

# Samford University Survey Policy and Procedures

## Purpose

The following procedure was created in order to benefit the Samford community in three ways: improve quality, reduce oversampling, and reduce redundancy. It is not intended to regulate who may or may not engage in survey activities but rather to offer guidance when needed and to build a central location for information about these activities.

Review is not required for (a) faculty-supervised survey research that contributes toward students' academic progress, (b) evaluation of an event by participants (including students in a course), (c) feedback from clients at the point of service (including majors in a department), (d) course evaluation forms, and (e) surveys mandated for accreditation purposes.

## Definition of “survey”

All references to surveys from this point forward are defined as a gathering of information through questionnaires, interviews, etc. intended for distribution to any members or prospective members of the Samford University community (e.g. applicants, students, faculty, staff, and alumni). All such surveys must be approved using the procedures described herein. It does not include those exceptions stated in the previous paragraph.

## Definition of “approval”

All references to approval from this point forward are defined as gaining clearance to proceed with administration once the review process is complete.

## Administration of Procedure

### Survey Review Committee (SRC)

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness will act as the chair of the SRC with the Administrative Assistant of Institutional Effectiveness as committee secretary. Other committee members will include the Associate Provost, Chief Information Officer, IRB liaison, and up to three faculty members to serve as consultants.

Approval by the SRC to administer a survey is not a substitute for a review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). SRC may also request that a researcher submit a survey for review by the IRB before it is administered.

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The IRB will appoint a liaison to work in conjunction with the SRC to administer this process. If the survey related activity will be 1) listed as scholarly or scientific activity on your vita/resume or 2) presented to persons not currently employed or enrolled at Samford University, the activity

must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to initiation of the activity.

The approval path (IRB only, SRC only, both, or neither) will be determined during the submission process through the use of a workflow. The IRB and SRC use a common request submission form and is the only one required. If you are unsure whether or not your survey requires an IRB review, consult the [IRB webpage](#).

## Survey Tool Selection

Surveys may be administered using paper and pencil, phone, or electronic format. Regardless of the method used, the survey is subject to the policy as stated above.

## Researcher's Responsibilities

Acceptance of authorization to administer a survey establishes an obligation on the part of the researcher to use these data responsibly, including not distributing the data to others in or outside the University, unless the researcher is an authoritative source for and an authorized distributor of the data and the recipient is authorized to receive the data. In addition, a person who receives e-mail or traditional mail addresses of individuals in schools or offices will be responsible for that information and must agree to adhere to Samford University policies for handling data. Samford University's Information policies are in section 6 of University policy.

## Sanctions for Policy Violations

Intentional or repeated failure to adhere to the policies and guidelines relating to the use of surveys will result in a written notification to the data collector and the Vice President who is responsible for their unit or department. Violators of this policy must receive clearance from the Vice President to administer any future surveys for a period determined by the Vice President.

## Procedures

### The Approval Process

Individuals and offices wishing to conduct a survey that is covered by the survey policy must complete and submit the Survey Review Application, which can be found on the [SRC](#) web site. Information required for the application includes but is not limited to:

- Description of the survey project, including the purpose and intended use of results;
- Specific population receiving the survey;
- Method of survey distribution (e.g. online or hard copy, via email, in class, at event, etc.);
- Time frame for administering the survey, including beginning and end dates;
- Description of any planned incentive program for respondents; and
- Current draft of the survey and all invitations and cover letters.

Applicants must submit the completed Survey Review Application via SharePoint. If a recurring survey has been approved in an earlier year, it will be necessary to submit a renewal application. Surveys that had been approved in prior years, but which have been significantly changed, must be re-approved by the IRB and/or the SRC on an annual basis.

The SRC and IRB, as applicable, will review the Survey Review Application and provide a response to the applicant. The application will be reviewed based on the following questions:

- Is the purpose of the survey clear and is it explained to the prospective participants?
- Does the survey provide information useful for planning or improving services?
- Is the survey well-designed and of an appropriate length? Does it follow sound survey methods and practices? Are the questions easily understood and interpreted?
- What is the target population?
- Will the entire population or a sample be surveyed?
- Are the rights of prospective participants clearly explained?
- What actions are being taken to ensure the confidentiality of the responses?
- When will the survey be conducted? What is the optimal timing to ensure it does not compete with other university surveys and activities?
- How will the results be used?
- Will the findings be disseminated to appropriate university audiences? Who will have access to the information and will it help them make better decisions as a result?
- Has the Institutional Review Board approved the project (if necessary)?
- Can the proposed survey be combined with other planned surveys?
- Are there other data available that will allow the survey to be avoided?

SRC/IRB will provide feedback to the applicant, either approval of the survey project as is or a change notice with feedback regarding specific changes needed for approval. If you have any questions about the survey policy, please contact the [SRC Chair](#).

## Guidelines for Conducting a Survey at Samford University

All surveys conducted at Samford University should adhere to the following guidelines.

