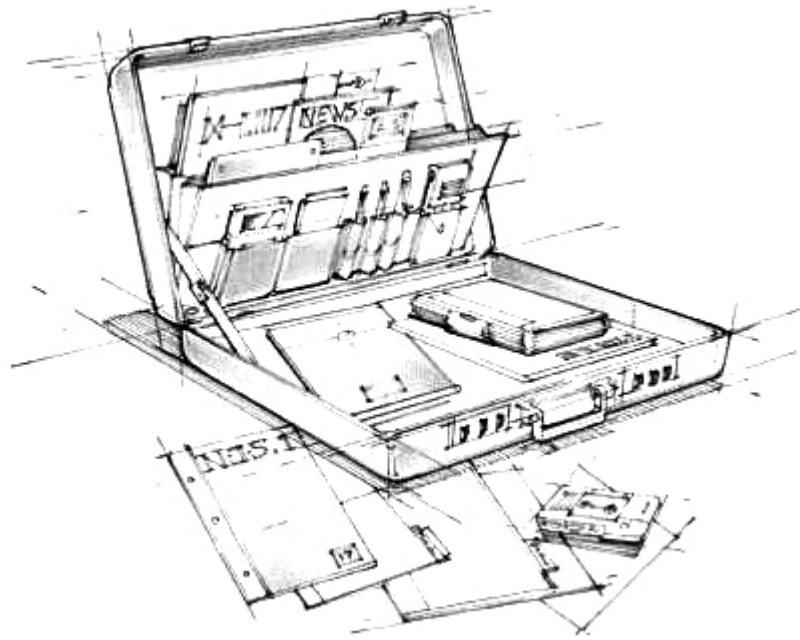
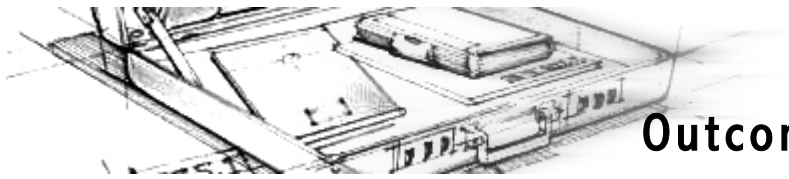


## **Outcomes Assessment Toolkit:**



## **Guidelines for Designing Surveys**



# Outcomes Assessment Toolkit

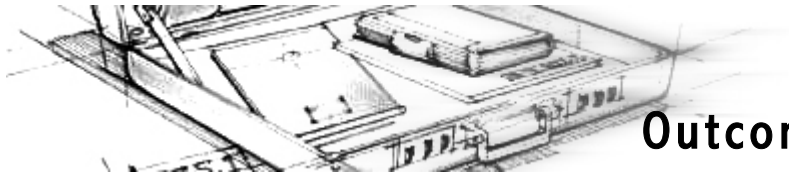
## Purpose of Survey

- Identify the functions of your department and the processes required to fulfill those functions. Then, identify the products and services for which you wish to get feedback. The purpose of the survey is to assess processes, products, and services, not individual employees.
- Identify the appropriate group(s) of people to take the survey. These are the people who are the receivers (or potential receivers) of your products and services and who can thus provide you with the feedback you need. Administer the survey to everyone in the group(s) if possible. If not possible, you will need to select a representative (random) sample of the group. Otherwise, the results will not be valid (will not represent) the opinions of the entire group(s).
- Your survey should ask about specific processes, products, services, and behaviors that are in your power to modify if needed. These are called “actionable”.
- Distinguish between the quality of customers’ interactions with your department and the quality of the services you provide. For example, to assess quality of customers’ interactions, you might ask whether your staff were polite or respectful. To assess quality of the service, you might ask about the speed with which requests are processed.

## Confidentiality

Be clear about the level of confidentiality the survey will provide.

- “Anonymous” surveys are those that do not ask for the participant’s name or other identifying information (e.g., social security number).
- “Confidential” surveys are those that collect some type of identifying information (usually for tracking purposes) but do not reveal this information in reporting results.
- You must get participants’ permission to reveal their name and/or personal information. The permission can be built into the survey.



