

CIRP Survey Administration Guidelines Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA

Administration of the survey

The Student Information Forms (SIFs) are designed to be administered in a proctored situation during the freshman orientation or registration period. The forms should be completed by your entering students before the start of the academic year. If this is not possible, they should be completed before the end of the first full week of classes.

*Use only the 2003 version of the Student Information Form (the 2003 SIF is **aqua**).* We cannot process forms from previous years. If you have forms from previous years, please dispose of them. Although there are common federal guidelines for the use of human subjects in research, procedures may vary from campus to campus. Therefore, it is critical for you to familiarize yourself with your institution's human subject's guidelines. The UCLA General Campus Review Board requires that you sign the attached "2003 Cooperative Institutional Research Program approval" form and return this form to us prior to administering the survey at your campus. This form assures us that you will abide by and comply with the CIRP administration procedures approved by UCLA's IRB. It also assures us that if local IRB approval of this research is required on your campus, you will administer the survey only after you have received IRB approval. **The research approval form must be signed by an individual who has the authority to determine the appropriate level of human subjects research review on your campus and who also has the authority to sign on behalf of your institution.**

Who may be surveyed

You may survey all entering students, regardless of their enrollment status (transfer and part-time students will be separated during survey processing; see "Reports" below).

Participation

The best results are obtained when the survey is administered in a proctored situation. Note, however, that participation is **voluntary**. *Students should be specifically informed that this is a voluntary survey. Please note that compulsory participation in research is a violation of the federal regulations.* The following text, which describes the survey, should be included with the survey packet (if mailed) or read aloud (if administered in person):

We ask that you complete this survey as part of a national study of higher education conducted by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles. One major goal of this research is to determine what happens to students when they attend college. These studies are designed to help improve the quality of college education and thus may benefit future generations of college students. Results of your participation will also be directly beneficial to (name of your campus), since we will receive complete tabulations of your responses to compare with the responses of students nationwide.

We ask for your name and address so that the researchers at UCLA can contact you at some later date for a follow-up study. We would also like your Social Security Number so we can merge your responses with other campus data to support our institutional research program. Of course, your responses will be used only for research purposes and will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your standing at (name of your campus).

Please also note that the attached Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Survey Information Sheet must accompany all survey forms.

Completing the surveys

Provide pencils

As noted on the SIF, the survey can be filled out in black lead pencil or *blue or black pen* however, you may want to have a supply of pencils on hand for students who need them.

Complete the Administration Report Form (ARF)

After all students have completed the survey, fill out the attached yellow Administration Report Form (ARF). *We need the completed ARF to process your surveys.* If you do not have all the ARF information in time to meet the delivery deadline, send a copy of the incomplete ARF with the surveys; then when the information becomes available, call the Higher Education Research Institute at (310) 825-1925 as soon as possible. (An incomplete ARF form may delay processing of your surveys.)

Returning the surveys

Use the pre-addressed return box provided to return the surveys and the ARF. Stack the surveys with page 1 facing up and all surveys oriented in the same direction. Ship to:

HERI Processing Center
Questar Data Systems
2905 West Service Road
Eagan, Minnesota 55121

Do not return the surveys to UCLA. If you do, we will ship them to Questar and bill you for shipping charges.

Note: If you are sorting the surveys into “standard” break-out groups, follow the instructions that appear on the ARF form. The break-out groups must be separately bundled (with rubber bands) and labeled exactly as indicated on the ARF form.

Surveys must arrive at Questar ready for processing!

This means the surveys must be flat, smooth, oriented in the same direction, and without staples, clips, or other extra items attached. If Questar must provide extra handling to ready the surveys for processing, we will pass the extra charge on to you.

Surveys must arrive at Questar no later than October 17, 2003—allow sufficient time for delivery by the deadline.

