

Designing and Implementing an Online Survey

(Guidance for students and staff in CoESE, Bangor University)

Please remember, all research in Bangor University must follow the University Research Ethics Policy. The procedures for COESE are presented on the college website

<http://nshss.bangor.ac.uk/researchethics.php.en>

The guide below is designed to help you with the specific considerations and steps needed for designing an internet hosted and distributed survey. You will be using onlinesurveys.ac.uk, this software is easy to use and should you be concerned or confused about your questions and available answers at any stage, you can select 'Preview Survey' from the menu on the left. This will show you the survey as the participant will see it, this is a very helpful tool and effectively allows you to continually pilot the survey as you write it. It is still important to pilot test the survey once finished, first reading through it yourself then getting family members, friends and then your supervisor to try completing it. This is a very important and often underutilized step, it will allow you to fix any issues before sharing the survey with participants.

Ethics

You will need to declare on your ethics checklist that you plan to use an online survey, and this will require review by the COESE Ethics Committee. The Committee does not normally give permission for undergraduate or postgraduate taught students to conduct online surveys (this is because it is good training to have experience of face-to-face surveys before doing your first online survey), so you should discuss this with your supervisor before submitting your ethics form.

In your research ethics submission, you will need to give details about how you will select your participants (sampling) and how you will access those participants, see below for an example, including ethical considerations.

Sampling & Access to participants

Your sampling options will remain the same as a paper survey, however your access to particular populations and the ethical considerations of this access will be different for online communities.

If for example you have a particular population in mind, let's say Bangor students in a particular Society. You cannot email the Society and ask for their email list, as this contravenes General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). However, you may be able to send a link to an identified gatekeeper, whose details are publicly available, in this example perhaps the Society's president. In your email to them, include the link to your survey and ask if they will distribute on your behalf. Please note, that they will only be able to do so if they permission to use the database containing the email addresses in this way, following their own obligations under GDPR.

Please also note that the use of such gatekeepers must be declared on your ethics checklist and will require review by the ethics committee.

First Page: Project Information & Informed Consent

Firstly, you will need to use the opening page of the survey to provide the participant with information about the project and an Informed Consent agreement. This is a key step, as we are all increasingly vigilant about our data privacy in online environments and as researchers we must ensure that our work meets GDPR guidelines.

On the onlinesurveys.ac.uk software, you will use the 'Add Page' button at the top. This creates a first page for your survey. Then select 'Add Item', this gives you a list of options, choose 'Note'. This option allows you to input a section of text- copy and adapt the Informed Consent and Information for Participants text, given below, into this section.

This will provide the participant with information about your research and how their data will be used, stored and protected. As such you need to follow this section up with a question, so that the participant can agree to these terms. To do this, select 'Add Item' again and choose the option; 'Multiple choice (single answer) question', then input a version of the following question:

'I have read the Informed Consent agreement and understand how my data will be stored and used in the Research Project'

