

# Survey Design Workshop for Teaching & Learning Projects

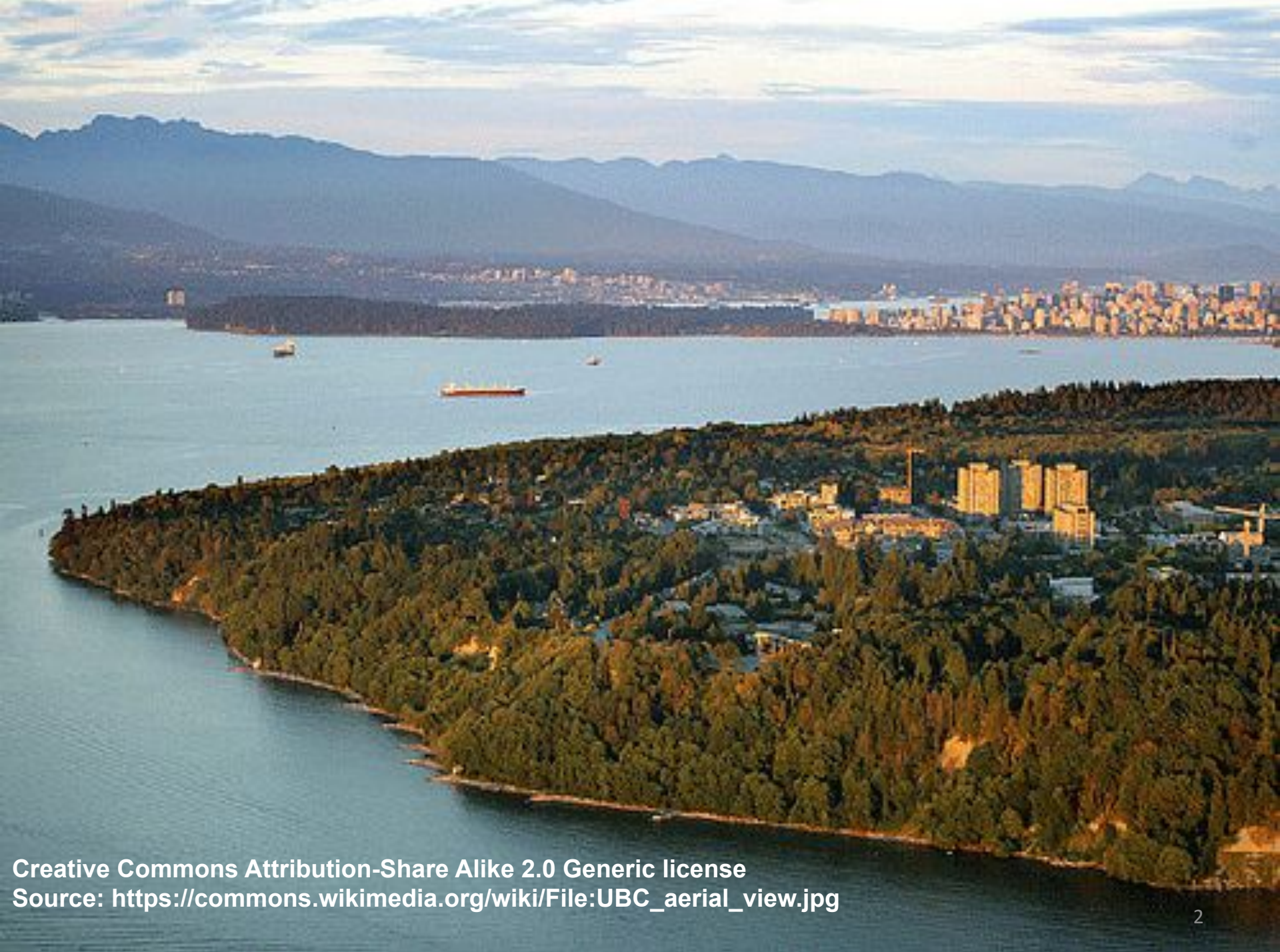


**Trish Varao-Sousa**, Evaluation & Research Consultant  
**Natasha Pestonji-Dixon**, Evaluation & Research Consultant

Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology  
November 29, 2023



Creative Commons, attribution, non commercial, share alike.



Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UBC\\_aerial\\_view.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UBC_aerial_view.jpg)

# Workshop objectives



B.C.

by johnny hart



©2011 John L. Hart FLP

www.johnHartStudios.com

By permission of John L. Hart FLP and Creators Syndicate, Inc.

# Workshop objectives

By the end of this session, you should....



- Have a better sense of whether a survey is the right tool for you
- Be more confident selecting question styles and designing individual survey items
- Know best practices for administering surveys and increasing response rates

# What is your prior experience with survey design?



1. Have you designed a survey in the past?
2. If you have designed a survey what did you find most challenging about the process? If you haven't yet designed a survey, what do you anticipate finding most challenging?



# Why choose surveys?



<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Can reach many participants in short periods of time</li><li>● Easier to reach broader groups that may be difficult to connect with (e.g., alumni, employers, etc.)</li><li>● Easy to integrate into class activities/assignments</li><li>● Inexpensive (time and cost) to administer compared to focus groups or interviews</li><li>● Free online, FIPPA compliant software available: Qualtrics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Respondents may not be able to provide in-depth insights</li><li>● Inability to elicit further discussion on specific topics</li><li>● Results tend to be highly dependent on wording of items</li></ul>

# When is a survey the right tool for your study?



Consider:

- Your research/evaluation questions
- What evidence/data do you need to answer your questions?
- What are the right tools to collect such evidence?

# Question types: Closed-ended (forced choice)

Appropriate if question can be meaningfully answered and most responses easily anticipated; easily analysed.

•Examples: Multiple choice, checklists, ratings, grids, likert scales



From the workshop elements, please select one that you think could be improved.

- Lecture
- Interactive activities (e.g., Mentimeter, group discussions)
- Panel discussion

Why did you choose to complete the interactive supplementary materials?  
Please select all that apply.

- They complement the material in class
- They are a useful study tool
- They help me to structure homework
- They are fun/engaging
- Want more practice
- Other:



# Question types: Closed-ended (forced choice)

## Likert scales

- Use of midpoints
- Avoid using “Always/Never”
- Use “Not Applicable or Do Not Know” when relevant
- Stick to 4-7 scale points



Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The content was clear and concise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please consider the video you just watched. Please indicate your agreement with the statements below:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Overall, the video I watched helped me better understand organic nomenclature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Question types: Open-ended

- Appropriate when question can't be easily answered with pre-chosen response options
- Allows for a large variety of diverse responses



Please describe one or two main strengths of the interactive supplementary materials. This could relate to design, content, accessibility, difficulty level, etc. It would be most helpful for us to know why you think this is a strength.

██████████ is a growing project, it is not the final product. Even though you did not access the resources, is there content that could be included to increase your likelihood of using it in the future? Please describe such features and explain why you recommend them.

# Best practices in survey design

- Only ask questions you need to answer your research/evaluation question(s)!
- “It’s interesting” ≠ Evaluation question (focus your questions)
  - Consider **relevance**: Do you need this item?
  - Consider **specificity**: How will you analyse each element you collect?
  - Consider **inclusion**: Asking information in an inclusive way



# Best practices in survey design

- Consider when to best administer the survey
- Use a previously validated instrument (when possible)
- I understand  $\neq$  Participants understand (pilot)
  - Reduce jargon, identify confusing items
  - Determine how long the survey takes



# Having BREB approval vs. Being ethical



CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: <https://www.picpedia.org/chalkboard/e/ethics.html>



Survey governance committee: <https://pair.ubc.ca/surveys/survey-governance/>

Sample consent forms: <https://isotl.cilt.ubc.ca/resources/how-to/>

Guide for deciding if you need to pursue institutional ethics: <https://isotl.cilt.ubc.ca/breb-application/>

# Increasing response rates

## Design:

- Be open with students about the purpose
- Keep surveys short
- Incentives are okay, but don't coerce!

## Implementation:

- Provide time in-class
- Provide a paper option
- Be mindful of when to administer
- Provide a window of availability
- Send reminder(s)





# Activity: Survey sample

Let's look at a sample survey, discuss why these items may not be the best choices and suggest better choices.





