

Learning Community Assessment Workshop

Iowa State University
Sponsored by the LC Assessment
Subcommittee
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Presenters

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Opening Go-round

- Name
- Position
- Learning community affiliation
- Brief description of what you hope to gain from this workshop

Workshop Overview

- Creating surveys and assessment tools
- Forming and utilizing control groups
- Recommended timeline

Workshop Learning Outcomes

- Participants will be able to create and administer surveys and assessment tools.
- Participants will be able to form and utilize control groups.
- Participants will be able to synthesize their learning community assessment experience with the information presented at the workshop.

How to do a Survey

- 9-Step process
- What do surveys tell you?
- Sources of reactivity (bias) in survey research

Survey Design

- Question types
- Writing survey questions
- Evaluating survey questions
- Questionnaire formatting
- Data quality

Question Types

Open-Ended Questions

What is your current occupation?

_____occupation

What is your major?

_____major

Question Types (continued)

Closed-Ended Questions with Ordered Response Categories

How would you rate the climate for diversity here at Iowa State?

1 = Excellent

2 = Good

3 = Fair

4 = Poor

Question Types (continued)

As a person conducting business in your community, how satisfied are you with the amount of support you get from your community?

- 1 = Very Dissatisfied
- 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 = Uncertain
- 4 = Somewhat Satisfied
- 5 = Very Satisfied

Question Types (continued)

Closed-Ended Questions with Unordered Response Categories

What is your current marital status?

1 = Married

2 = Living as married

3 = Divorced

4 = Separated

5 = Widowed

6 = Single and never married

Question Types (continued)

Show which of these six groups you feel should have the most and least influence in deciding whether the proposed community bypass should be built by putting a "1" in the box for most influence, "2" for second most influence, and so on until you have ranked all six choices:

- Local Chamber of Commerce
- State Highway Department
- The City Council
- The Mayor
- The Voters
- Local businesses

Question Types (continued)

Partially Closed-Ended Questions with Unordered Response Categories

What type of position do you have at ISU?

1 = Faculty

2 = Merit

3 = Professional and Scientific (P&S)

4 = Other (Please Specify)

Question Types (continued)

Think about long range goals for your family. In your opinion which of the following is the most important long range goal for your family?

1 = Good family relationships

2 = Balance between work & family

3 = Adequate family income

4 = Secure retirement resources

5 = Other (Specify) _____

Writing Survey Questions

- Choose simple words
- Use as few words as possible to ask a question
- Use complete sentences to ask a question
- Use equal numbers of positive and negative categories for scaled questions
- State both sides of attitudinal scales in question stems

Writing Survey Questions (continued)

- Develop response categories that are mutually exclusive
- When comparing question to previously gathered data, use identical question wording
- Avoid asking respondents to say “yes” in order to mean “no”
- Avoid multiple questions within an item
- Avoid asking respondents to make unnecessary calculations

Evaluating Survey Questions

- Will all respondents understand the question in the same way?
- Is the vocabulary used appropriate?
- Is there too great a cognitive burden on the respondent?
- Will the answer to the question provide me with the information I am looking for?

Questionnaire Formatting

DO's

- Cover letter
- Instructions
- Verticality
- White space
- Font size
- Type style
- Symbols, color, arrangements
- Precoded response categories
- Booklets

Questionnaire Formatting (continued)

Don'ts

- Print on both sides, then staple
- Use landscape orientation
- Use unusual folds
- Use unusually shaped pages

Data Quality

- Sampling
- Instrument design
- High response
- Low item non-response
- Consistent and accurate editing, coding and data entry
- Proper and complete reporting

Forming and Utilizing Control Groups

Why have a control group?

- it should ensure more valid comparisons of the effects of LCs compared to the absence of a LC
- it provides a stronger case for the “treatment” effect of learning community participation
 - if results show better outcomes from being in a LC
- it makes for a stronger research design and more believable results

Control Groups (continued)

How should the control group be picked?

- ideally, as similar as possible to the “treatment group”
- there are two main ways to do this:
 - (1) random selection
 - controls automatically for key traits (e.g., gender, classification)
 - (2) matching
 - controls for known key traits

Control Groups (continued)

How can control group members be collected?

- from class enrollment lists
- from Registrar's office data
- from Residence Halls data
- from "purposive" comparison groups
 - other sections of the same class
 - other, roughly comparable, non-LC classes

Control Groups (continued)

What do you do with control group data?

- compare results for control group (e.g., grades, retention) against the same measures for the LC
 - t-tests, analysis of variance, analysis of covariance
- adjust for missing data, particularly if using one-to-one matching
- compare means (e.g., gpa) or proportions (e.g., retention) between groups

Control Groups (continued)

Where can I get help with comparing the control group with the LC?

- Learning Communities Assessment Subcommittee
- college research institutes/centers
- Statistical Laboratory/statistical and research methods consultants
- Registrar
- Residence Halls

Recommended Timeline

Adding questions to the learning community survey

- Wednesday, October 3
 - Attend Learning Community Workshop
- Wednesday, November 14
 - Send additional questions to Michelle for formatting and printing
- Monday, November 26 - Wednesday, December 5
 - Administer survey

Workshop Summary

- Creating surveys and assessment tools
- Forming and utilizing control groups
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Upcoming LC Assessment Initiatives

- October 31
 - Update to LC coordinators on the survey administration process
- November 25 - December 5
 - Posttest and separate lc survey administered
- March 15
 - Summary reports provided to LC coordinators
- April 3
 - Interpreting LC Survey Results (Spring LC Assessment Workshop)
- May 13
 - Overall LC Assessment Report (LC Institute)

Closing Go-round

- What questions are left unanswered?
- What information presented today will you take and apply in the assessment of your learning community?