assessment efforts through an email or a meeting.

### Are there any protocols when it comes to my sample in terms of recruiting or incentives?

**Required:**
- Duke has a Group E-Mail Policy that applies to survey invitations sent by email to large (>100) samples. The policy details where approval is required before sending out email invitations as well as technical and other conditions. The policy can be accessed here: [http://www.oit.duke.edu/email-accounts/dukemail/group_email/policy.php](http://www.oit.duke.edu/email-accounts/dukemail/group_email/policy.php)

- In regards to incentives offered for participation in your research, any compensation you give should be commensurate with the level of respondent effort and appropriate for the study and requires pre-approval at the departmental level.

If participants will be required to provide their social security numbers in order to receive payment, they must be informed during the invitation process, and if you plan to use a lottery or drawing as an incentive, the protocol must follow the guidelines of Duke University’s Campus Human Research Protections Program: [http://ors.duke.edu/faq/irb-faq-20](http://ors.duke.edu/faq/irb-faq-20)

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Assessment & Research if you have any questions at all about recruiting or incentive protocols.
| What about Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval? How do I know when I need it, and how can I obtain more information about it? | We recommend obtaining IRB approval for any type of research where you are interacting with and collecting identifiable information from Duke students. We encourage this as the IRB ensures that your participants’ rights and welfare are being fully protected while providing an unbiased, friendly review of your proposed research.  

There are however two main types of research where IRB approval is not needed. These include:  
- de-identified data/data where there are no identifiers whatsoever, so there is no way in which the participants could ever be identified.  
- program evaluations, where the information collected will be used only for that purpose.  

The Office of Assessment & Research is a resource for assisting with the IRB process, from determining whether IRB approval is even needed, through the full application and approval process. More information on Duke University’s IRB process is available here: [http://ors.duke.edu/research-with-human-subjects](http://ors.duke.edu/research-with-human-subjects). Even if IRB approval is not required for your study, you are expected to follow the same research protocols. |
| Are there any other research protocols that I should follow? | **Required:**  
- When it comes to gathering information from a population there are some basic research protocols that should be followed regardless of sample size or research methodology. These policies include the following, all with the goal of protecting participants’ rights and welfare:  
  - Being honest and frank with participants about the information they are being requested to provide and its purpose.  
  - Making clear that participants know their participation is strictly voluntary, so that they can refuse to participate or stop participation at any point without penalty of any sort.  
  - Including and communicating to participants the measures you are taking to safeguard their confidentiality.  
  - Following up with participants to communicate research results if requested. |
| Where can I contact and obtain more information from the Office of AR? | If you have any questions about appropriate protocols or any stage or the research process, do not hesitate to contact the Office of Assessment & Research through the Project Request Form in your Baseline Account: [https://duke.campuslabs.com](https://duke.campuslabs.com) (see Appendix for further assistance)  
  or email: research@studentaffairs.duke.edu  
  Our office is located in the Bryan Center--Suite 101, and our website can be accessed here: [http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ra/programs-services/assessment](http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ra/programs-services/assessment)  
  We can also be contacted by phone:  
  - Ana Li, PhD, Director of Assessment & Research: (919) 684-4582  
  - C. Colgate Taylor, Assistant Director of Research & Assessment: (919) 684-4186 |