SURVEYING & STUDENT/ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT IN CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEWS

Presented by: Quality Assurance Office, Institutional Analysis and Planning and Alumni Relations
PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSHOP

To provide you with information to get positive engagement and feedback from students and alumni in program reviews and the resources available to you.

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of engaging students and alumni in the academic program review
- Recognize where and how students and alumni can be involved
- Understand the proper process for getting information from students and alumni
- Know where to access survey templates and survey software
- Know how to disseminate surveys and collect responses
- Know who can assist you with surveys and focus groups
WHY ENGAGE STUDENTS AND ALUMNI IN ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEWS?

It is best practice AND a requirement to include students and alumni in the authorship of the self-study:

“The self-study results from a participatory self-critical process and documents involvement in its preparation of all faculty in the program, and of students.”

“The self-study shows active involvement of students in the agenda-setting, self-analysis and preparation of the Report.”

“Students contribute to the preparation of the self-study, as well as meet with the external reviewer(s).”

(Source Guide to the QAF)
SURVEYING

Who to survey?

- Undergraduate students
- Graduate students
- Alumni
- Employers
- Professional associations
OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- Fine-tune Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) with CTE
- Get existing student survey data (e.g., NSSE, CUSC, OUGS etc.) from IAP
- Look at the timeline for doing a survey and work backwards from deadline

Consider:

  o Review survey administration process & Academic Program Review survey toolkit on IAP website
  o When is the best time to send out a survey? Consult data steward (e.g., RO, Alumni Relations, Graduate Studies & Postdoctoral Affairs, Cooperative and Experiential Education).
  o Explore how RO and Alumni Relations support departments/programs with surveys (e.g., survey dissemination)
EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE SURVEYS

- IAP will review the survey repository for existing survey results by program
- Data availability is dependent on sample size of the program

Survey data provided by IAP:

- Employment rate, related skills/subject, and salary – six months/two years (OUGS)
- Satisfaction with quality of teaching, would recommend Waterloo, program contribution to growth and development (CUSC Graduating)
- Program contribution to skills, quality of overall experience, would students take same program again (NSSE)
EXISTING GRADUATE SURVEYS

- IAP will review the survey database/repository for existing survey results by program
- Data availability is dependent on the sample size of the program

Survey data provided by IAP:
- Availability of courses needed to complete program (CGPSS)
- Would recommend Waterloo to someone considering their program (CGPSS)
- Would select same field of study if restarting graduate/professional program (CGPSS)
CONDUCTING YOUR OWN SURVEY

- Preparation is KEY in a well-thought-out survey!
- **Survey Toolkit** (general survey guidelines and process) and **Academic Program Reviews Survey Toolkit** (specific to program reviews) are available on the IAP website.
- **Academic Program Reviews Survey Toolkit** includes:
  - Set of pre-approved questions and instructions for conducting surveys
  - Student questions (e.g., Academic Profile, Program Satisfaction and Quality, General Satisfaction etc.)
  - Alumni questions (e.g., Academic Profile, Program Satisfaction and Quality, Skills and Competencies, General Satisfaction, Post Graduation Experiences etc.)
- Waterloo’s **Survey Research Centre** can assist with the development and operationalization of a survey for a fee.
IAP | SURVEY REVIEW GUIDELINES

Institutional process: all surveys to be reviewed by IAP on behalf of the Survey Advisory Committee (Policy 55)

To begin the review:

- Check IAP survey calendar for appropriate timeline
  - Discuss proposed timeline with IAP and Data stewards (Alumni, GSPA, Registrar)

- Submit the following for review via IAP Survey review form
  - Brief description of survey
  - Target population and proposed timeline
  - Description of incentives
  - Documents: Survey instrument, invitation/reminder letters, Incentives rules*, Privacy policy*

- IAP to review documents and send feedback within 1 – 2 weeks
Incentives can be offered to all survey participants or in the form of a draw.

If offering a draw, consider the following:

- Draws should be open to the entire target population regardless of if they participate in the survey (Criminal Code of Canada/ Competition Act).
- Skill-testing question requirement (Criminal Code of Canada).
- Privacy: store contact information used for draws separately from Survey responses (PIPEDA).
- Disclose the following to participants (Competition Act – Fair disclosure):
  - Number/ value of prizes, skill-testing requirement, odds of winning, eligibility criteria, contest rules, privacy policy.
  - Prepare & disseminate Incentives Rules and Privacy Policy to survey participants.

