10 Tips to Increase Online Survey Response Rates

Response rate is defined as the percentage of survey invitations that result in a response.

Response rates are very important as they act as a measure of your research. It is important to remember that low response rates can produce unreliable data, while achieving a higher response rate will indicate non-bias research data.

1. **Clearly define the purpose of the survey.**
   First ask yourself what you need to know and then formulate your questions. Don’t ask questions you already know the answers to. Refer to the question bank for additional guidance.

2. **Keep the surveys short and focused.**
   Work with approx. 15 questions along with 2 or 3 open-ended questions. Note that the open-questions can provide the most interesting and useful feedback. Ideally a survey should take approx. 10mins to complete. Inform the students how long the survey might take to complete. Short and focused surveys help with both the quality and quantity of responses.

3. **Keep the survey questions simple.**
   Questions need to be short and to the point and relevant to the student. Don’t use jargon.

4. **Logical ordering.**
   Make sure your survey flows in a logical order. Begin with a brief introduction, followed by broader based questions moving to those narrower in scope. Leave ‘open-ended’ questions to the end of the survey.

5. **Explain clearly why the information you are seeking is important to your School.**
   The surveys give students a unique opportunity to provide feedback which enables academic staff and Schools to enhance their overall learning. Students need to know the importance of how their feedback plays a critical role in the development of their curriculum.

6. **Personalise your survey invitation.**
   Put some thought into the wording of the survey invitation. Inform the students of the purpose of the survey and how it will benefit them. Remind students that they will receive feedback on the survey.

7. **Set a deadline for students to respond.**
   In order to get maximum participation allow for 5 days to get a good sample response.

8. **Don’t be afraid of reminders.**
   Generally the rate of response return is high in the first day, after which there is a steep decline. This is the time to send a reminder and possibly another one, but don’t bombard the students with reminders.
9. **Inform students of the survey outcomes.**
   A culture should be embedded across the School where students and academic staff are both engaged with enhancing teaching and learning. Feedback of the surveys should be communicated to students soon after the survey has taken place and modifications and future action be clearly communicated to the students. It is critical that Schools re-iterate to academic staff the importance of student feedback. Staff, by their efforts, find that they get higher response rates when they communicate feedback to students and inform students of modifications. To achieve high response rates it is critical to engage the students in the entire student feedback process.

10. **Little feedback, long surveys, poorly designed and multiple surveys at one time can all lead to low response rates.**
    A downward trend in response rates could be a result of students suffering from survey fatigue; simply getting tired of filling out surveys, not responding as they don’t feel its necessary as they are happy with the module or not hearing about modifications to the teaching and learning. To achieve high response rates, keep surveys short and simple and communicate action (modifications) of feedback to students in a meaningful way.