



Surveying academic integrity: Methodological issues and lessons learned

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Questionnaire-based survey is an efficient method for collection of large scale, longitudinal, comparative quantitative data. Therefore, we can find numerous examples of research on academic integrity that have employed surveys. However, there are cases when surveys on academic integrity do not properly consider methodological principles and requirements that would allow collecting valid and reliable data. Following a previous study on quality and methodological issues found in surveys on academic integrity, in May 2018 we established a Survey Working Group (SWG) under the frame of the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI). The group aims to conduct a critical review of currently ongoing international surveys on academic integrity and ultimately to develop an international survey toolkit as well as guidance principles for how to use it. During the workshop, the working group members will present their progress to date and invite input from participants to establish what types of surveys are seen as valuable and why.

The credibility of any survey mainly depends on the tool used for data collection. In order to make accurate measurements, it is therefore vital to use a valid and reliable instrument for data collection. Although there are several sub-categories of these two terms, the most common ones appear as content and construct related to validity, and stability and consistency related to reliability. Although measurement error might be due to participants and/or researchers, using valid and reliable instruments help researchers avoid measurement error that might be due to the instrument. Within this perspective, well designed surveys can be used to capture key information in educational research about conduct and perceptions of different players. Triangulating the responses, for instance comparing responses from students to those from their teachers, can provide insights into differences in viewpoints and

the underlying reasons. Survey designers need to be mindful of the aims and objectives of the research, target audience, ethical constraints, the level of detail needed and how the responses will be captured, analysed and interpreted.

Following topics will be covered during the workshop:

Key questions to guide survey related decisions

WHY is a survey being conducted and HOW can surveys on academic integrity be useful? WHEN is it appropriate to conduct a survey (e.g., at the beginning of the process, at a later stage, a longitudinal perspective)? WHO will be the target group or groups (i.e. students, faculty, administrators, librarians)? WHAT do we want to know from the target groups (focusing on different aspects of academic integrity)? HOW should a methodologically sound survey be conducted?

Selected highlights of methodological issues

Ethics in surveys. An informed consent form should be prepared and the research team should provide full details about the processes to be followed. This, together with methodological interventions, should be approved by a recognised ethical committee, which will be institutional, if the survey involves just one institution. If multiple institutions or external bodies are collaborating in the research, approval is needed from each institution. Similarly, there is a need to take into consideration roles such as research assistants, volunteer researchers and such, who may facilitate administering the survey or handling the data. Anyone who plays a role in determining validity and stability of data should also be approved by an ethical committee.

The ethical approval should check a range of details about the research design, such as ensuring risks are identified and mitigated, the process for informed consent for research participants is clearly defined, measures are in place to anonymise the participant information and how the results will be managed where this is not possible. This workshop will highlight the ethical implications of conducting surveys and show the importance of GDPR compliance. Moreover, the participants will also be engaged in a mock decision-making process for ethical clearance.

Survey questions as measurement tools. Questionnaire-based surveys rely on quality of each question included. If a questionnaire is of poor quality the data collected cannot be considered reliable. Construction of good questions starts with the process of proper conceptualisation. Then, concepts must be translated into measurable empirical indicators. Therefore, we will discuss the key methodological requirement for good questions. Based on examples we will show how wording of a question may be misleading or biasing an answer, or differently interpreted by respondents (and what consequences it has for the quality of data), we will discuss issue of double or even triple questions and answer alternative, how to construct mutually exclusive answer alternatives and avoid too complex formulations of questions.

The workshop will include discussion of examples from two international surveys that have been conducted, with involvement of some of the authors of the workshop.



Global Essay Mills Survey (GEMS) is an international project, which was focused on students' unethical behaviour, specifically on contract cheating. Thanks to this project a questionnaire was developed, which was translated into 22 languages and spread around the different countries. Despite the great potential of the project and a lot of effort, however, insufficient data was collected to make the results in all countries statistically significant. The reasons for this are a long questionnaire, complex questions, difficult translations, irrelevant questions (or answers) for some countries, not consistent organization, weak (impossible) control and many others.

An Erasmus project Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE, 2010-2013) included a survey of 27 EU member states. The survey made use of three separate questionnaires (for students, teachers and managers), translated into 15 European languages, supplemented by documentary analysis, national level interviews and student focus groups. Although the research results from this project continue to be useful and influential, the limitations of the survey design reduced the amount and quality of data collected. Flaws in the survey include: lack of clarity in some questions, especially when translated into different languages; questionnaires not available in all European languages; asking too many questions, some very complex; difficulties in separating language, nationality and study/employment location of the participants.

Details from these two examples, and what has been learnt from them, will be used to inform discussions and activities in the workshop about more effective ways to design, test and conduct surveys on topics relating to academic integrity. The workshop will employ the following *methods of delivery*: oral presentation; demonstration of examples prompting discussion from participants; practical tasks for participants and collecting feedback and ideas.

Keywords: surveys, academic integrity, higher education, academic misconduct, ethical approval.