

PIRLS Survey – Activity Checklist

Based on past experience of PIRLS we have drawn up a list of issues that you may want to consider in running a survey.

This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is provided only to give guidance or make suggestion of things you *may* want to do.

Before Survey Launch

1. Formulate a PIRLS working party, chaired by a senior academic and including PI or Research Leader representatives
2. Agree the working party's remit, budget, reporting line, frequency of meeting, reporting and so on
3. Ascertain who the PIs and/or Research Leaders are in your institution.
4. If not in place establish an email list to contact all PIs and RLs. Email contact will make a BIG difference in achieving high return rates.
5. Agree person or persons who will be responsible for the survey, and pass this on to Bristol Online Surveys at: bos-support@bristol.ac.uk
6. Ensure the person(s) responsible are comfortable with the BOS survey software (more information will be provided).
7. Consider whether you need to add institution-specific questions to the survey. The survey is preloaded with 'core questions' so in considering additions ask yourself the following:
 - Is the question relevant to researchers and in particular their employment and career development?
 - Is the information returned useful (is it just "nice to know" or can you act upon it)?
 - Should it be a mandatory or optional question?
 - If it is mandatory question, can all researchers answer it? You might need to add an option such as "Not Applicable" or "Don't Know".
 - Are the possible responses to your questions consistent? i.e. don't mix possible responses such as "Very good", "good", "Not very helpful", "Not at all helpful"
 - Try to ensure consistency in use of upper and lower-case i.e. Do not have as a response "Very good", "Good", "Not Very Good", "Not good"
8. Ensure key people are aware of the intention to survey, the reason and the benefits. Possible contacts:
 - Vice chancellor
 - Registrar
 - Deans
 - Heads of Academic departments
 - All in Personnel and Training

- All in Careers departments
- All in Research 'support' departments
- Unions
- Researchers

9. If you have a dedicated Web site for your researchers
 - Use it to promote the survey. Add a link to the survey's web address (URL).
 - Make sure that ALL contact with researchers (posters, footers of email, letters, payslips, induction and review documents) include the survey URL.
10. Decide how long to run the survey for. We suggest a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 4.

At survey launch

11. Launch the survey using BOS (this requires no technical know-how and only a few minutes work - further instructions are provided)
12. Contact ALL researchers, ideally via email. Include the following
 - DOUBLE-CHECK that the URL for the survey matches the URL you have placed in your email to researchers. You will lose a lot of potential returns if an inaccurate URL is sent out – many potential respondents will not give you second chance.
 - Background and reasons for the survey (repeat what you've said before if required)
 - Stress that the survey is not just being run in your institution but across the UK
 - The time period the survey will be open for
 - How and ideally when they will find out results
13. Consider writing to heads of departments to ask them to encourage their researchers to complete the survey.

While the survey is open

14. Via the BOS administrative screens check response rates as often as possible, but at least weekly.
15. Send out email reminders on a regular basis (after week 1, week 2 and so on). Include statistics on completion rates (e.g. 25% have completed the survey)
16. A few days before close send final reminder
17. Field any queries from your researchers in a positive manner
18. Any problems or difficulties with the software or questions you cannot answer from survey respondents – contact: bos-support@bristol.ac.uk

After the survey closes

19. Send an email to researchers. Include the following:

- A big thank you for taking time to complete
- Statistics on completion rate
- Information on what will happen next
- Information on how they can find out results

20. Analyse the results as quickly as possible (you can do this online using BOS inbuilt reports or download results into Excel or SPSS)
21. Report results to the Working Party (you will be able to set-up other people in the software to view reports for your institution)
22. Highlight areas of poor performance
23. Review summary of UK wide results to be produced by Vitae.
24. Develop an action plan to improve performance in poor areas
25. Use the PIRLS data to make the case for further funding to implement your plans
26. Communicate your action plan to researchers and the University. Where applicable stress the value of PIRLS data in ensuring action is taken. Evidence of action will encourage higher response rates in subsequent years.

The following year(s)

27. Reissue PIRLS survey
28. Evaluate the performance of your action plan by highlighting a change in results
29. Report results to Working Party and/or Senior Managers, Heads of Departments, researchers, Unions, and others
30. Check your performance against other institutions
31. Amend your action plan as required