Frequently Asked Questions

Institutional Surveys Policy

Feedback on the Draft Policy can be sent to Policy@Mun.ca

1. **Why is this policy important?**
   a. Institutional surveys are centrally coordinated to ensure that:
      i. consistent and appropriate survey designs and methodologies are used.
      ii. privacy protection and information management protocols are followed.
      iii. efficiencies around resources and information gathering efforts are achieved.
      iv. survey results are shared and used in an effective manner.
      v. the University has an appropriate understanding of the survey demands being placed upon its various populations.

2. **What are the main changes to the policy?**
   a. Most changes to the policy are minor, with clarification in scope and definitions of what constitutes a survey. Critically, the policy would include a prohibition on student surveys during the regularly scheduled exam period.

3. **What is an institutional survey?**
   a. An institutional survey is a survey conducted by a University Unit or its subsidiaries, or by a third-party under the direction of the University for an Administrative Purpose, and directed towards a sample or population of the University. University populations include prospective students, current students, employees, alumni, or other stakeholders.
   b. An administrative purpose refers to the use of information for the operating functions of the University. This may include activities for assessment, evaluation, quality assurance, management or improvement purposes and any other non-research activities pertaining to how the University and/or its Unit(s) operate.
4. What is ISOC? What is its mandate? What are its responsibilities?
   a. The Memorial University Institutional Survey Oversight Committee (ISOC) is established under the authority of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) for the purpose of providing central coordination of Institutional Surveys. Its Terms of Reference are available at: https://www.mun.ca/ciap/media/production/ciap/media-library/isoc/ToR-ISOC.pdf
   b. The Committee has overall responsibility for the review and approval of survey requests. Its mandate is:
      i. To review requests for approval of Institutional Surveys, as per the Institutional Surveys policy.
      ii. To apply the guiding principles of Institutional Surveys specified in the Institutional Surveys Policy.
      iii. To consult with CIAP on current best practices for Institutional Surveys.
      iv. To report to and advise the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of Institutional Survey activities at the University.
   c. ISOC is responsible for the review and approval of survey requests through a standardized process. The guiding principles for the approval of survey requests are:
      i. the purpose of the Institutional Survey is consistent with the strategic objectives of the University;
      ii. the timing, target population, and content of the Institutional Survey do not overlap with previously approved surveys;
      iii. opportunities for efficiently consolidating surveys are considered;
      iv. survey administration will follow appropriate and best practices methodologies, including:
         1. appropriate content and design of the survey instrument, and
         2. use of standard methods and systems as currently recommended by CIAP;
      v. the information to be collected by the survey normally cannot be obtained through any other methods or sources;
      vi. there will be measures in place for the protection, use, retention and disposal of survey information, in accordance with University policies including Appropriate Use of Computing Resources, Electronic Data Security, Information Management, and Privacy and their related procedures;
vii. the survey does not interfere with the normal operations of the University. Institutional Surveys may not be administered until approval has been granted by ISOC.

5. What is the relationship of ISOC and this policy to ethics committees/boards/authorities?
   a. This policy does not apply to academic research. Research projects that receive clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) or a Research Ethics Board do not require additional clearance from the Institutional Survey Oversight Committee. There is often communication between ISOC and the ethics committees/boards when a proponent is unclear whether a survey falls under the scope of this policy.

6. What resources are there for units undertaking institutional Surveys?
   a. The Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning hosts and maintains the committee’s webpage. This website contains such resources as sample privacy statements, survey methodology standards (Question wording templates, considerations for question design), ISOC meeting schedules, among other things.
   b. The Committee Website is https://www.mun.ca/ciap/institutional-survey-oversight-committee/
   c. The resources page is https://www.mun.ca/ciap/institutional-survey-oversight-committee/resources-and-support/

7. How long does it take to have a survey approved?
   a. The Committee recognizes that many surveys are time sensitive and endeavors to review and provide feedback as quickly as possible. To minimize unforeseen delays, survey designers/proponents are encouraged to reach out to the Committee (via ciap@mun.ca) as early in the process as possible. Early engagement with CIAP will help address any issues prior to formal submission to ISOC.