We recommend that you **ship by United Parcel Service (UPS), FedEx**, or other traceable means of parcel delivery--**do not use the U.S. Postal Service**. If the surveys are shipped in more than one box/package, indicate this on the box (for example, “Box 1 of 3”). Please send all surveys at the same time—if that is not possible, note on the ARF that you will send another shipment and when it should arrive—remember, all shipments must arrive before the delivery deadline.

If your surveys arrive at Questar before September 26, 2003, you can obtain a data file of students’ responses by early November.

Reports & Data Files

Institutional Profile

Participating institutions receive a report that summarizes the survey data. The “institutional profile” report includes summary data for your first-time, full-time men, women, and all students, plus

comparative national normative data. You also receive separate summary reports profiling part-time students, transfer students, and all survey respondents at your institution.

Subgroup Comparisons

CIRP offers two methods for comparing subgroups of students:

- “standard” break-outs (up to 8 mutually exclusive subgroups of first-time, full-time freshmen)
- “special” break-outs (up to 190 subgroups; may include part-time and transfer students)

Standard break-out groups

Standard break-outs permit you to compare subgroups of first-time, full-time freshmen. They can be used to compare mutually exclusive student subgroups, such as: departments (English vs. engineering vs. psychology, etc.); housing plans (on-campus vs. off-campus housing); residency (in-state vs. out-of-state), etc. “Standard” break-outs must be independent of one another (i.e., a single student must belong to only one subgroup). You must designate at least two standard break-out groups, but no more than eight (if there are more than eight, we will merge the extra groups into the last group).

When you return the surveys for processing, bundle (by rubber-banding) each break-out group separately. Attach a label to each bundle that corresponds to the break-out group name you listed on the Administration Report Form (ARF).

Note: *If you are sorting surveys into “standard” break-out groups, you must create at least two, but no more than eight, subgroups.*

To permit comparison to the national normative data, “standard” break-out groups are limited to first-time, full-time freshmen. (If you include part-time or transfer students’ surveys in a break-out bundle, they will be dropped from the break-out group during processing—If you have subgroups that include substantial numbers of part-time and/or transfer students, you should use “*special break-outs*”, described below.) The results for each “standard” break-out group will appear in your institutional profile as a separate report. (A code indicating the break-out group (01-08) is also added to your institution’s data file.)

Special (coded) break-out groups

“*Special*” (coded) break-out groups, permit you to compare more than eight subgroups of students. These break-outs are not limited to first-time, full-time freshmen; “special” (coded) break-out groups may include part-time and transfer students, as well. (If you have a large number of part-time and transfer students, you should use “special” break-out groups rather than “standard” break-out groups.)

“Special” break-out groups are identified by marking one or both of the two *Group Code* grids on the survey. Each grid can be used to identify up to 95 unique student subgroups (from 01-95). Once the code is entered onto the survey it can be used in two ways. First, it becomes a permanent part of the survey data and can be used when conducting analyses with an institutional data file (see “obtaining student data for local research” below for further information). Second, CIRP can produce a special break-out report. This report comes in a format similar to the standard institutional profile. However, it provides a separate profile of each coded subgroups, as well as a total survey population profile.

“Special” (coded) break-out groups allow you to identify up to 190 unique subgroups.

To use “special” break-out groups, instruct your students to mark the *Group Code* (located next to the Social Security Number grid) with the appropriate value (from 01-95; values 00 and 96-99 are used by CIRP for processing purposes) at the time they complete the survey. (Be sure to provide instructions regarding the appropriate codes to grid.)

The special break-out report is available for a nominal charge. To request the report, use the 2003 *CIRP Survey Data Services Order Form*. A copy of the 2003 CIRP Data Services Order Form can be found on the HERI webpage at: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html

Confidentiality

Please inform your students that the surveys will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. Assure them that no one at your institution or at our processing center will scan individual surveys prior to computer processing. ***We do not release individual identifiers to other researchers or to other agencies.*** Additionally, we will not release identifiable data to participating institutions unless students provide permission for us to do so. Under no circumstances do we release the names and addresses of student participants.

