
# SURVEY GUIDE

## RESOURCES FOR CONDUCTING CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT EVALUATION SURVEYS

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# Table of Contents

**Survey Administration . . . . . 1**

**Allowable Modifications to NACEP Evaluation Survey Essential Questions . . . . . 2**

Modifications Allowed on all Surveys . . . . . 2

Principal Survey . . . . . 4

Guidance Counselor Survey . . . . . 4

Student Alumni Surveys . . . . . 4

**Recommendations for Best Practices in Survey Methodology . . . . . 5**

Response Rates . . . . . 6

Survey Methodology . . . . . 8

Suggested Methods to Increase Response Rates . . . . . 9

Survey Instructions . . . . . 10

Cover Letters (Both Print and Email) . . . . . 10

Email Invitations . . . . . 11

Reporting Results . . . . . 11

**Survey Resources . . . . . 12**

Because of the added scrutiny that concurrent enrollment faces, NACEP's standards encourage concurrent enrollment partnerships (CEPs) to display greater accountability by conducting regular program evaluations. NACEP's standards require all NACEP-accredited programs, and those seeking NACEP accreditation, to conduct evaluation surveys of student alumni and participating instructors, guidance counselors, and principals. These surveys are the minimum expectations for NACEP-accredited CEPs. Programs are encouraged to conduct additional program evaluations using other methods as well.

This guide was prepared by NACEP's Research Committee under the leadership of then Chair Diana Johnson of NorthWest Arkansas Community College. It is intended to provide advice and guidance on effective practices for administering evaluation surveys. Suggestions for improvements to future editions are welcome.

## 1 Survey Administration

NACEP has developed, refined, and tested essential questions for the surveys required for accreditation, relieving colleges and universities from having to develop their own surveys. Any CEP is welcome to use NACEP's survey templates. The essential questions found in the templates are required to be used by NACEP-accredited CEPs and those seeking accreditation. Survey templates can be found here.

| SURVEY | FREQUENCY | INTENT |
|---|---|---|
| **Evaluation Standard 2**<br>CEP Alumni who are One Year Out of High School | Every year | To determine transfer credit recognition and to track student college matriculation.<br>To inform and guide program improvement.<br>To gauge student satisfaction. |
| **Evaluation Standard 3**<br>CEP Alumni who are Four Years Out of High School | 3 year intervals | To determine long range benefits to students of CEP participation. |
| **Evaluation Standard 4**<br>Impact Surveys of Participating:<br>• Instructors<br>• Principals<br>• Guidance Counselors | 3 year intervals | To determine teacher, counselor, and principal perspectives.<br>To inform and guide program improvement. |

NACEP-accredited CEPs must conduct the surveys at least as fequently as the time intervals designated above.

Beginning in school year 2015-16, NACEP-accredited programs will be required to provide record-level data from the required evaluation surveys to NACEP for national aggregation. CEPs using the surveys for students taking other dual enrollment courses outside of NACEP's definition of concurrent enrollment should ensure that they can disaggregate these students so that only CEP data is reported to NACEP.

Survey administration can be done electronically, by mail, and/or by phone. This decision will depend on your survey population, cost of survey administration, and the need to get a good response rate from a representative sample.

## 2 Allowable Modifications to NACEP Evaluation Survey Essential Questions

### Modifications Allowed on All Surveys

- CEPs may add questions to the survey as long as they do not delete or alter any of the NACEP Essential Questions. Programs focused on career and technical education courses, for example, may wish to ask additional questions about job skills, industry certifications, and/or career awareness.
- CEPs may renumber or reorder the questions as long as the questions are not altered. Please take care to ensure that they remain in logical order and to update any instructions to skip certain questions based on prior responses.
- CEPs may include check boxes (or pull-down menus on online survey systems) for standard questions such as "Which high school did you attend?".
- NACEP's sample cover notes are suggested texts only and may be modified by CEPs.

- Many CEPs have administrative databases that include demographic and course information that is requested on the surveys (e.g. high school name, subjects of courses, race/ethnicity, school type, etc.). CEPs may remove these questions from the surveys if they have the ability to link this data with individual responses to the survey (e.g. by using a unique code on the questionnaire, student identification number, or unique email address). This can help improve your data accuracy and also increase response rates as it reduces the length of the survey.

