Survey Guidance for Five-Year Reviews of Deans and Directors

The items in the Sample Survey Items spreadsheet are categorized examples of survey questions that can be used in the five-year reviews for deans, department heads, department chairs, and directors. Fifteen items constitute a “core” set of questions used in most survey tools for five-year reviews. Review committees can draw from additional questions listed to round out the survey instrument. In addition, committees may look to the unit’s bylaws and strategic goals of the college/ school/ department to ask questions specific to those goals set by the dean/ head/ chairperson. It is generally advisable to create surveys with no more than 20 questions to encourage users to complete the surveys.

Many surveys end with a single open-ended question allowing users to enter additional information not covered by the survey or questions that users would like to elaborate on. Some surveys include an open-ended question at the end of each page, asking users to add more information on “any of the above questions.” Other surveys include a series of open-ended questions at the end that ask questions such as “please comment on the department head’s strengths,” “please comment on areas in which the department head can improve,” etc. In most cases, it is not advisable to include more than two or three open-ended questions.

Most surveys use a five-point Likert scale with a sixth answer choice to indicate “no basis for response.” The five-point scale can have different meanings for different groups of questions – poor to excellent, strongly disagree to strongly agree, never to always – as long as negative responses are at the low end of the scale and positive responses are at the high end of the scale and placed consistently. For example, the lowest/most negative response could be consistently listed on the far left with the most positive on the far right. Any calculation of survey results will be aggregated and calculated by the Provost’s Office and shared with the committee in summary form. Open-ended responses will also be shared with the committee in summary form. Raw data will not be shared with review committees.

Committees are cautioned when sending surveys to groups that are small in size. Survey results will not be shared with the committee if 1) fewer than five users respond or 2) there is unanimity regarding a particular question. Non-unanimous results can be shared but the questions where the respondents all answered in the same way will not be included. Reporting unanimous results, positive or negative, violates the confidentiality of the users.

If you need more information on this survey instrument, please contact Kate Techtow, Coordinator for Assessment and Evaluation, Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (217-300-1913 or techtow@illinois.edu).