

# Tips for Survey Research Success

*This handout pertains to surveys conducted by SUNY Oswego students or employees or that use SUNY Oswego students or employees as respondents and that will develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; e.g. that are done for research purposes.*

## IRA



## IRB

IRA is the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, in Culkin Hall 603, x-2345  
<https://www.oswego.edu/institutional-research/institutional-research-and-assessment>  
Contact: IRA@oswego.edu

**Step 6.** Once you have secured IRB approval (or exemption), send IRA the following things:

- a copy of the IRB approval email message;
- all of your survey materials (invitation letter, consent statement, survey questions or URL to the survey);
- a description of the sample you need;
- any relevant deadlines and timeframe preferences.

IRA staff will do the following things:

- Proofread all of your materials.
- Assess whether the survey lives up to the ethical standards stated in the IRB proposal, e.g. one last check.
- Provide a random sample of employee or student email addresses that meet the needs of the survey.
- Samples will be as small as possible to meet the researcher's goals.

If given enough time and justification, IRA can also create an online survey, send invitations to participate to the random sample, and send the results file to the researcher at the end of the data collection period. This level of support is not guaranteed and must be approved by the Director (Deborah.Furlong@Oswego.edu).

Oswego's Institutional Review Board (IRB) includes a Human Subjects Committee. This group of university employees and community members determines if research proposals are ethical, and focuses on protecting the rights and welfare of people ("human subjects") who are recruited to participate in research projects.  
<https://www.oswego.edu/orsp/human-subjects-committee/> Contact: hsc-admin@oswego.edu

**Step 1.** Complete Human Subjects training

- Learn about mandatory IRB training at <https://www.oswego.edu/human-subjects-committee/mandatory-training>
- Training is online at [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org). Oswego has an organizational membership, so you do not need to pay for this training.
- Most survey research will require that you complete CITI's "Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE) Basic" course. You do not have to complete all parts in a single sitting.

**Step 2.** Prepare your research materials

- Survey questions; online survey tool; text of invitation email and follow-up messages
- Informed consent (see the back)

**Step 3.** Do practice Human Subjects form, online at <http://www.cs.oswego.edu/~dab/IRB/PracticeHSTForm.html>

**Step 4.** Submit real Human Subjects form, online. See instructions at <https://www.oswego.edu/orsp/human-subjects-committee/>

**Step 5.** Get approval from the IRB and move to the IRA column for the next step!



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## Exempt and Expedited research doesn't get to skip the IRB

- **Exempt** status is conferred on projects that involve minimal or no risk, have no deception, collect no sensitive information and exclude vulnerable populations. To get an exemption, the researcher should send the Human Subjects form and project materials to the chair of the Human Subjects committee and request an exemption. **The chair determines which projects are exempt, not the researcher.**
- **Expedited Review** is conducted by the chair and/or one other committee member. While many student research projects will be determined to be exempt, a few will need to be reviewed by a second person.
- **Full Committee Review** is required if the project is not exempt or expedited. The project will not be approved until after the committee meets. If your project may require a full board review, you must build in an extra 3-4 weeks of time at this stage. See meeting dates at <https://www.oswego.edu/orsp/human-subjects-committee/>.

## Informed Consent Refresher for Survey Research

Almost all survey research that uses Oswego students or employees must give those subjects the right to make an informed decision whether they want to be included in the project. Approximately 2% of Oswego's undergraduate students are younger than 18 and are not legally capable of providing consent. If you are getting email addresses from IRA, you should ask for students under 18 to be excluded. Informed consent statements should do the following:

- Explain the purpose of the research
- Give a realistic estimate of how long it will take to complete the survey
- Describe how to access and complete or submit the survey
- Describe any potential risks to participants
- Describe any potential benefits
- Explain how confidentiality of their responses will be maintained
- Provide contact information for participants who have questions about their rights as subjects
- Explicitly state that their participation is voluntary, that if they refuse there will be no penalty or punishment, and that they may skip any portions or stop at any time.

Additional requirements apply under certain conditions. Exempt research projects can usually streamline the statement of informed consent and include its main elements in either the invitation letter or at the opening of the survey with a statement, concluding the statement with something like "Completing the survey indicates that you have given your informed consent to participate in this project."

## Anonymity, Confidentiality, Privacy and Security

Anonymity and confidentiality are impossible to guarantee but certain steps can improve the chance of protecting the privacy rights of human subjects.

Anonymity means neither the researcher nor anybody else can connect the survey responses to the individual who provided them. Remove user's IP addresses from data files and ask the fewest possible demographic items to improve security. Password protect and encrypt data files and store them in secure locations, such as on an Oswego drive that requires your password to access. Use high quality passwords and change them regularly. When your research data are no longer useful, erase the raw data files or store them in a secure environment.