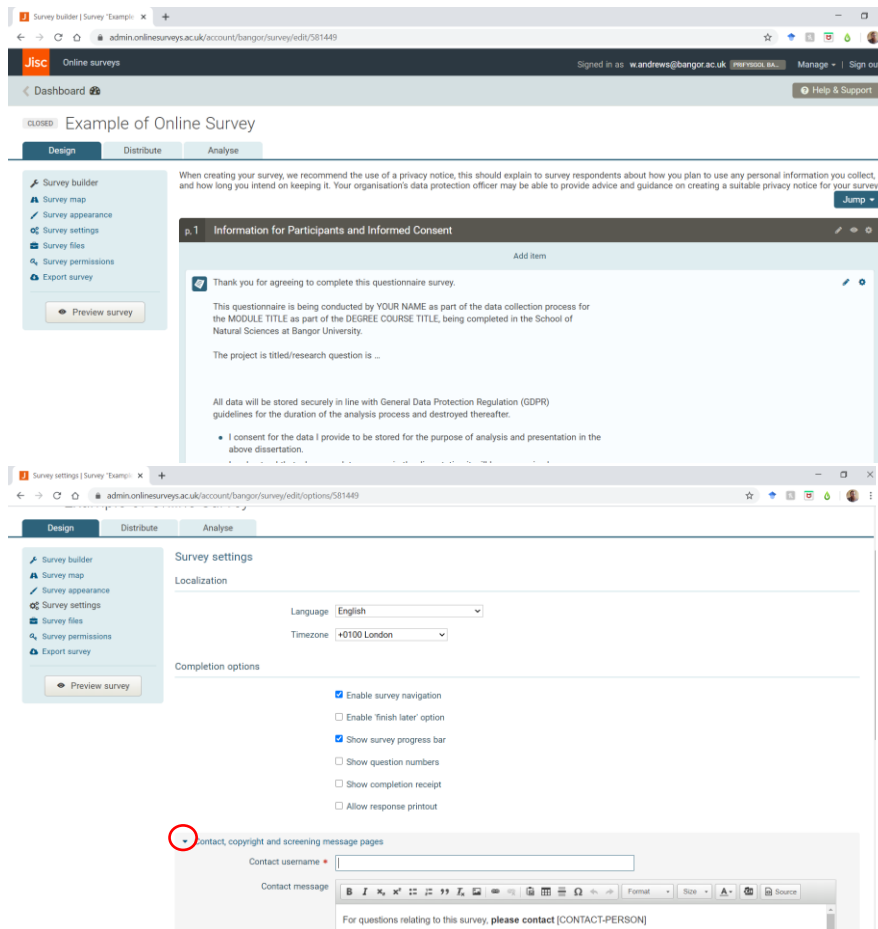
-Using the 'Add answer option' and 'Add another answer option', you should give two options: 'Agree' and 'Disagree'. You will also need to open the 'Advanced options' tab and from the 'Optionality & dependency' menu, select 'Required'. This is so that the participant can not skip to the next page and start the survey, without answering this question.

Following this question, you will need to employ a technique called 'Screening', so that if the participant selects Disagree, they are not given the next question but are instead routed to a page which thanks them for their time. Please follow the points below.

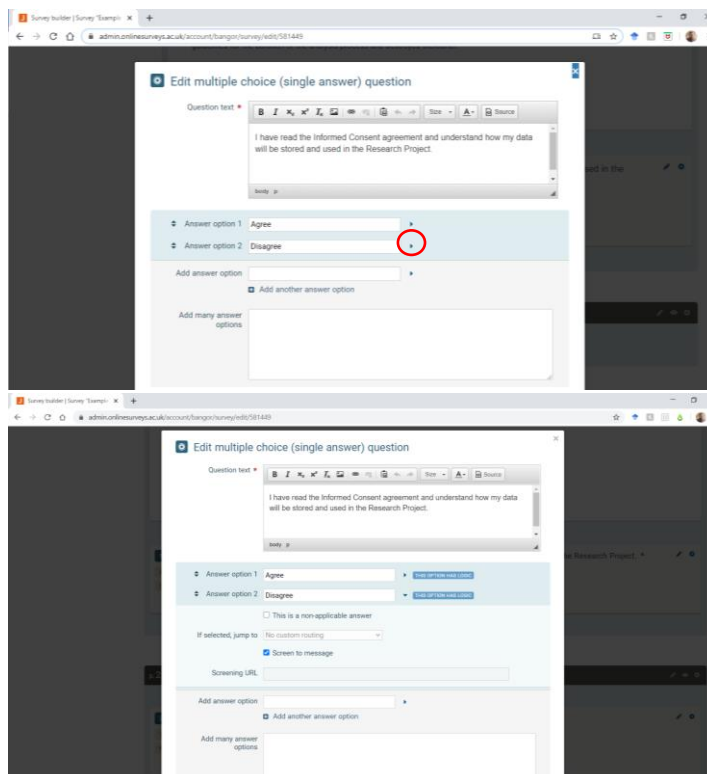
1. You need to first create the Screening message which thanks the participant who selects 'Disagree' for their time. I suggest something like, "Thank you for your interest in this survey, if you have any further questions please contact **YOUR BANGOR EMAIL ADDRESS**".
2. Now you need to save this message as a Screening message. Go to the main Design page, where you are building your survey. From the list of tabs down the left (see below), select 'Survey Settings', in the next window select 'Contact, copyright and screening message pages'.