# Outcomes Assessment Toolkit

## Survey Administration

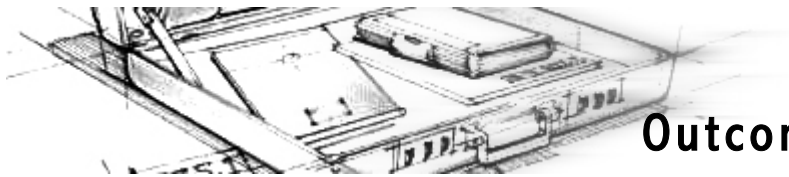
There are three ways to administer surveys that are available at Brooklyn College:

- **Paper and pencil surveys.** These surveys often are mailed out to participants who return the completed survey by mail in postage-paid envelopes. Paper and pencil surveys also are handed out to individuals at events and are completed on-the-spot. In both cases, the surveys are pre-formatted so that survey responses can be scanned into a computer, eliminating the cost of data entry. Open-ended comments, however, must be typed in individually, adding to administrative cost.

In general, the response rate for by-mail surveys tends to be low. Follow-up mailings are often done to increase response rate.

- **Online (intranet) surveys.** These surveys are easily programmed using a web-based program called "ASSET". This type of administration is efficient in that participants' responses are automatically collected into a data file that can be easily analyzed. Open-ended comments also are captured as they are being typed. The main disadvantage is that some participants may not know how to use a computer or may not have access to one.
- **Telephone Surveys.** Short surveys can be administered over the telephone. A trained interviewer will ask questions and provide the participant with the possible responses. This type of survey requires that the participants have a telephone and that you have access to their phone numbers. This mode of administration also is useful in following up with small groups of individuals that did not respond to an initial paper and pencil or computer survey. Telephone surveys that are conducted in the evening may be perceived as an imposition on participants' personal time.

Computerized telephone survey programs are currently not available at Brooklyn College. These computer programs dial telephone numbers and ask questions using a pre-recorded computerized script. This technology is costly and participants do not enjoy responding to a relatively slow, automated script.



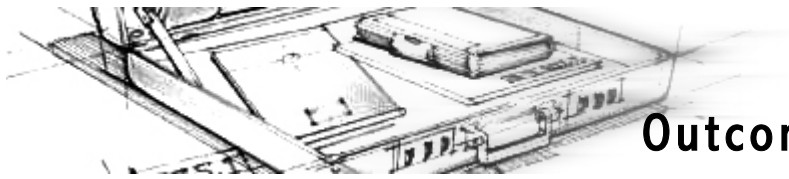
# Outcomes Assessment Toolkit

## Writing Good Survey Opinion Questions

- On questions assessing opinions or attitudes, allow for a range of positive and negative answers to elicit meaningful differences among participants.
- Give participants instructions on how to answer the questions.
- Don't ask leading or loaded questions. Questions should be worded in an objective way, not in a way that leads participants to feel that a particular response is desired.
- Make questions concise and focused.
- Ask only one question at a time so it is clear what question the participant is answering (no "double-barreled" questions).
- Avoid writing questions in the negative where possible. They are more difficult to understand and respond to.
- Ask about attributes such as satisfaction, quality, performance, degree of access, frequency of use, usefulness, accuracy, ease of use, clarity, extent of knowledge, preferences, effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, or promptness.

## Open-Ended Questions

- Ask only if necessary. Open-ended questions may require substantial staff time to computerize and analyze. Think ahead about what you want to know. If you are interested in learning something specific, ask it explicitly in the open-ended question. For example, you may want to know about perceived weaknesses in a program or service, or may want suggestions for ways to improve your program.



