

Questionnaire Design

Planning your research and how you are going to go about it, is one of the most important stages of the research process. Give some serious time and effort to this stage as it should pay off in the long run.

Below is a checklist to help with the planning and management of your Questionnaire or Survey. Since you are now at the questionnaire design stage, I can only assume you have a clear understanding of the goals of your research and what you are trying to achieve

Questionnaire Checklist

Task	Comment	Check
Make sure you have permission to carry out the research.	Check with the necessary staff for permissions. There may be a research ethics policy that you would need to adhere to. If you want to use college logo, ask permission to do so	
Decide what you need to know, making a list of all the information you will require and why you need to know it	This is critical and will help inform the rest of your decisions.	
Having thought this through-ask if a questionnaire is the best way to obtain the information	Consider alternative methods of data collection Is it quantitative research or qualitative? Try and keep what your are doing straight forward and focussed	
How is the questionnaire to be distributed and returned	It's worth thinking this through at this stage as it may affect how you ask questions. For example, the hand out method may allow for a discussion about questions, where an online survey may not and probably best suited for quantitative surveys.	
Decided on Question type. This may be informed by distribution method to an extent	Verbal, list, category, ranking, scale, quantity or grid. Each type requires a different analysis – this is something you will need to give serious thought. Once decided, maintain consistency. (see further reading for support with questions)	

Task	Comment	Check
Begin to think about the wording of your questions and how many questions you want to ask (see below for examples of questions types)	Always keep in mind what you are trying to achieve and who is potentially completing your questionnaire. Keep the language simple and easy to understand. Avoid jargon A Small number (2- 5 questions), if asked to a large number of people (at least 30) can deliver manageable but significant results.	
When you are happy with all your questions, order them	It is often better to leave sensitive questions to the end.	
Write out instructions to be included on or with the questionnaire	Respondents must be clear in how they are to answer the questions (ticks in boxes, circling or rating items. Time scales should also be clearly stated.	
Consider layout and appearance.	A well-presented and professional looking design will encourage people to respond. Look at using Survey Monkey and some of its design tools. Design forms in a way that helps you collate it quickly	
Decide on your sample..	Try to select a sample that is close to your target audience and appropriate for your brief.	
Pilot your questionnaire	No matter how pushed for time, this is worth doing as it may highlight potential problems and save time in the long run.	
Try out your method of analysis	Again, it's important to make sure this is fit for purpose. A good form design and well thought through questions should help in this process.	
Take on board feedback from your sample and pilot studies and make any necessary amendments	Were there any comments on time taken to complete the form; were there comments on the wording of your questions? Did the results look like they would fulfil your brief?	
Make your return dates clear	If you are working to a specific time scale then make this known to the respondent. Give yourself ample time to review result and write your report.	
Keep good records of what and when you are sending information out	It's important that you keep on top of the management, distribution and return of your information.	
Plan to collect enough data to achieve convincing and reliable results		

Task	Comment	Check
If appropriate, decide what you are doing about non respondents		
Analysis of the results. Ensure you understand how to present the data you have gathered.		
Review	Take a note of anything that could have been different. This is sometimes worth talking about in your report.	

Questions for Quantitative Research

❖ Common quantitative research questions will begin with:

How often? How much? How regularly? What percentage? What time? What is? etc

Use closed questions that give you Yes/No answers or a result that you can count (quantify)
This will make it easier for you to record and analyse the answers

❖ Examples of Well-structured Questions:

How often do you use the college gym?

- a) Every day
- b) About once a week
- c) About once a month
- d) Hardly ever

What gym equipment do you prefer?

- a) Cycling machine
- b) Rowing machine
- c) Running machine

Are you a member of staff? Yes/No

❖ Examples of Poorly Constructed Questions

What is wrong with the following questions?

1. How old are you? Please circle one of the following: 0-20 20-40 40- 60
Answer: Allows overlap in ages. It should read; 0-19, 20-39, 40-60 (No provision made for over 60s)
2. Do you know who is the current Secretary of State is for Culture, Media and Sport?
Yes/No
Answer: Respondents can easily lie in this one and there is no way you will know. It should read: Who is the current Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport?
3. Do you like coming onto campus and eating in the café?
Answer: This contains two questions Ask yourself what you want to find out - is it about eating in the college café? Then word it appropriately: Do you like eating at the café on campus?
4. Do you believe in the culling of all badgers? Yes/No
Answer: Yes/No will not provide information on the range of opinions or understanding on this debate. It could read: Which of the following statements most represent your view on culling badgers?

❖ Questions for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is more about understanding an individual's perspectives. It tends to use non numerical and unstructured data. A good questioning technique is required to encourage good and informative answers:

- Use open ended questions that encourage more than a Yes/No answer
- Good questions are also focused and keep the respondent on the subject
- Good questions also encourage respondents to look at issues from different perspectives.
- Questions should also be free of bias and take care not to present a particular point of view.

Further Reading

❖ Textbooks:

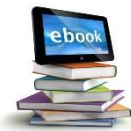


These textbooks cover Questionnaire Design and other aspects of Research and are worth using.

Cottrell, S. (2013) *The study Skills Handbook*. 4thed. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bell, J. (2014) *Doing Your Research Project: a guide for first-time researchers*. 6th ed. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

❖ Electronic Book:



[Bell, J. \(2014\) *Doing Your Research Project: a guide for first-time researchers*. 6th ed. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education](#)

❖ Websites:



[SurveyMonkey](#) You can sign up for free to use this online resource and create professionally designed surveys.

[Survey Design from Wikiversity](#)

[Survey Fundamentals: A guide to designing and implementing surveys](#)