### **The Rights of Respondents**

- The survey form or cover letter must include "contact information" (name, e-mail address, telephone number) of the primary investigator, chair of the IRB or chair of the SRC should the respondents have any questions about the content of the form or about the use and/or publication of survey results.
- The survey form or cover letter must include a statement specifying that participation is voluntary, and either anonymous or confidential.
- The use of prizes or other incentives to encourage participation typically requires the collection of personal information from the respondents (i.e., name or e-mail 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:
  1. 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.
  2. A double-blind procedure is developed in which a second party ensures that the analyst does not see any personally-identifiable information.
- If your survey or data analysis will include academic or contact information for Samford University 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 results of the analysis are:

1. not reported in such a way that individual students can be identified.
2. only presented to individuals currently employed or enrolled at Samford University.

All other investigators must receive written consent from the students to access non-public student data. To learn more about FERPA, contact the Registrar's Office.

- Surveys that request individual health information may be subject to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). For more information, contact your school's IRB representative.
- If subjects are promised anonymity and a login is required to access the survey (e.g., UPSIDs), the researcher must ensure that respondent's information will not be collected and stored in a way that it can be connected to survey results.

## Sponsorship

- All surveys should clearly identify the group or person who is conducting the survey.
- The use of the name "Samford 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, or have an exempt status (contact SRC for assistance).
- Information from surveys conducted by administrative offices, faculty administrative committees, and other university committees are the property of Samford University. The researcher, department, unit, or committee responsible for conducting the survey must be consulted prior to the release and distribution of the survey findings. Intellectual property resulting from faculty research is covered in the Samford [Faculty Handbook, section A6.5](#).
- The use of any Samford University listserv to promote or distribute a survey to Samford University faculty, staff, or students is limited to official surveys approved by the Samford University administration. Appropriate individuals or offices must first approve these surveys. Please contact [SRC](#) for more information.

## Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information should be collected only as required in relation to the expressly stated purpose of research or a project.

## Data Security

Use of the University's survey administration system (Qualtrics) is recommended for conducting surveys. Using Qualtrics, you can assume that your data is secure. If you use another survey system, it is considered the same as an off-campus host and the researcher assumes full responsibility for security and privacy of the data.

- 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 Samford University except under special circumstances (e.g. a data sharing consortium). If survey data are shared,
  - The use of the data should conform to Samford University's Information policies which are in section 6 of University policy.

- The data should not contain any information that will identify a respondent, and
  - The release of data must be approved by the appropriate Vice President.
- 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 Internet (IP) address, SSL encryption, full encryption of data-at-rest, and firewall and intrusion prevention technology).
  - The release of survey data to a Samford University student for a class project is at the discretion of the owner of the survey. The student must send an email to the survey owner, copying the faculty member teaching that assigned the class project, with the course title and the reason the information is needed. The survey owner's name may be obtained from the Chair of the Survey Review Committee.

## **Institutional Review Board Review**

The Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects of Samford University has been established in compliance with Federal Regulations concerning experimentation involving human subjects (45 C.F.R. Part 46, Protection of Human Subjects). The purpose of this board is to provide review of all research conducted by faculty, staff, and students to insure protection of human subjects and compliance with the federal regulations.

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, your survey activity, may be suspended or terminated. Survey researchers should be aware of their responsibilities and make every effort to protect the rights of survey recipients.

## **Survey Calendar and Scheduling**

It is recommended that all surveys be scheduled through the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#) (OIE) to maximize response rates. The requested timeframe will be accommodated as closely as possible. Requests will be tentatively scheduled in the order they are received and confirmed upon approval. Survey administration timeframe is typically limited to ten working days.

## **Use of Qualtrics for Administering Web Surveys**

Samford University's web survey system, [Qualtrics](#), will be available to offices, departments, committees, or student organizations requesting its use to collect information on campus programs or services.

## **Use of E-mail for Administering Surveys**

E-mail is a convenient and effective way to contact and communicate with potential research subjects; however, e-mail is a fundamentally insecure medium. Subjects cannot be assured of the confidentiality of their data in e-mail surveys. E-mail may be safely used as a vehicle only to contact potential subjects, who may then be given the option to (a) print and return an anonymous survey via campus or surface mail, or (b) go to a web link to complete an online survey.

## **Survey Publicity**

The survey requestor is responsible for submitting all publicity for their survey to either the IRB or SRC as appropriate. Surveys can be publicized through media such as *The Samford Crimson*, e-mail, social networking, message boards, and posters. Notices and reminders by members of the staff (e.g., residence advisors) and faculty (e.g., department chairs) can also be effective.

## **Incentives**

The use of incentives to encourage participation must be indicated on the submitted application.

## **Assistance with Survey Development, Administration and Reporting**

OIE will consider requests for assistance with the development and analysis of surveys conducted by academic departments, committees/task forces, and administrative units as time permits. Assistance with external projects (e.g., grant-related projects) conducted by Samford University faculty and staff may also be considered, but these will have a lower priority. OIE will deny a request for assistance if resources are not available.