How many surveys are too many? 
The development and introduction of a university-wide survey framework

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Planning and Statistical Services
Background

• Policy in 2010:
  – introduce new course and teacher evaluations (SELT)
  – no specific regulation or coordination of student survey activity

• Post-policy:
  – large number of internal and external surveys of ANU students
  – some surveys poorly constructed and deployed
  – some surveys little or no feedback to the institution
  – duplication of survey themes
  – overlap of fieldwork dates
  – decline in response rates to online SELT

➢ Need to better manage the volume, quality and use of student surveys
➢ Need to protect/quarantine SELT evaluations
Environmental scanning

- Feedback from [teach-eval@maillists.uwa.edu.au](mailto:teach-eval@maillists.uwa.edu.au), June 2012
  - Formative mid-semester evaluations
    - ‘H’ Form, Muddiest Point, etc. (UWA)
    - ‘Stop, Start, Continue’ (Curtin)
    - Sample minute paper (Lincoln, NZ)

- Review of Australian university survey policies, Aug 2012
  - Principles, Surveys/Instruments, Reporting/Feedback
    - categorising survey activity (Monash, UC)
    - university-wide experience surveys (Monash, Melbourne, Newcastle)
    - student survey approvals (USC, Monash, Deakin)
    - protected survey periods (USC)
  - Identified some practices for introduction at ANU:
    - Formative + Summative + Core + Approved non-core
    - Register of ANU student surveys
Brainstorming for a new framework
## Drafting a new policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 Policy and guidelines</th>
<th>2013 Policy and procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range of methods including: SELT, FYE, CEQ, Staff-student liaison committees, focus groups, informal feedback</td>
<td>Categorisation of surveys: Core (Govt. surveys, surveys approved by VC/DVC); Formative; Summative (SELT); Non-core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELT ‘expected’ at least every second offering</td>
<td>SELT at least every second offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELT reporting restricted to n&gt;=5</td>
<td>SELT reports provided to convenors/academics with no minimum response numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal publication of SELT course evaluations and benchmarking results (n&gt;=5)</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of student feedback by University Education committee (UEC)</td>
<td>Formal UEC feedback/review of courses with less than 50% satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardised SELT fieldwork dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey exclusion period to protect SELT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approval process for non-core surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results of surveys must be disseminated to University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Stakeholder consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder feedback</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys are just ‘one of the sources of evidence’ …</td>
<td>Agree. Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student feedback is not the sole basis for decision making</td>
<td>Agree. Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month for non-core survey approval is too long</td>
<td>One month necessary during peak survey activity. Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the definition of non-core surveys to exclude multiple related courses (not just single courses)</td>
<td>Agree. Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customised summative course evaluations should be permitted during exclusion period</td>
<td>Customised course evaluations may run in alternate offerings to SELT. Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenors should not be required to discuss the outcomes of mid-semester feedback with students</td>
<td>Closing the feedback loop with students is important to demonstrate the value of their feedback. Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELT benchmarking should reflect known factors influencing satisfaction</td>
<td>Agree. Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenors should receive copies of teacher evaluations within their course(s)</td>
<td>All teacher evaluations are for professional reflection and development. Unchanged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy approval process

- Planning and Statistical Services draft a new policy and procedure
- New framework tabled at Education Standards and Quality Committee
- Stakeholder consultation and feedback (Colleges, Divisions, Individuals)
- Revised draft endorsed by Education Standards and Quality Committee
- New policy and procedure discussed and endorsed by University Education Committee
- Endorsement from Academic Board
- Sign off by the Vice-Chancellor
Non-core survey approvals

• Key considerations:
  – Clear benefit to university community
  – Collecting ‘new’ data
  – Well-designed instrument
  – Sound fieldwork methodology
  – Robust reporting mechanisms

• Reasons for non-approval (examples)
  – Content is unrelated to core university activities (eg. local tourism activities)
  – Data already exist from alternate surveys
    (eg. why students chose ANU, what resources informed their decision)
  – Alternate collection methods will be more effective
    (eg. focus group will enable flexible exploration of themes)
  – Non-compliance with research ethics and/or privacy legislation
    (eg. mandating respondent provision of personal information or contact details,
    failure to articulate how personal information will be protected)
Requests for non-core surveys

Request for approval of a Non-Core Survey

APPLICANT'S DETAILS

Name
Position
College/Division/Area
Telephone

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (Where appropriate, please select the relevant check box)

What is the name of your proposed survey?
What is the benefit of the university of the survey?
Please provide details of any executive level endorsement of the survey.
Has a version of the survey been run previously?
Yes ☐ No ☐
If you selected “Yes” for the above question, please provide details of the previous outcomes and actions.
Have you reviewed alternative data sources and/or collection methods whilst preparing for the survey?
Yes ☐ No ☐
Please list any alternative data sources and/or collection methods that you have reviewed whilst preparing for the survey.
Have you drafted questions for the survey?
Yes ☐ No ☐ (Please provide these with this form)

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION (Where appropriate, please select the relevant check box)

Which student group will the survey be distributed to?
Which survey approach will the survey follow?
Census ☐ Sample ☐
Which method will you use to deliver the survey?
Paper ☐ Online ☐
If you selected “Online” for the above question, please identify the survey software and/or survey provider.
Will responses to the survey be anonymous?
Yes ☐ No ☐
How will you ensure the privacy of respondent data?
Have you invited students to participate in the survey?
Who will administer the survey?
If the survey is for research purposes, does it have ANU human ethics approval?
Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
Do you plan to offer lottery based incentives for participation in the survey?
Yes ☐ No ☐
Sampling framework

• Use census submissions
• Student cohorts grouped into:
  – UG, PG, HDR
  – New/Continuing
• Stratification by:
  – Domestic/International
  – Male/Female
  – ASCED field of education
• Assigned to 12 sample groups
  – could be aggregated to various sample sizes (census, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, etc.)
• No over-sampling for small cohorts
## Sampling for student surveys, Sem 2 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>First Year UG (2567)</th>
<th>Later Year UG (5984)</th>
<th>Survey invitations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITS Survey</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Lifecycle Survey</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANUSA 2013</td>
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<td>7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM Survey</td>
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<td>5 6 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student health</td>
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<td>3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>O-Week</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>New Postgraduate (1692)</th>
<th>Cont. Postgraduate (777)</th>
<th>Survey invitations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>ITS Survey</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
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<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>New HDR (388)</th>
<th>Cont. HDR (1791)</th>
<th>Survey invitations:</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
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How many surveys are too many?

- Unanimous agreement: 8 student surveys per semester is too many
- Semester 2, 2013 - no significant reduction in number of surveys
  - from 8 in S2 2012 (8 surveys for UG, maximum 6 surveys for HDR)
  - down to 7 in S2 2013
- Sampling has resulted in reduced invitations to students
  - maximum 4 surveys: some new undergraduates
  - minimum 1 survey: some continuing PG and HDR
- Student representatives continue to report a perception that there are too many surveys
Where to next?

• Greater communication about the new survey framework
• Web publication of related resources
  – a selection of formative evaluation tools
  – literature reviews
  – best practice guides for survey design, methodology and ethics
• Web publication of a non-core survey matrix
  – as a register of non-core surveys per semester over time
  – including links to published survey reports and/or articles
• Further consolidation of student surveys and/or greater exclusivity of samples
• A single ANU experience questionnaire?
Questions or suggestions?