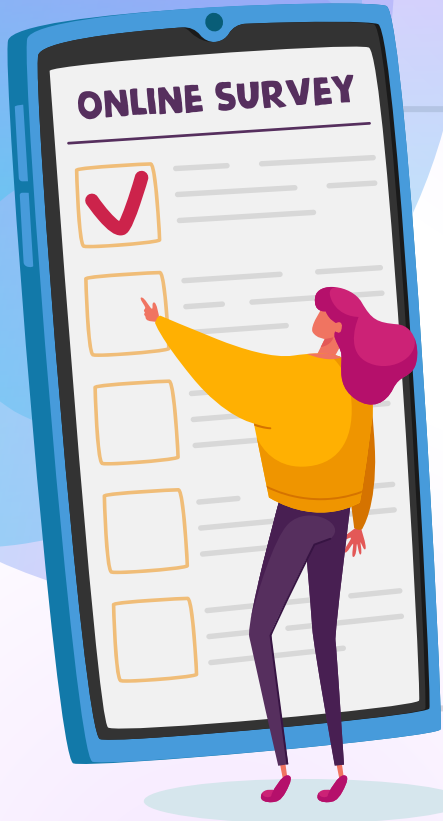




ATENEO



*Ethical Research is  
Cura Personalis in Practice*

# Doing Surveys in Ateneo the Ethical Way

University Research Ethics Office  
Ateneo de Manila University

## Note:

This is intended to cover surveys or questionnaires conducted for the purpose of gathering information, including initiatives that are NOT for research (i.e. there is no intention of contributing to generalizable knowledge and/or generating a publication). This includes but is not limited to: activities and projects for completion of class requirements; and gathering of opinions, views, perspectives, and attributes by an office for the purpose of guiding programs and policies.

If the survey or questionnaire is to be used for research (e.g. thesis), then it might have to be evaluated, along with the entire protocol of the study, by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) or the appropriate Department research ethics committee, or at least be declared by the University Research Ethics Office (UREO) Director as exempt from review.

## What is a survey?

A survey is a method used for collecting data from a pre-defined group of people that is meant to gain information on those people's perspective or status on topics of interest. Surveys usually lend themselves to qualitative and quantitative analysis for trends. Nowadays, a lot of surveys are done online. They are usually but not always in the form of a questionnaire.

## Why be ethical about it?

By their very nature, surveys are a source of information about people, and some of this information can be quite personal and sensitive, such that if this information is made public (whether intentional or not), there can be negative consequences for the person who owns that information. This becomes especially likely if the survey is not done anonymously; i.e. the survey asks for personal, identifiable information.

In any endeavor that involves people, **it is our responsibility to protect their dignity**. This includes protecting the privacy of the information that they give us.

## What counts as identifiable information?

This is information by which the owner's identity can be revealed. The most obvious example is the person's name, but a person can also be identified through his/her personal numbers (e.g. identification cards, bank and government accounts, phone, etc.), home or office address, and online information (e.g. e-mail address, social media accounts, etc.), among others.

## What if I REALLY need to ask for identifiable information?

We do not anticipate that you will be needing the names of your respondents for any purpose. Otherwise, a personal interview might be a better option. If it is for the purpose of preventing people from responding more than once, there are ways to change the settings of an online survey or the method of a physical survey that will allow you to do this.

Being able to determine if people have answered the survey that they have promised to do is not a good reason, because it is entirely up to the people whether or not they will actually do it!

## So...how should I do it?

Here are several ways by which you can ethically conduct a survey:



1) Define the parameters of your target audience based on your topic and objectives. This will allow you to place a limit or range on the type and number of people that you will have to survey.



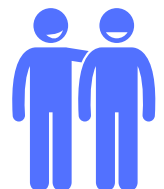
2) Determine the proper sample size. This will depend on your objectives and your target audience. Consult a statistician or a statistics text! This will raise the confidence on the validity of your results.



3) Do not pressure your friends or family members into answering the survey! Find a way to make your survey representative of the population that you are targeting. This might require that you randomly select your respondents from the whole population, and this can be easily done by using randomization apps or software.



- 4) Preface your survey with an introductory page that:
- Introduces you by providing your name, year and course or office, contact information, and the course for which you are conducting this survey (if applicable);
  - States the title or topic of your study;
  - States the rationale or objectives of your study;
  - Invites the readers to participate but emphasizes that doing so is purely voluntary;
  - Assures the readers that there will no negative consequences to not participating in your survey;
  - Assures the readers that you will take all necessary measures to keep their information confidential (e.g. only you will have access to the raw data);

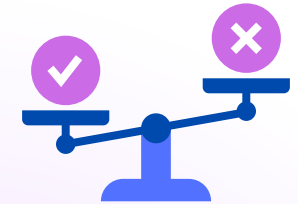


- g. Informs the readers that they can stop answering the survey at any point or withdraw their data from your study (meaning you can no longer use it!) at any point, even after submitting their answers;
- h. Discusses the benefits that the readers can obtain from participating in your study, if any;
- i. Discusses the risks, if any, that the readers may be exposed to if they participate in your study (although this risk should be kept minimal, such as discomfort at answering some questions; any greater and you should reconsider this project!); and
- j. Provides the readers with the option to not proceed any further. For a physical survey, this is as simple as the person declining to participate and handing back to you the questionnaire or survey form. For an online survey, this is often a button that when clicked will proceed to the survey proper.



**Tip: You can actually use the Informed Consent Form (available at <https://www.ateneo.edu/ureo/forms>) as a template for the preface to your online survey!**

- 5) In the survey proper, do not ask your respondent for any identifiable information.
- 6) Even if you are asking delicate questions, make sure to frame them carefully and sensitively.
- 7) Make sure that your survey conforms to other generally accepted rules on the form of surveys and questionnaires.



**DON'T FORGET: One must always protect another person's dignity and his/her right to privacy.**

**Thank you for being an ethical researcher and practicing cura personalis in research!**

**For any question or clarification, contact the UREO at [univresearchethics@ateneo.edu](mailto:univresearchethics@ateneo.edu).**