# Activity: Survey sample

1. What is your gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other
  
2. How long have you lived in Canada?
  - a. 1-4 years
  - b. 5-7 years
  - c. 8+ years
  
3. Did you like the course?  
(open-ended)

4. This was a good course that increased my interest in Sociology.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Somewhat disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
5. Social justice has been a critical component of this course and promotes important awareness and action of the wrongs of today's society. Do you agree that social justice is important having taken this course?  
(Open-ended)







# Activity: Survey sample



INSTEAD OF:

1. What is your gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other

CONSIDER:

- Is this question actually necessary for your evaluation question? If yes:
  - Revise choice options: Man, woman, gender non-binary, open-text, prefer not to answer
  - Put any demographic items at the end of the survey to avoid influencing responses

**What is your gender identity?**

Woman

Man

Non-binary person

Prefer not to answer

**Do you have lived experience as a trans person  
(meaning your gender identity does not align with your gender assigned at birth)?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer



# Activity: Survey sample

## INSTEAD OF:

2. How long have you lived in Canada?
  - a. 1-4 years
  - b. 5-7 years
  - c. 8+ years

## CONSIDER:

- What is this question about?  
Residence? Language? Comfort with environment?
- If it is about language:
  - “How often do you have language-related difficulties understanding course material at UBC?”
    - Almost daily
    - At least once per week
    - At least once per month
    - At least once per term
    - Never





# Activity: Survey sample

## INSTEAD OF:

3. Did you like the course? (open-ended)

## CONSIDER:

- Phrasing the question so it does not offer the option of only writing “yes” or “no”
- Being specific in what you want to evaluate (a specific lecture, assignment, learning outcome, etc)
- Revised examples:
  - “What did you like best about this course?”
  - “Please list which chapter module(s) provided the most valuable learning experience(s) and how it/they did so.”





# Activity: Survey sample

## INSTEAD OF:

4. This was a good course that increased my interest in Sociology.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Somewhat agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Somewhat disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

## CONSIDER:

- Avoid double-barreled questions.
- Revised wording:
  - “I am satisfied with the quality of instruction in this course.”
  - “This course increased my interest in Sociology.”





# Activity: Survey sample

## INSTEAD OF:

5. Social justice has been a critical component of this course and promotes important awareness and action of the wrongs of today's society. Do you agree that social justice is important having taken this course? (Open-ended)

## CONSIDER:

- Avoid using leading questions to elicit desired responses.
- Revised wording:
  - How has this course impacted your [knowledge of/perspective on] social justice? Please explain.



# How do I....? (FAQ)

- Get fair and accurate answers without swaying respondents with my word choices?
  - Avoid: double-barreled items; and/or statements; leading statements/priming
  - Have someone pilot the survey to ensure what you are trying to ask is what being understood
- Balance a need for feedback without contributing to survey fatigue?
  - Keep surveys short and to the point
- Decide how many questions should be in a survey? How to balance qualitative and quantitative?
  - Narrow your research/evaluation goals for the survey, carefully consider what needs to be asked and what type of data you are trying to collect
- Transform a research/evaluation question into a survey effectively?
  - Reflect on what your intended impacts/goals are and what would allow you to know if they are achieved
  - Consider how you would write up or present findings from your project and work backwards to create answerable question items
- How do I “validate” survey items so the responses are reliable/generalizable?
  - If there is a validated survey tool that meets your project needs, use it! But many don’t fit the nuance of our work. It’s okay for results to not generalize to all contexts



# Thank you for attending!



Did you like this workshop?

- It was amazing*
- It exceeded my expectations*
- I agree that this was a good workshop*
- The workshop was okay*

Your facilitators:

**Natasha Pestonji-Dixon:** [natasha.pestonji-dixon@ubc.ca](mailto:natasha.pestonji-dixon@ubc.ca)

**Trish Varao-Sousa:** [trish.varao-sousa@ubc.ca](mailto:trish.varao-sousa@ubc.ca)

# Additional Resources



- Guides on asking about demographics, gender and sexuality:  
<https://isotl.ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/how-to/>
- Sample survey introduction and consent forms (under “recruiting participants”): <https://isotl.ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/how-to/>
- Equity and Inclusion office: <https://equity.ubc.ca/>
- Chapter 5: “Developing Research Questions” in Andres, L. (2012). Designing and doing survey research. Sage.  
<https://methods-sagepub-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/book/designing-and-doing-survey-research/i254.xml>
- Sample Likert scale response options:  
<https://www.marquette.edu/student-affairs/assessment-likert-scales.php>