**NOTE:** Please contact Legal and Immigration Services <LIS@uwaterloo.ca> for help with drafting/approval of the draw contest rules before the survey opens.
IAP Resources:

- IAP Survey Calendar
- Survey Request form: https://uwaterloo.ca/iap/surveys/survey-data-request-form
- Survey Review form: https://uwaterloo.ca/iap/surveys/survey-review-form

Other Resources (Contact list):
Each data steward has specific guidelines about how to contact their constituents. Please follow the instructions on the following pages:

- Undergraduate students (Registrar): https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar-resources-staff-and-faculty/mass-email-communications-undergraduate-students/requests-send-mass-email
- Graduate students (GSPA): https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-studies-postdoctoral-affairs/current-students/graduate-student-e-news
- Faculty and Staff (University Relations): https://uwaterloo.ca/university-relations/resources/mass-email-guidelines
Student/Alumni Engagement in Cyclical Program Reviews

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Step 1: Connect with your Alumni Staff Member

**Faculties**

Jennifer Bentley  
Faculty of Health

Phoebe Wong  
Faculty of Arts

Gosia Brestovacki  
Faculty of Engineering

Dheana Ramsay  
Faculty of Environment

Beth Harris  
Faculty of Mathematics

Patricia Rintjema  
Faculty of Science

**AFIW**

Fred Martin  
Conrad Grebel University College

Cort Egan  
Renison University College

Hayley Winters  
St. Jerome’s University

Rebecca Wagner  
United College

Contacts and email addresses:  
https://uwaterloo.ca/alumni/about/people
ALUMNI RELATIONS

Step 2: Alumni staff will help coordinate for an email to be sent on your behalf

- Message will be scheduled so it does not conflict with other emails alumni are receiving.

- Staff will request recipient data list, making sure message goes to your alumni and honours privacy and Canada Anti-Spam Law (CASL) guidelines.

- Will be sent using a branded template to be consistent with messaging alumni are accustomed to.
  - Responsive: email adjusts to device screen size
  - Can be personalized: Dear [first name],

*Tip:* A lot of email goes out to alumni – reach out to Alumni Staff sooner rather than later to book your email.
Alumni Relations

Step 3: Consider email best practices

- Alumni audience likely 5-7 years out from graduation
  - Millennials/Gen Z: TL;DR
  - Keep your message brief and to the point – 200-250 words
  - Put the “fine print” on the first page of the survey
- Alumni live in 140+ countries – consider for any incentives
- Consider who the email signatory will be
  - Name recognition can lead to more responses
- Average email open rate: 43%
Step 4: Develop content for your email

- Alumni staff will coordinate content with you and can provide examples of other programs’ emails

- Be sure to communicate to alumni the reasons why they should take the survey?
  - Your feedback can make a difference
  - You’re going to help future students

- Be courteous: let them know how long the survey will take and include your thanks

- Optional – survey close date
Faculty of ARTS

The Department of Economics is embarking on an important review of our degree programs. We would love your perspective on your degree experience while studying with us. We have designed a short survey (5-10 minutes) which you can access via the button below. Your participation is confidential but we’d be happy to share the results with you if you are interested.

Thanks in advance for considering this request in the midst of your busy day! Your feedback is important as we consider how to shape our program for future students.

We sincerely appreciate your support.

Lutz-Alexander Busch,
Chair, Economics Dept.
ALUMNI RELATIONS | SUMMARY OF STEPS

1. Connect with your Alumni staff member
2. Alumni staff will coordinate with Alumni Relations for an email to be sent on your behalf
3. Consider email best practices
4. Develop the content for your email
SURVEY CREATION & DISSEMINATION

- Create your survey in a software platform
- **Qualtrics** is recommended - UW has a license, IST support available
  - Can also use other survey platforms, such as Survey Monkey

Student Surveys
- Timing of student surveys should be verified with IAP.
- Programs are responsible for programming & disseminating the survey. IAP is available for consultation.
- Contact list/population files available through the Data stewards (see slide 11).

Alumni Surveys

*All contact with alumni must be run through Alumni Relations*

Your Faculty Alumni Officer can help facilitate surveying (e.g., provide list of alumni to contact, email content and timing).
SURVEY RESPONSES

- The software platform in which you create your survey will collect the responses
- Send reminders to respondents, if needed
- Review the results
- Seek assistance for interpretation of data, if needed
- Statistical Consulting & Collaborative Research Unit (SCCR) will provide data analysis (Note: a cost maybe involved for their services)
FOCUS GROUPS

The QA Office can assist you to:

▪ help prepare a set of questions
▪ host and facilitate the focus group
▪ report back on results

Alumni Relations will:

▪ help connect you with alumni for focus groups
INTEGRATING RESULTS INTO THE SELF-STUDY

Self-Study (Section 1.6)

▪ Discuss how students and alumni were consulted and what role they played in creating the self-study.
  ▪ Include a copy of survey(s) or focus group questions as an appendix
  ▪ Include aggregate data as an appendix

Self-Study (Section 9)

▪ Survey/focus groups results will help inform the strengths, challenges, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement
QUESTIONS?

Quality Assurance Office
quality.assurance@uwaterloo.ca

Institutional Analysis and Planning
Rohem: rohem.adagbon@uwaterloo.ca

Alumni Relations
Katherine: katherine.prospero@uwaterloo.ca