openlearning

Building Effective Surveys: A Step-By-Step Guide

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Introduction

The purpose of this survey guide is to provide insights and assistance to users of OpenLearning in creating effective surveys that cater for a range of objectives, such as:

- Understanding your learners better;

- Gathering qualitative and quantitative feedback during or at completion of a course to inform continuous improvement practices;

- Gathering qualitative and quantitative feedback at completion of a course to support marketing and recruitment activities;

- Undertaking a range of research activities.

The guide is not intended to provide technical support on how to create and deliver surveys in the OpenLearning platform. However, the guide does provide suggestions on question and response types in the OpenLearning platform survey widget.

For technical support on survey development, please refer to the following Help documents or contact our Customer Success team via support@openlearning.com.

- How do I use the survey widget?
- How do I create a survey and export the results?

Instructions for Surveys

Pre-course Survey

> The following are example instructions. The instructions should be customized based on your objectives and the survey questions you are using.

Welcome to *[course name]*,

Before we dive in and begin exploring the concepts covered in this course, let's do a quick pulse check.

The survey below contains some questions regarding topics covered in the course, the course learning outcomes and how confident you feel about the course content before starting the course.

Please complete this pre-course survey before you access the course content.

This survey is anonymous.

Any responses provided will only be viewable by course facilitators and course administrators.

Thank you,
[course facilitator]

Post-course Survey

> These are example instructions. The instructions should be customized based on your objectives and the survey questions you are using.

Congratulations on completing *[course name]*,

We hope you enjoyed the course.

We aim to provide learners with a high-quality learning experience by continuous improvements to courses based on data and feedback from learners. We would greatly appreciate feedback on your learning and learning experience in this course.

Please complete this post-course survey to provide your feedback.

This survey is anonymous.

Any responses provided will only be viewable by course facilitators and course administrators.

Thank you,
[course facilitator]

Demographic Questions

> The following are example questions. They can be used on a stand-alone basis, as part of a pre-course survey or a post-course survey. The questions can be customized according to your requirements.

[Suggested Response Style in OpenLearning survey widget]

Demographic	Questions	Response Style	Responses
Age	• Which age group do you fall into? • What is your age?	Choice Input (Radio Button)	Organize age groups by category e.g. ○ Under 18 ○ 18-24 ○ 25-29 ○ 30-34 ○ 35-39 ○ 40-44 ○ 50-54 ○ 55-59 ○ 60-64 ○ 65-69 ○ 70-74 ○ 75 or over
Gender	• What gender do you identify with/as? • What is your gender?	Choice Input (Radio Button)	○ Female ○ Male ○ Non-binary ○ Gender diverse ○ None of the options offered ○ Prefer not to say
Nationality	• What is your nationality?	Text Input with Auto-complete	

Ethnicity	• Which ethnicity best describes you? • What is your ethnicity? • Please specify your ethnicity.	Choice Input (Radio Button) Text Input Text Input with Auto-complete	
Disability	• Do you identify as a person with a disability or are you a person with accessibility needs (vision, hearing, mobility, communication, cognition, mental health, neurodivergence, etc.). Select all that apply	Choice Input (Radio Button) Text Input	○ Vision ○ Hearing ○ Mobility ○ Communication ○ Cognition ○ Mental health ○ Neurodivergence ○ Other ○ None ○ Prefer not to disclose
Education level	• What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Choice Input (Radio Button)	○ Other ○ None ○ Prefer not to disclose
Employment status	• What is your current employment status?	Choice Input (Radio Button)	
Prior experience with online learning		Choice Input (Radio Button) Table of Selections	

Pre-course Survey

> The following are example questions. The questions can be customized according to your requirements. Pre-course survey questions are useful for establishing a baseline of learners' knowledge of course content to inform delivery and facilitation. Pre-course survey questions can also be used to identify learners' preferred learning style, any technology needs or adjustments required or simply to get to know your learners better.

[Free entry text option in the OpenLearning survey widget]

Why did you choose this course?

<Free text>

How do you rate your understanding of the topics in this course?

Are there are any topics in the course that you think you may find challenging?

Do you require any technical or other adjustments during the course?

How do you learn most effectively?

Post-course Surveys

Quantitative Questions

> The following are example statements. The statements can be customized according to your requirements.

