

California Lutheran University Survey Research Guidelines

All proposed survey research that includes a sample population from CLU requires scheduling and a sample draw (contact list) from the Educational Effectiveness and Institutional Research office (EE&IR) even if the research project has IRB approval. Appeals and special cases may be referred by the EE&IR to a committee of CLU Survey Research Experts for review. All CLU surveys must conform to the following guidelines. If EE&IR schedules the survey, the investigators will get a specific sample list from which to seek participants and an official “CLU survey skin” to use on the survey and to use in all survey related communication.

1 – Justification for the need for Survey Research Guidelines

These guidelines help to protect and preserve the CLU populations for legitimate CLU survey research.

There are a finite number of potential survey research participants and participant time at CLU. There are a finite number of reasonable survey data collections at CLU in a given semester. Proper scheduling and sampling of survey avoids duplication of content and exhaustion of participants.

A key to maximization of survey research resources is the planning to get high levels of response rates.

Those asking to survey any CLU population need to understand that proposed surveys must fit within priorities, deadlines, and what is appropriate for CLU. The major priorities for survey research at CLU are:

- Scholarly research approved by the IRB
- Academic program assessment
- Co-curricular and service assessment
- Other interests

Please note: IRB approval is only a first step toward gaining permission to schedule and conduct a survey.

2 – Survey research materials must have consistent content:

Mission fit. The survey instruments and related messages to any CLU population member must be consistent with the CLU Mission and consistent with this and all other relevant campus policies.

Explanation. All survey research materials at CLU must explain to participants and others how the study is a legitimate scholarly, institutional, or instructional activity.

Participants have the right to know if their responses could influence university decision making.

Approval notifications. All communication regarding the survey and the survey instrument must have an official “CLU survey skin” so potential survey participants can know when a survey is ‘approved’ for their participation.

EE&IR will also post a list of scheduled surveys every two weeks so that those concerned can verify official scheduling for the survey.

The principal investigator and the approving administrator must be clearly identified along with their contact information in all recruitment messages, survey instruments, or debriefing messages.

3 – Restriction on contacts. Survey researchers must restrict contact to only the sample listing provided by the EE&IR. At NO POINT should a survey researcher spam all CLU students, all CLU staff, all CLU faculty, or all CLU alumni with a solicitation to participate in survey research.

4 – Opt-out Rights. Members of all CLU populations have the rights to withdraw from a survey at any time and to express a survey research opt-out and opt-back-in preference for any contact concerning survey research participation. All survey researchers representing CLU or contacting a CLU population must demonstrate an active effort to practice a before-the-fact respect and honor for individual preferences for contact about survey participation.

The EE&IR will maintain an online instrument where CLU population members can opt-out or opt-back-in of CLU survey research

The EE&IR will maintain a list of opt-outs and remove those opt-outs from sample lists. Survey recruitment messages should have instructions on how population members can opt-out or opt-back-in for CLU surveys.

5 – Project Review. Researchers seeking to conduct survey research at CLU must provide evidence of an appropriate review and approval of the project (e.g., the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a department chair, a director, a Dean, the Provost or an appropriate Vice President). The review will address the following:

Mission fit and use. Researchers need to explain why the project is important for CLU and who is expected to use the information.

Sampling plan. Researchers seeking approval to conduct a survey of an CLU population must submit a sampling plan justifying the inclusion or exclusion of participants from the sampling frame.

Administration.

Time limit. Conducting of the survey must be only for a specific set of dates.

Extensions require resubmission to EE&IR for scheduling.

Survey instruments should not be embedded or attached to a mass email.

Instead, provide a link to a web-based survey.

Paper-based surveys require specific approval for times and means of administration. Avoid in-class surveys that disrupt instruction.

Debriefing and follow-up materials (e.g., how participants can find out about the actual purpose and the results of the survey) must be part of the plan for administration of the survey.

6 – Reports

All survey documents, particularly reports about the findings from the survey, must have a date identifying the month(s) and year of the data collection.

The following materials are required when seeking approval for survey research:

1. The purpose for the research
2. Appropriate approvals
3. Survey instrument (both complete copy and a URL link to any online version)
4. A description of the planned administration specifying the rationale for including or excluding participants, method of contacting participants, time-frame for survey, and the provision of an option for opting-out of the survey
5. Copies of planned correspondence with participants