

## Survey Research Design Checklist: Learning Gain Measurement

If your institution or programme/course is exploring the use of a learning gain survey gathered via a self-report questionnaire, then it is advisable to consider the following eight criteria and associated key questions before implementation:

SRDC Criterion	Guiding Evidence	Key Questions
1. Access to survey	<p>Evidence indicates that the process through which participants are <b>introduced to any survey</b> is extremely important for subsequent engagement.</p> <p>Response rates for students are usually much higher if surveys are <b>embedded within their own programmes of study</b>, rather than seen as additional or institutional.</p> <p><b>Minimising the number of tasks</b> deemed absolutely essential, before respondents get to the survey, per se, is also crucial.</p>	<p>How is the measure of learning gain embedded within your institution?</p> <p>How will you engage and support members of staff with the measurement of learning gain in your institution?</p> <p>Will staff have access to the questions used in the survey?</p> <p>To what extent is the survey integrated into the programmes of study at your institution?</p> <p>How will students access the survey (e.g. using an individualised link, an open link or both)?</p> <p>Will any promotional resources be used in your institution? If so, when are they released?</p> <p>Will there be any academic-led promotional activities?</p>
2. Level of student support	<p>The overall <b>visibility of a survey and access to support / discussion with programme tutors</b> and students, pre-completion, could be crucial for engagement; especially to ground the process within an integrated subject and curriculum context. Feeling part of a course of study is the foremost starting point for engagement and subsequent academic success.</p> <p>Pre-empting <b>possible benefits and disbenefits</b> could also feature to enhance possible engagement.</p>	<p>Will students have any opportunity to discuss learning gain before participating?</p> <p>How will confidentiality and consent be managed?</p> <p>Will any approaches be used to encourage participation while the survey is open (e.g. reminders)?</p>



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3. Incentives	<p>Due to perceived <b>survey saturation</b>, considerable attention has been given to the use and effectiveness of incentives linked to response rates. Evidence shows that response rates improve when providing a <b>clear narrative</b> for how scheme incentives are administered at the outset; usually by using an <b>immediate and guaranteed reward</b> alongside longer-term 'lottery' opportunities.</p> <p>The use of incentives to re-engage non-respondents can also increase uptake, although there are some <b>ethical and methodological challenges</b> to consider regarding rewarding non-respondents more favourably than original survey participants.</p>	<p>What are the incentives for students to participate in the survey?</p> <p>What impact, if any, will the incentives have on student participation?</p> <p>What considerations, if any, will your institution give to the timing of the incentives throughout the survey window?</p>
4. Optimal length of survey	<p>Response rates are linked closely to how long surveys take to complete. Studies show that an optimal time for students to engage in any survey is <b>approximately 13 minutes</b>.</p>	<p>Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and recorded the completion time?</p> <p>Will different access arrangements (e.g. online, paper) affect completion time?</p>
5. Timing and possible information fatigue	<p>Targeting first year undergraduate students during <b>the first few weeks of their studies</b> can be problematic, especially during points of induction-related information overload and if mechanisms such as welcome surveys are used.</p> <p>At the time of survey delivery, it is much more productive for response rates if <b>the topic has a high degree of salience</b> for potential participants.</p>	<p>When will the survey open and close in your institution? Is this timing optimal?</p> <p>Will respondents receive any follow-up communication if they partially complete the survey?</p>



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6. Question wording and ordering	<p>Evidence indicates that <b>simplicity</b> encourages participation.</p> <p><b>Ordering effect</b> is often given insufficient attention in survey design.</p>	<p>Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and recorded feedback on language, content and ordering?</p> <p>Have you considered techniques such as cognitive interviewing to evaluate question design?</p>
7. Survey question formats	<p>There is considerable literature about the implications of questionnaire layouts and how ease of survey navigation for respondents can be pivotal to engagement.</p> <p>Evidence indicates that <b>simplicity</b> encourages participation.</p>	<p>Have you piloted your survey on your proposed sample and explored various layouts?</p> <p>Have you considered techniques such as cognitive interviewing to evaluate question design?</p>
8. Reporting and debriefing	<p>Considerable attention needs to be given to <b>motivational strategies</b> for furthering student engagement following completion. This could be monitored formatively and summatively.</p> <p>It may be useful to consider <b>theories of social exchange</b> for possible impact upon engagement within the survey process.</p>	<p>Will students have any opportunity to discuss their learning gain results? If so, is there sufficient infrastructure in place to deliver this support (e.g. staff and institutional capacity)?</p> <p>Will there be a response rate target? If so, who will set the target?</p> <p>How will the survey data be used?</p> <p>Will the data be analysed at different levels (e.g. at an individual level, for specific groups of students, at a programme level, at an institutional level)?</p>