- Most CEPs do not offer courses in all disciplines listed on the NACEP Essential Questions. To make it easier for respondents, CEPs may remove disciplines they do not offer from their survey and/or re-order the disciplines to put the most commonly taken courses first. Programs that wish to disaggregate the disciplines to examine responses by course or sub-discipline may do so, provided the data can be aggregated into the standard categories for reporting in NACEP's national dataset. Likewise CEPs may ask some of the other questions (e.g. transfer) for specific courses, as long as the responses can be aggregated into single response for inclusion in the national dataset.

- There are very few narrative questions, given the difficulties of aggregating narrative responses at a national level. Programs may wish to include narrative questions (e.g. follow a discrete question with "Please describe" or "Comments") to provide richer details and feedback to better understand the responses.

- Because NACEP seeks to aggregate survey data from accredited programs to create a national dataset, the standard NACEP definition of concurrent enrollment must be included in the survey instructions. Institutions who offer opportunities for high school students to earn college credit through models that do not meet the NACEP definition can ask additional questions on the survey related to those opportunities and courses; however, data for the NACEP defined programs must be broken out and reported to the NACEP national dataset.

- If the institution does not have a program name to describe its concurrent enrollment courses, the words "concurrent enrollment", "dual credit", etc. can be inserted to ensure grammatically complete sentences. For example, "The number of Example University college credits I earned by taking concurrent enrollment courses is Fill in the Blank."

- Modifications are permitted to ensure that the sentence is grammatically correct to accommodate the CEP's program name (e.g. an vs. a, inserting "the" when needed).

## Principal Survey

Programs conducting the Principal survey for NACEP-accreditation purposes must survey Principals of high schools or career centers where concurrent enrollment courses are offered. However, programs may include other administrators such as assistant principals, school or district curriculum directors, district career/technical administrators, etc. CEPs that wish to expand their survey pool may do so but should make sure to disaggregate the data so that only responses from Principals are reported to NACEP.

## Guidance Counselor Survey

Programs conducting the Guidance Counselor survey for NACEP-accreditation purposes must survey Guidance Counselors of high schools or career centers where concurrent enrollment courses are offered. However, programs may include other high school staff involved in college transition and/or administering concurrent enrollment (e.g. high school liaisons, graduation coaches, college admissions counselors, etc.). CEPs that wish to survey others may do so but should make sure to disaggregate the data so that only responses from Guidance Counselors are reported to NACEP.

## Student Alumni Surveys

- Student alumni should be surveyed based on when they graduated from high school regardless of what year they

took concurrent enrollment course(s). A student who graduated from high school in May 2014 should receive a 1-year out survey between December 2014 and August 2015.

- On the 1-year survey, question #5 may be split into two questions by first asking if respondents are continuing their education and then a second question with the five options. Programs using online survey systems may incorporate skip logic to only display certain options depending on the response to the first question.
- The questions related to credit transfer (questions #11-13 on the 1-year out survey and #15-17 on the 4-year out survey) can be disaggregated for specific courses taken by the student or altered from a "Yes or No" response to "All, Some, or No." When aggregating the data to report to NACEP, "Yes" should be reported for "Some or All" responses or if the answer is "Yes" for at least one course.

3

## Recommendations for Best Practices in Survey Methodology

When administering a survey, decisions we make can impact who responds, how they respond, and the validity of the data. Dimetrosky et al (2001) have identified four sources of error in survey data: coverage error, sampling error, measurement error, and nonresponse error.

*Coverage error* occurs when you are unable to contact portions of the populations. For example, if you are able to get current addresses for students attending public colleges and universities in your state but not students attending out of state or private institutions, coverage error occurs.

