1. Establish the goals of your survey.
A questionnaire that is written without a clear goal may overlook important issues, lack a logical flow, and thereby cause the participant to lose interest. Survey goals can include: gathering information to evaluate how well services are delivered, identifying areas for improvement, assessing a variety of program outcomes or components, such as satisfaction and use of services, understanding of program components, and the quality and usefulness of information received. The goal of a survey can also be to identify and understand behavior as it relates to usage and understanding and delivery of services.

2. Identify program or service components or expected outcomes.
Sometimes surveys are conducted so that programs can assess the effectiveness of the overall program as well as individual program components. If this is the goal of the survey project, then it is important to also identify all of the program components of interest and/or their respective expected outcomes.

3. Create a list of the topics for each goal or a list of topics for each program component or expected outcome.
For each goal, program component, or expected outcome identified in steps one and two, create a list of the topics that should be dealt with on the questionnaire. If the goal is to assess various program components, the program components may form a natural list of topics for the survey.

4. Clearly identify your population of interest. This will dictate whether you will need to survey the entire population or employ probability sampling strategies. It will also shape your survey deployment strategy.
What group or groups do you want to draw valid and reliable conclusions about? How many observations will you need to draw those conclusions? What level of confidence and precision do you need for your estimates? In what way are you most likely to reach your population of...
interest; by e-mail, a classroom administration, or regular mail? Typically, the Institutional Research office will be able to assist you in developing answers to these questions.

5. **Write your survey questions.**
You may want to write several questions for each topic.

**Types of questions and levels of measurement**

**Nominal or categorical questions.** These questions are used to describe data. In terms of questionnaire design, numbers are assigned to categories of responses and, in terms of analysis, have no quantitative value. The numerical value assigned to a category functions to identify the category. Your analysis may be limited to only descriptive statistics if you use this type of question format.

- **Dichotomous question:** This is generally a yes/no question.
  Example: Are you a full-time student (are you taking 12 units or more)?
  1. Yes
  2. No

- **Multiple choice questions:** This type of question consists of three or more exhaustive, mutually exclusive categories. Multiple choice questions may be structured for single or multiple responses. Multiple response questions typically ask respondents to identify or select all categories that apply to them.

  Example: Which of the following is the ethnicity that most closely describes you?
  1. African American
  2. Asian
  3. Caucasian
  4. Hispanic/Latino
  5. Native American

**Ordinal questions.** This type of question also may be used to describe data; however, ordinal level measurement implies higher or lower numerical distances. In ordinal measurement, distances between numbers do not have a precise numerical value. Ordinal level questions usually require respondents to rate a product, service, or experience on a scale or a continuum. Responses are typically structured on a numerical continuum from low to high or high to low.

- **Rating scale question:** This requires a respondent to rate a particular topic or issue using a well-defined, evenly spaced continuum.

  Example: Please rate your satisfaction with the academic advisement you received prior to enrolling in the nursing program.
1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
4. Dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

*Common rating scales in surveys*

- **Importance:** 1. Not very important 2. Not important 3. Neutral 4. Important 5. Very important
- **Frequencies:** 1. Not at all  2. Occasionally  3. Frequently  4. Very Frequently
- **Other types of scales:** On a scale of 1 to 10 with one meaning not at all confident and 10 meaning extremely confident......

**Interval-ratio level questions.** This type of question allows respondents to enter in a number or quantity that has a defined numerical value; i.e. the measurement for all cases or respondents is expressed in the same units. For example, points on an exam, dollars, years, months, etc. This level of measurement has the most use statistically or analytically because it can be used to describe populations or samples or used in techniques that draw inferences from samples about populations.

For example, What is your age?  __________ Age in years

**Qualitative questions.**

- **Open-ended questions:** Seek to explore the qualitative, in-depth aspects of a particular topic or issue.

Example: Please provide any of your suggestions or recommendations to make the Schedule of Classes more user-friendly.

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**Tips for writing questions**

- **Avoid double-barreled questions:** Make each question about only one topic.
- **Avoid ambiguity, confusion, and vagueness:** Make sure it is absolutely clear what you are asking and how you want it answered.
- **Avoid asking questions beyond a respondent’s capabilities:** Respondents have cognitive limitations, especially when it comes to memory of past events.
• Avoid negatives and especially double negatives: It is confusing.
• Avoid the use of abbreviations, jargon, or foreign phrases.
• Avoid questions that are too demanding and time consuming.

6. Organize questions into a meaningful order and format.

• Questionnaires often begin with an introduction that includes the questionnaire’s purpose, explains how the information obtained will be used, and assures respondents’ confidentiality.
• The first questions should be easy, avoiding controversial topics.
• Address important topics early, rather than late, in the questionnaire. Since respondents tend to be indifferent to the questionnaire as it nears the end, the questions of special importance should be included in the earlier part of the questionnaire.
• Structure the survey so that the questions follow a logical order and evolve from general to specific. Questions on a topic or a particular aspect of a topic should be grouped together.
• Try to use the same type of question and response throughout a series of questions on a particular topic.