

Colorado Mesa University Survey Policy

As an institution of higher education, Colorado Mesa University and its constituents participate in many forms of research. CMU's students, faculty, and staff are often asked to complete surveys as part of faculty and student research, class projects, and assessment of CMU's programs and services for quality improvement. If these surveys are not coordinated, campus constituents may receive multiple requests for surveys, sometimes on similar topics, within the same term or at the same time. This approach can result in confusion and survey fatigue and lower response rates for both academic research and administrative studies, reducing the value of survey research.

In order to reduce confusion and survey fatigue, and to ensure that the surveys administered have sufficient response rates to yield valuable results, it is important to monitor the number of surveys that are administered to CMU constituents, which individuals receive survey requests in a particular term, and to coordinate survey launches to campus populations. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is one gateway through which some surveys are vetted. This group only reviews proposed research with an eye to participants' vulnerabilities, however, and not all surveys require IRB review.

The purpose of this policy is to improve response rates for surveys of CMU students, faculty and staff by

- Tracking the number of electronic survey requests to CMU constituents each semester;
- Decreasing the number of electronic surveys administered to the same populations each semester;
- Reducing collection of duplicate information from different surveys;
- Supporting researchers in the use of best practices in survey construction, administration, and reporting; and to do these things in a way that helps academic research to flourish

Who is a researcher? For the purposes of this policy, a "researcher" is any person who conducts a survey. A researcher may be a faculty member, a staff member, an administrator, a student, or a person not affiliated with the CMU community.

Policy

The [Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Decision Support \(IRPDS\)](#) is the starting point for all surveying activity on campus. IRPDS will assist administrative offices, academic departments, and student services units in the creation and distribution of surveys to the campus community for assessment, strategic planning, and quality improvement. Other researchers who wish to conduct surveys of CMU constituents must schedule their surveys through IRPDS.

This can be done by emailing the office (survey@coloradomesa.edu) and providing a brief description of the survey project, the population to be surveyed, and the anticipated date of the survey, and attaching a draft of the survey instrument. For faculty or students conducting academic research, attaching a copy of the instrument is optional.

IRPDS will work with the researcher to identify an appropriate window for the survey launch that does not conflict with other surveys already scheduled for the same population. The office may work with the researcher to identify an appropriate sample of the student body that will meet the researcher's needs and also limit the number of requests to an individual student.

Additionally, some surveys may require IRB approval before they can be scheduled. A survey may be subject to IRB review if:

- The survey is conducted as research that will contribute to generalizable knowledge
- Survey results will be shared with a scientific, professional, or public audience
- The survey is part of a research project for a course such as an undergraduate senior thesis or a graduate-level thesis, dissertation, or other scholarly project
- The survey audience includes protected populations (such as minors, pregnant women, and/or prisoners)
- The survey will collect sensitive information
- For more information about the Institutional Review Board, refer to the website <https://www.coloradomesa.edu/sponsored-programs/irb/index.html>
- To determine if your project constitutes human subject research, complete the Request for Determination of Human Subject Research form https://www.coloradomesa.edu/sponsored-programs/irb/1_non_human-subjects-form_2019_june.pdf and submit to the Office of Sponsored programs

Researchers who survey the CMU community are expected to:

- Complete the appropriate CITI training course from the list below. For more information on CITI training, visit <https://www.coloradomesa.edu/sponsored-programs/irb/index.html>
 - Social and Behavioral Science Research Course (ID 10089) or
 - Biomedical Research (ID 10088)
- Seek and receive IRB approval, as appropriate
- Ensure that surveys are accessible to students with disabilities
- Use samples rather than surveying the entire student population whenever possible
- Avoid repeating surveys annually
- Follow the basic principles of informed consent
- Otherwise use best practices in survey construction, administration, and reporting

Which surveys do not require scheduling through IRPDS? (Note: these surveys must follow the expectations above and might require IRB review.)

- Surveys distributed to fewer than 50 campus constituents
- Surveys that target a limited, well-defined group for which the researcher has an established connection (students in the researcher's class or organization; participants in a program, course, or event that is being evaluated; students in the researcher's academic major; students served by the researcher's program or office; etc.)
- Most surveys conducted by students as a part of a class project

Academic Freedom. No effort will be made to review or control the content of academic research surveys. This policy is intended, rather, to facilitate both academic and non-academic surveys and to assist researchers to achieve the survey response rates they need by avoiding multiple and simultaneous survey requests.

Priorities. In scheduling surveys, those studies that have been identified by the CMU management team as major institutional surveys will have first priority and will be scheduled well in advance of the semester in which they occur. Other surveys will be scheduled as requests are received, so early requests will be to the advantage of the researcher. When multiple requests are in hand at one time, academic research by faculty and students will receive top priority for scheduling, and whenever possible the scheduling preferences of academic researchers will be accommodated. Surveys by administrative units and student organizations will have lower priority, and surveys from external sources will be considered only after all internal survey requests have been scheduled.

Survey policy adapted with permission from Keane State College

Is this a research project that will contribute to generalizable knowledge or be shared with a scientific, professional, or public audience?

→ Yes → **IRB determination required**

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No
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Is this a research project for a course such as an undergraduate senior thesis or a graduate-level thesis, dissertation, or other scholarly project?

→ Yes → **IRB determination required**

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No
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Is the project solely for a class assignment where data will not be used outside of the classroom context and data are destroyed at the end of the project with no further use?

→ No → **Contact IRB for guidance**

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Yes
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Does the project involve protected populations or the collection of sensitive information? (See examples above)

→ No → **IRB review not required**

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Yes
↓

IRB determination required