*Sampling error* occurs when you survey only a sample of the population and not the whole population. Statistical methods exist which reduce the probability of sampling error for large populations. To determine how many respondents are enough you must look at the size of the population, how you want to break down the data (i.e., gender, race, etc.), the degree of

variance in responses in the population, and how accurate you want to be. If you want to look at the differences between key demographic groups within the population, you would need to use stratified random sampling (select a random sample from each subgroup). Stratified random sampling will require you to survey a larger number of individuals. Once you have decided how large a sample size you need based on your desired confidence level and margin of error, you will need to estimate the response rate you expect to get. This may increase your sample size. For example, if you determine that you need 500 responses to achieve a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error but only expect a 75% response rate, you need to send the survey to 667 individuals (500/0.75). The number of initial responses needed for a specified confidence level and margin of error can be obtained from any number of random sample calculators available on the web. For more information on random sampling, visit your institutional research office, a local statistician, or a general statistics book. One source is *Online Surveys for Dummies* by Vivek Bhaskaran and Jennifer LeClaire.

*Measurement error* results from inaccurate responses that stem from poor question wording, poor interviewing, and respondent behavior. NACEP has already developed and tested the questions for the required surveys, so ideally measurement error will be minimal.

*Nonresponse error* occurs from individuals in the sample who, if they had responded, would have answered differently from those individuals who did respond. We account for this error in the survey response rate (the higher the response rate the lower the error), margin of error, and the confidence interval for sample surveyed.

## Response Rates

Response rates matter as they are a measure of the possible bias or error in survey response rates, specifically non-response bias. As response rates increase, the risk of bias decreases. Ann Ray (2006) states that your decision making needs will determine

if the response rate is viable. You may require a statistically reliable sample or simply enough respondents that you feel comfortable moving ahead with program changes based on the results. The goal is not exclusively to get a lot of people to answer but to get a representative group of respondents. In a 2012 editorial, Edward Livingston and Joseph Wislar argue that response rate should not be the only measure of judging survey quality or bias. Researchers need to compare the demographics of their respondents to the population being surveyed. So in addition to looking at the response rates, programs should ask:

- Does the data serve your decision-making needs?
- Do you have enough respondents that you feel comfortable moving ahead on decisions, or do you need a more statistically reliable sample?

Response rates are more important when the study's purpose is to measure the effect or make generalizations about a larger population, less important if the purpose is to gain insight solely on the program (Assess Teaching, 2012).

Response rates will vary depending on the survey method selected or the population being surveyed (Ray, 2006).

+ Mail: 50% adequate; 60-70% is good
+ Phone: 80% is good
+ Email: 40% is average; 50 to 60% is good
+ Online: 20-30% average
+ Face to Face: 80% is good
+ Employees: 60-90%
+ Customers and members: 5-40%
+ General Public: 1-20%

Calculate response rate by dividing the number of completed surveys received by the number of individuals asked to complete the survey:

**# COMPLETED SURVEYS / # INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED = RESPONSE RATE**

### Survey Methodology

Choosing between mail, email, and phone surveys depends on the size and culture of the population you are surveying as well as staffing and costs. Some programs have had success reaching out to students via multiple methods, for example sending a postcard and an email with a link to an online survey that is unique to each respondent or following up on paper surveys by sending email reminders. Email surveys are less expensive but require sustained efforts to get good response rates. NACEP's standards require at least one follow-up contact with non-respondents, regardless of the method used.

## Example Procedures

| MAILED SURVEYS | ONLINE SURVEYS | PHONE SURVEYS |
|---|---|---|
| Mail to parents' address during breaks when students are likely to be home. | Send an email in advance notifying the students that they will be receiving a survey soon. | Use an in-house call center staffed by students. Develop a system where information is inputted directly into a database. |
| Explain to the parents the importance of the survey and encourage them to forward to the student. | Send an email to parents of students with invalid addresses explaining the importance of the survey and requesting a current email address for their child. | Limit average survey time to 5 minutes or less by training surveyors and reducing the length of the survey by linking to existing databases that include demographic and course information. |
| Mailing Sequence:<br>**1st Mailing**: Letter, survey, and postage paid return envelope.<br>**2nd Mailing**: Reminder phone call, email, postcard, or letter to non-respondents.<br>**3rd Mailing**: Follow-up letter, survey, and postage paid return envelope to non-respondents. | Mailing Sequence:<br>**1st Mailing**: Informative email letter or mailed postcard with a survey link unique to each student.<br>**2nd Mailing**: Reminder phone call, email, postcard, or letter to non-respondents.<br>**3rd Mailing**: Follow-up email with link to survey. | Sequence:<br>**1st Call**: If student is not reached, leave an informative voicemail explaining the purpose of the survey.<br>**2nd Call**: Request a call back.<br>**3rd Call**: Leave another message and follow up by email or postcard. |
| Mail follow-ups at 10-14 day intervals. | Mail follow-ups at 7-10 day intervals. | Follow-up phone calls at 2-4 day intervals. |