# Outcomes Assessment Toolkit

## Response Scales

- Use recommended response scales that are grammatically correct and unambiguous. A verbal label (a word or phrase) should describe each possible response choice. This clarifies each response choice, making the results easily interpretable.
- There are two main types of response scales used in surveys:
  - **Bipolar scales.** Many response scales are bipolar five-point scales with favorable ratings at one end, a neutral point in the middle, and unfavorable ratings at the other end (see “*Agreement*” scale below). An additional point can be used to indicate if a question is not applicable, to provide a “don’t know” response, or to indicate some special case with respect to that question.
  - **Unipolar scales.** Unipolar response scales range from “All” to “None” without a neutral point (see “*Usefulness*” scale). Additional response categories can be added for “non-applicable” and “don’t know” responses. See the sample scales below for examples of each type.
- If you want to average together responses to a group of related questions, you must use the same response scale for each question. Do **not** combine items that are about different topics and that do not belong together. A good response scale to use when combining questions is the “*Agreement*” scale. However, if not averaging items together, it is more meaningful to use scales more directly related to what you’re assessing.



# Outcomes Assessment Toolkit

**Table 1: Sample Response Scales Used in Surveys**

<b>Attribute Assessed</b>	<b>Polarity (Unipolar or Bipolar)</b>	<b>Scale Labels and Values</b>
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Bipolar	Very satisfied (5); Satisfied (4); Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3); Dissatisfied (2); Very dissatisfied (1).
<b>Agreement</b>	Bipolar	Strongly agree (5); Agree (4); Neither agree nor disagree (3); Disagree (2); Strongly disagree (1)
<b>Quality/Performance</b>	Unipolar	Excellent (5); Good (4); Acceptable (3); Marginal (2); Unacceptable (1).
<b>Quality/Performance (2)</b>	Unipolar	Excellent (5); Good (4); Average (3); Fair (2); Poor (1).
<b>Efficiency</b>	Bipolar	Very efficient (5); Efficient (4); Neither efficient nor inefficient (3); Inefficient (2); Very inefficient (1).
<b>Promptness</b>	Unipolar	All or almost all of the time (5); Most of the time (4); Sometimes (3); Hardly ever (2); Never (1).
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Bipolar	Very effective (5); Effective (4); Neither effective nor ineffective (3); Ineffective (2); Very ineffective (1).
<b>Effectiveness (2)</b>	Unipolar	Very effective (5); Effective (4); Somewhat effective (3); A little effective (2); Not at all effective (1).
<b>Frequency</b>	Unipolar	Almost every day (5); At some point during most weeks (4); Several times during a year (3); Rarely (2); Never (1).
<b>Frequency (2)</b>	Unipolar	All or almost all of the time (5); Most of the time (4); Sometimes (3); Hardly ever (2); Never (1).
<b>Probability of an action</b>	Unipolar	Certainly (5); Probably (4); Not really sure (3); Probably not (2); Definitely not (1).
<b>Clarity of information</b>	Bipolar	Very clear (5); Clear (4); Neither clear nor unclear (3); Unclear (2); Very unclear (1).
<b>Ease or difficulty in accessing information</b>	Bipolar	Very easy to access (5); Easy to access (4); Neither easy nor difficult to access (3); Difficult to access (2); Very difficult to access (1).
<b>Amount of information</b>	Unipolar	Far too much (5); Too much (4); About right (3); Too little (2); Far too little (1).
<b>How much?</b>	Unipolar	A lot (5); A fair amount (4); Somewhat (3); A little (2); Not at all (1).
<b>Understanding</b>	Unipolar	Understand very well (5); Understand well (4); Understand somewhat (3); Understand a little (2); Don't understand at all (1).
<b>Usefulness</b>	Unipolar	Very useful (5); Useful (4); Somewhat useful (3); A little useful (2); Not at all useful (1).
<b>Accuracy</b>	Unipolar	Very accurate (5); Accurate (4); Somewhat accurate (3); Not too accurate (2); Not at all accurate (1).
<b>Ease/Difficulty of use</b>	Bipolar	Very easy to use (5); Easy to use (4); Neither easy nor difficult to use (3); Difficult to use (2); Very difficult to use (1).
<b>Importance</b>	Unipolar	Of great importance (5); Of considerable importance (4); Of moderate importance (3); Of some importance (2); Of no importance (1).
<b>Importance (2)</b>	Bipolar	Very important (5); Important (4); Neither important nor unimportant (3); Unimportant (2); Very unimportant (1).
<b>Extent</b>	Unipolar	To a great extent (5); to a considerable extent (4); to a moderate extent (3); To some extent (2); To no extent (1).