[These are on a 5-point Likert scale in the OpenLearning survey widget]

Content

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
The course content was useful	○	○	○	○	○
The course content was at the level I expected	○	○	○	○	○
The resources (readings, videos, tools, etc.) were useful	○	○	○	○	○

Instructions and Understanding

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
The objectives of the course were clear to me	○	○	○	○	○
The course learning outcomes were clear to me	○	○	○	○	○
Participation expectations were clear to me	○	○	○	○	○
The schedule of learning activities and assessment was clear to me	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
The connection between content, learning activities and assessment was clear to me	○	○	○	○	○
The learning activities and assessment details were easy to follow	○	○	○	○	○

Design and Activities

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
The structure/layout of the course aided my learning	○	○	○	○	○
The learning activities were engaging	○	○	○	○	○
The learning activities helped my understanding of the course content	○	○	○	○	○
The assessment tasks help me learn the content better	○	○	○	○	○
The course content was organized in a way that assisted my learning	○	○	○	○	○
The OL platform and course was easy to navigate	○	○	○	○	○

Engagement

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
The course design provided me opportunities to interact with other learners	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The course design provided me opportunities to engage in a variety of tasks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The course provided me opportunities to learn from others	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Marketing

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
Overall, the course met my expectations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Overall, I am satisfied with the course	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I would recommend this course to others	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Qualitative Questions

[Free entry text option in the OpenLearning survey widget]

Why did you choose this course? Please list your top 2-3 reasons.

<Free text>

What was the most helpful / inspiring thing that you learned in this course?

Reflecting on the topics, what would you have liked to learn or know more about in this course?

What do you think worked well in this course?

What changes do you suggest for improving this course?

Would you recommend this course to others? Please give reasons for your answer.

Skills Development

> The following are example skills. Surveys on skills development should be used for insight on the impact a course has had on learners' skills.

[This is on a 5-point Likert scale in the OpenLearning survey widget]

This course has allowed me to improve my	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly agree
Critical thinking skills	○	○	○	○	○
Problem solving skills	○	○	○	○	○
Written communication skills	○	○	○	○	○
Oral communication skills	○	○	○	○	○
Presentation skills	○	○	○	○	○
Teamwork skills	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to learn independently	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to learn with and from others	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to learn online	○	○	○	○	○

End of Course Sample Page

Next Steps

Example

Foundations of Financial Wellbeing is the first course in a series of 4 courses on the topic of financial wellbeing.

Foundation of Financial Wellbeing

Introduction to Financial Resilience for Retail Workers

Introduction to Concepts of Wealth Generation

Understanding of Financial Products

If you want to learn more, we invite you to explore the other courses in this series:

- **Course 2:** Introduction to Financial Resilience for Retail Workers
- **Course 3:** Introduction to Concepts of Wealth Generation
- **Course 4:** Understanding Financial Products

Surveys for Research

The following instruments (surveys or scales) are commonly used in a pre-post test research design. A pre-post test design is the simplest way to evaluate the impact of a course, program, intervention or assessment on learners.

The instruments listed below are some of the commonly used surveys for research on online/blended learning. They have high evidence-based validity, reliability and internal consistency. To maintain this, the surveys should be administered, analyzed, and interpreted as per guidelines provided in each of the references.

The wording of questions in the surveys can be customized based on context provided the change in wording does not influence the meaning of and interpretation of questions by learners. Some of the surveys contain sub-surveys or subscales which can be used independently as well.

An overview of each instrument, inclusive subscales and objective of each is provided below. For details on, implementation, analysis, and interpretation of findings, please see references provided.

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

The MSLQ is a self-report instrument designed to assess learners' motivational orientations and use of different learning strategies. The MSLQ contains two sections: motivation and learning strategies. The instrument contains a total of 15 subscales which are designed to be modular so that they can be administered independently as well. For information on the relationships between the constructs measured by each of the subscales and learner's performance, engagement, effort, etc. see (Pintrich, et al. 1991).

Motivation scales
- **Goal orientation** is the learner's perception of the reason for participating in a learning activity. In the MSLQ, goal orientation measures a learner's overall goals or orientation to a course, program or learning activity. The goal orientation scale is split into intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation. The *intrinsic goal orientation* scale comprises 4 questions and measures the degree to which a learner is driven by challenge, curiosity

and mastery as opposed to purely achievement or performance. The *extrinsic goal orientatio*n scales compromises of 4 questions and measures the degree to which a learner is driven by achievement of an extrinsic reward such as grades, performance and competition.