Using optional (local) questions

At the end of the survey (lower right portion of page 4) is a set of circles for local optional questions (#41 through #61). You may use this space to ask up to **21** additional questions of specific interest to your college. Each question permits a maximum of five alternatives (A through E.) *Students should mark only one alternative.* (If students mark more than one alternative -- for example, both A and D -- the optical scanning equipment will only “read” the darkest mark.) Fewer than five response alternatives may be used for any of the questions, in which case students should be instructed to choose only among those circles that apply, starting from the left. Student responses to these optional questions will be included on the computer file (see below); the statistics for these questions will be included in your institutional summary report.

Although your campus is responsible for developing the local optional questions (as well as any supplemental directions for your students that might help explain the additional questions), we would be happy to review and comment on any of these materials. We recommend that you distribute to your students a sheet containing the supplemental instructions, your additional questions (beginning with Question #41), and the response alternatives (indicated by A through E). We would also appreciate receiving a courtesy copy of your questions and supplemental instructions. Please send them directly to the Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, 3005 Moore Hall/Mail Box 951521, Los Angeles, California 90095-1521, Attention: William S. Korn. *(We urge you to “pilot test” your local option questions with current students. Many campuses find that entering freshmen often interpret questions differently than the institution intended.)*

Obtaining student data for local research¹

You may order a computer file containing the coded item responses of each student at your institution who completes a SIF. Campuses use the data file for a variety of analyses—admissions, retention, academic performance, departmental profiles, etc. In fact, any item contained on the survey could be used to define interesting subsets for study—students interested in the humanities vs. those interested in professional fields, residential vs. commuting students, in-state versus out-of-state students (the locally defined question—see “*Using optional (local) questions*” above—can be used to identify subsets that are institutionally specific, such as students living in Alpha residence hall versus those in Beta Hall). Even if you do not now plan to use a data file, your institution might find it useful in the future.

¹ The 2003 CIRP Data Services Order form should be returned directly to the Higher Education Research Institute offices—not to Questar

Early data files

Participating institutions may receive data files containing their students' responses by early November if their surveys arrive at Questar before September 27, 2003. The early data file permits analyses of your students' responses prior to the preparation and distribution of the majority of institutional reports. If you are interested in this option, you may order an early data file by completing and returning the 2003 CIRP Survey Data Services Order Form. A copy of the 2003 CIRP Data Services Order Form can be found on the HERI webpage at: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html. There is a slight charge for an early data file.

In addition to studying a wide variety of issues based solely on data from the freshman survey, it is also possible to use these data to build a comprehensive database using other institutional data (e.g., registrar, admissions, or financial aid data) or by conducting longitudinal follow-up surveys -- see Figure 1, below. In order to do studies based on data other than that found on the freshman survey, it is necessary to have some way to link these different sorts of data together. Thus, to maximize the utility of these data for institutional research purposes, we suggest that you encourage students to provide their Social Security Numbers in the grid on the first page of the survey. Note that if a student fails to provide a Social Security Number when he or she completes the survey instrument, you will not be able to merge the CIRP Survey data with data from other campus files.

Permission

Question #40 on the survey form asks each student if he/she gives permission for HERI to include his/her Social Security Number (SSN) on the data file. If the student responds "NO", HERI is obligated to withhold it. HERI interprets a non-response to Question #40 as **NOT** granting permission to include the respondent's SSN in the data file. Clearly, if a significant number of students deny permission to provide you with the SSN, the effectiveness of a merge with other data bases may be put at risk. To work around this potential problem, HERI is willing to perform such merges for you, upon receipt of the data you wish to merge, including the students' SSNs. HERI will return the merged file to you after removing the social security numbers of students who have not given permission to release them. Please contact William Korn at the HERI office for more details.

The attached green sheet provides a paragraph that should be read to students before administering the survey. It explains the nature of our research program, why we request names and addresses, and the need for Social Security numbers.