Designing & Implementing an Online Survey

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3. Scroll down and you will see a textbox next to the option 'Screened out message', here you should enter the Screening message which you created in Step 1.
4. Now you need to ensure that if someone chooses the 'Disagree' option, they will be routed to this 'End of Survey' message.
 - Go to the question and click the pencil icon in the right hand top corner, this allows you to edit the question. Go to the answer option you want to route from, in this case 'Disagree' and click the blue arrow to the right of this answer (see red circle below).
 - You will see the option 'Screen to message', tick this box (see below) and then scroll to the bottom and click the green 'Save' button.



For more information on Screening see:

<https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/help-support/screening-out-certain-respondents/>

Example of Information and Informed Consent- *to input on First Page*

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire survey.

This questionnaire is being conducted by **YOUR NAME** as part of the data collection process for the **MODULE TITLE** as part of the **DEGREE COURSE TITLE**, being completed in the School of Natural Sciences at Bangor University.

The project is **titled/research question is ...**

Please read the statements below which refer to the data you will provide as part of this survey.
Please select one of the options below to show that you agree or disagree with this use of your data.

- I consent for the data I provide to be stored for the purpose of analysis and presentation in the above dissertation.
- I understand that my IP address will not be visible to the researcher at any point.
- I understand that no individually identifiable data will be collected.
- I understand that where my data appears in the dissertation it will be anonymized.

- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire process at any time.

Answer Options: Agree Disagree

Adding Questions: How many per page?

First you need to decide, how many questions do you want per page?

A good rule is to divide your questionnaire into themes and give each theme its own page, with no more than three questions on each. It is important here to preview the survey and to pilot test it, you want to make it as easy for participants to complete as possible.

For example, if you have 15 questions total, would the participant rather answer 5 themed sections of 3 questions each, or 15 individual pages?

The decision you make here will also affect the data the participant provides, arranging questions by theme, aids thinking and where you include open questions, you may get more developed responses. If you use 15 individual pages, you will find that the later answers may receive less detailed answers or may be skipped altogether.

Adding Questions: Types of Question

There are a number of options available for different types of question, you need to think about what kind of data you need in order to answer your research question.

For the purposes of this guide there are three key types of question which you might include.

1. Multiple choice questions (defined options)
 - These are questions such as 'Please select the age category you fit into', where the options are defined by you. However, it is always important to offer a 'Prefer not to say' option.
2. Open questions
 - These are often broader qualitative questions, more akin to interview questions. Onlinesurveys.ac.uk refers to these as free-text questions and you can choose to give participants a single or multiple lines for their response.
3. Scale questions
 - These are questions where you are asking the participant to rank something. For example, putting particular brands in order of preference. This is most commonly done using a Likert scale of 1-5. In onlinesurveys.ac.uk this is called a scale/rank question.

For more information on different types of question and how to utilise them see:

<https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/help-support/question-types/>

Final Page

On the Final Page of the survey, you need to thank the participant for their time and answers. You can also use this stage to suggest that the participant contacts you if they require any further information or want to discuss anything further. This latter point is optional but can be helpful for identifying participants for follow-up research, such as interviews.

Designing & Implementing an Online Survey
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“Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, your answers are much appreciated. If you are interested in further information about this project please contact BANGOR EMAIL ADDRESS.”

Further reading

Specific guides for Online Surveys: <https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/help-support/>

The books below are both available for online access through the Bangor library website. Whilst they are geography titles, the methods covered are interdisciplinary and the writing is accessible for those across the social sciences.

Guide to conducting questionnaire surveys: Lafferty, S. L. (2012) ‘Conducting Questionnaire Surveys’, In Clifford, N., French, S. and Valentine, G. (eds.) Sage Publications Ltd, London, pp77-88

Peters, K. (2017) Your Human Geography Dissertation: Designing, Doing, Delivering, Sage Publications Ltd, London, pp120-122

Also see the Reading List for DXX-2000, DXX-3701 and DXX-4103, all of which contain the readings above and many more to help you with research design more widely.