- The **task value** scale comprises 6 questions and measures the degree to which a learner values a task with regards to how interesting, important or useful it is.
- The **control of learning beliefs** scale comprises 4 questions and measures learner's belief that their efforts will culminate into positive outcomes.
- The **self-efficacy for learning performance** comprises 8 questions that measure a learner's evaluation of their ability to accomplish a task and confidence to perform that task.
- The **test anxiety** scale comprises 5 questions. Test anxiety has a cognitive and an emotional component. The cognitive component, also called the worry component, is the learner's negative thoughts and the emotional component is the affective and physiological trigger to anxiety.

Learning strategies

- The **rehearsal** scale comprises 4 questions on basic rehearsal strategies used for tasks that involve drawing on working memory as opposed to acquiring new information.
- The **elaboration** scale comprises 4 questions that measure a learner's ability to store information into long-term memory and construct knowledge by building connections between prior and new learning, that is, integrating information.
- The **organization** scale comprises 4 questions and measures how a learner selects relevant information and forms connections to build new knowledge.
- The **critical thinking** scale comprises 5 questions and refers to the degree to which a learner applies pre-existing knowledge to solve problems, make decisions and critically evaluate information.
- The **self-regulation** scale comprises 12 questions on a learner's ability to self-regulate with regards to planning, monitoring and regulation.
- The **time and study environment** scale comprises 8 questions that measure a learner's ability to regulate their time and their study environment.
- The **effort regulation** scale comprises 4 questions that measures a learners' ability to control their effort and attention when faced with distractions and tasks they find uninteresting.

- The **peer learning** scale comprises 3 questions on collaboration and dialogue with peers.

Source: Pintrich, P.R., Smith, D.A.F., García, T., & McKeachie, W.J. (1991). A manual for the use of the motivated strategies questionnaire (MSLQ). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.) [Download](#)

Classroom Community Scale

The classroom community scale measures the sense of community in a learning environment. The scale comprises two subscales with 10 questions each: connectedness and learning. The connectedness subscale measures a learner's feelings regarding connectedness, cohesion, spirit, trust, and interdependence with co-learners. The learning scale measures a learner's feelings regarding interaction with co-learners, shared values, and the degree to which they are satisfied with their goals and expectations. The subscales can be administered independently. Administered in its entirety, the classroom community scale provides an overall classroom community score. The classroom community scale is commonly used to inform iterative design for continuous improvement. Originally developed in the context of classroom learning, the scale can be used in other contexts with minimal customization.

Source: Rovai, A. P. (2002). Development of an instrument to measure classroom community. Internet and Higher Education, 5, 197-211. [Download](#)

Online Learning Self-Efficacy Scale (OLSES)

The OLESS measures learner's self-efficacy in a wide range of tasks required for successful online learning. The OLESS comprises a total of 22 questions split into three subscales: learning in the online environment, time management and technology use. While the OLSES was developed for research purposes it can also be used by learners as a self-assessment tool to assess their strengths and weaknesses or by instructors to gauge learner's confidence and identify areas that may require training or assistance. The OLESS was specifically developed for paced, cohort-based online courses for post-secondary students therefore, administration of the survey in other contexts may require some customization.

Source: Zimmerman, W. A. Kolikowich, J. M. (2016). Online learner self-efficacy in students with and without online learning experience. American Journal of Distance Education, 30(3), 180-191. [Request](#)

Growth Mindset Scale

The growth mindset scale has 3 questions that measure how much a person believes that intelligence and talents can grow with effort. The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset of the belief that intelligence is fixed and no amount of effort can change that. A growth mindset is positively related to higher achievement.

Student Satisfaction Survey

The student satisfaction survey comprises of 35 questions split between subscales including: learner-content interaction which is defined as non-human interaction that the learner has with the content; learner-instructor interaction defined as two-way communication with the instructor; learner-learner interaction defined as two-way communication between peers; and learner-technology interactions defined as the skill and comfort level the learner has the technology and used in the online learning environment.

Source: Strachota, E. (2006). The use of survey research to measure student satisfaction in online courses. Download

Distance Education Learning Environments Survey

This survey has been developed to assist researchers and practitioners in measuring and researching the psychosocial learning environment in post-secondary distance education. The DELES has 34 questions split between six subscales: instructor support, student-interaction and collaboration, personal relevance, authentic learning, active learning, and student autonomy.

Source: Walker, S. L. & Fraser, B. J. (2005). Development and validation of an instrument for assessing distance education learning environments in higher education: The distance education learning environments survey (DELES). Learning Environments Research, 8:289-308. DOI:10.1007/s10984-005-1568-3. Download