## Suggested Methods to Increase Response Rates

- Inform respondents how long it will take to complete the survey. Programs that have used the NACEP student alumni surveys have found that it takes students 5-10 minutes to complete the survey.
- Pick times during the year which are not busy for your respondents. For many CEP alumni, school breaks are a good time to survey.
- Send an advance postcard or email indicating that a survey will be arriving soon. This helps to establish that the actual survey is not junk mail.
- Provide a return envelope if administering a paper and pencil survey.
- Send multiple follow-up requests to nonrespondents by varied methods such as postcard, phone, or email.
- Code the surveys with a unique identification number to track and follow-up with those who have not responded, while providing reasonable anonymity for respondents.
- Send surveys to permanent mailing or email addresses and/or to the student's parents' address or email.
- Offer an incentive, such as a chance to win a prize in a drawing, to individuals who complete the survey.
- Make the survey look professional and use college or program logos for visual identification but not too many graphics that clutter print materials or cause emails to load slowly.
- Include student or alumni leaders as advisors to the survey effort and to help communicate the purpose and importance of the survey to heighten student interest.
- Use Multiple Opportunities to Track Students
    - + Collect student contact information at every opportunity before high school graduation.
    - + Require completed senior exit forms.

- Ask for contact information on end-of-course evaluations.
- Utilize social media channels and partner high school alumni networks to stay in touch with alumni.
- Collect students' personal email addresses, not just high school addresses.
- Collect parents' contact information, including email addresses, on enrollment forms.
- Locate students by collaborating with institutional research offices at your institution, in the same state or system, and at institutions where your alumni attend.

## Survey Instructions

- State the purpose and importance of the survey and make instructions clear and easy to follow.
- Distinguish questions to be answered from instructions by changing the font size or type.
- Bold or underline key points or items to draw the reader's attention to them.
- Iclude them in an introduction page for online surveys.
- Address the issue of confidentiality. Stress that you are only interested in aggregate responses and that the respondent's questionnaire will be separated from any personal identification.

## Cover Letters (Both Print and Email)

- Personalize the invitation by using the recipient's name.
- Have the cover letter signed or sent by an individual who is well-known to the recipients and likely to have a positive influence on them. Consider using multiple senders; e.g. a follow-up note to non-responders might come from the college president or an advisor who they know personally.
- Add *pleases* and *thank yous* to your cover letters and at the end of the survey, e.g. *Thank you for participating in this survey.*

- Make your survey sound important to the respondent in your cover letter or email.
  - Why should they take the time to complete the survey?
  - How will completing the survey benefit them?

## Email Invitations

- Make the request to take the survey clear with a hyperlink that is visible without scrolling through too much text.
- Subject lines should be kept short and clear and should not mention incentives to avoid being classified as SPAM.
- SurveyMonkey's analysis of surveys emailed through their system finds that response rates on Mondays are 10% higher than average, while surveys sent on Fridays are 13% lower than average. Students tend to respond to emails at different times; weekends may be more effective than with working professionals.

## Reporting Results

When writing up the results of your survey, do not stop at calculating the averages and standard deviations. Really look at the information: draw conclusions, identify areas for improvement, and use the information to improve your program. General tips for reporting:

- Work with your college's institutional research office to analyze the results.
- Know your audience; you may want to have different formats for different audiences.
- Always tell your audience:
  - Who was surveyed.
  - How they were surveyed.
  - What the response rate was.
  - How the respondents reflect the population as a whole.

- Use plenty of headings.
- Avoid jargon.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- Give conclusions and recommendations of findings.

## 4 Survey Resources


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We ensure the excellence of concurrent enrollment programs through our national standards and accreditation and promote knowledge sharing, networking, and advocacy that supports our members and advances the field.

**www.NACEP.org**

PO Box 578, Chapel Hill, NC 27514
information@nacep.org
(919) 593-5205
(877) 572-8693 [fax]