

Race Equality Charter (REC) survey: guidance and rationale

Undertaking a staff and student survey is a mandatory part of a REC application, along with wider involvement with minority ethnic staff and students.

Rationale for the survey

As set out in the REC guiding principles, racial inequalities are not necessarily overt, quantifiable incidents which are recordable and straightforward to address. Racial inequalities might manifest as a series of micro-inequalities against minority ethnic individuals; they can be difficult to describe and in isolation may seem insignificant. At the same time, White British staff and students will have their own views on the institution's race equality priorities, and understanding their appetite for this work can be useful for developing and communicating any actions and priorities.

Advance HE recognises the limitations of a survey, and we do not anticipate the survey being your only form of capturing staff and student views, but it can be a useful starting point. As well as providing some quantitative markers of progress (for example, identifying changes in the way people have answered questions over time), the open text boxes allow for issues to be understood in more depth, and for solutions to be suggested.

Advance HE recommends the survey results are used to provide a basis for any follow-up interviews and focus groups which might be conducted.

The survey template

There are two survey templates, one for staff and one for students. Templates are available online.

Each template comprises:

- optional introductory text explaining the survey and who should respond
- mandatory questions, all of which must be included in whatever format you use for the survey
- optional personal details section

The introductory text is provided as an example of what you might want to include, but it is your choice to decide whether to use it, adapt it, or write your own from scratch. Likewise,

the personal details section is provided as an example of what you might want to include but there is no obligation to use the wording provided.

That said, **as part of your survey analysis we do need to see as a minimum:**

- how you have maximised responses, particularly responses from minority ethnic staff and students
- how you have collected and analysed the data by specific ethnic group
- how you have distinguished between UK and non-UK responses

As your race equality work progresses, and where the numbers permit, you may decide to consider other variables such as:

- role, grade and type of contract for staff
- level of study for students
- faculty/discipline
- intersectionality with other protected characteristics

However, it is up to you how to request this information.

Changes to the survey

You are required to conduct the survey in its entirety, with questions asked in the format given by Advance HE. You are welcome to add questions to the survey but **do not edit or delete any questions**. If you feel any of the questions are inappropriate for your institution for any reason, please contact the race charter team at racecharter@advance-he.ac.uk to discuss and agree a suitable way forward.

As set out above, you are welcome to change the introductory text and the personal details section so that they are in line with your preferences and house style, providing you are still able to analyse the data adequately.

You are also encouraged to change anything that appears in square brackets and highlighted in red. The wording of the survey is generic, but obviously people will respond better to it if it is personalised for your institution.

You may want to add an option for staff and students to give contact details where they are comfortable doing so, in order to be involved more in future. They may be happy to take part in focus groups and interviews and be involved with developing the action plan and

prioritising the actions. Alternatively, they may be willing to be interviewed confidentially by a specific member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.

Adding questions

The survey currently includes questions on the areas specifically included within the REC application form, but there are areas which directly impact on an individual's sense of belonging and therefore their ability to thrive, which you may want to add.

For example, academic research collaboration, social activities, living in halls of residence. These may all impact on an individual and how they perform in their day-to-day work, and may be worth adding to the survey.

Conducting the survey

You are welcome to run the survey however you think best, but it is likely to be more effective and easier to disseminate as an electronic survey. However, you will also want to consider how staff who are not desk-based will access the survey, and what alternative formats may be necessary.

Running the survey as a standalone exercise

Keeping the survey as a discreet exercise prioritises race equality. It keeps the survey focused in its aims and ensures that analyses can be undertaken immediately, without waiting for another project to be completed.

There is also a danger that the questions may get lost within a larger survey, and response rates may drop off before respondents have answered all sections.

Keeping the survey as a separate exercise enables your institution to add to the mandatory questions in order to explore existing or additional areas more fully.

Including the questions within an existing survey

If the REC survey is run as part of an existing survey, there is a danger that increasing the survey length with additional questions may not be possible.

Staff and students receive a lot of surveys, and survey fatigue can reduce response rates. If the REC survey is to be conducted alongside a similar survey it may be worth combining them, but your institution will need to manage the perception of how the race questions are being prioritised. Your approach to this should be included within your REC application.

Streamlining the surveys sent to staff and students is sensible, but strategies will need to be developed to ensure the REC-specific questions are prominent within the survey, and that

analyses of those questions can be undertaken by the appropriate people once the survey has closed. It will also be important to ensure that responses can be analysed by specific ethnic group and UK/international status.

Timing of the survey

The timing of the survey is an important consideration and institutions are advised to think carefully about when to distribute their survey to achieve the best possible response.

Impact of the survey

It is worth considering the impact of the survey on minority ethnic staff and students. First-year students may be surprised at receiving a race-specific survey in their first few weeks, and may need time to settle into the institution before being able to have an opinion. There is also the possibility of making staff and students feel more aware of racial inequalities, and therefore avoid key times when it could have a detrimental impact by increasing stereotype threat, for example, close to examination periods or internal promotions rounds.

Validity of the survey data

Advance HE expects institutions to run the survey before applying and re-applying to the charter, which is every four years. As mentioned above, the timing of the survey is important and your institution will want to spend time analysing the results as part of your self-assessment. We would therefore anticipate you running the survey up to a year ahead of your actual application submission.

Institutions that are unsuccessful may want to resubmit before it would be viable for them to rerun the survey. In these instances, the original survey data is valid for two years. For example, if an institution runs the survey in January 2016 and applies in January 2017, the survey data would be valid for a resubmission in July 2017, or January 2018 (which is two years after the original survey was conducted).

After this point institutions should rerun the survey to ensure the results are up-to-date.

Using the survey results in your self-assessment and application

Throughout the survey, respondents are asked to outline any issues they want to highlight, and what actions they want their institution to implement.

The issues raised are likely to help your self-assessment team to understand the statistics and other data that you have on race and ethnicity. Real life experiences add context to the statistics and can help ensure that the numbers have been interpreted correctly.

Quotes from survey responses can help to bring your application to life, and provide valuable context and understanding to the quantitative data. Qualitative data does not

contribute to your word count, and Advance HE encourages its use in all sections of your application where relevant.

The ideas and solutions that respondents raise also make a good starting point for developing your action plan. Even where people have suggested quite broad ideas, you could then seek further views on the ideas and start fleshing out the details and how to implement the actions.

It is important to describe in your application how you conducted the survey and maximised response rates (see below) as well as details of number of responses and how the data was analysed and used. There is no need to provide the actual results in this section. Instead, please embed the survey findings into the relevant parts of your application, for example comments and data on recruitment and selection will go in the section on recruitment and selection.

Use the survey results to add context to the other data you are including and to provide the rationale for actions.

Evaluation panels will expect your application to contain relevant data from the survey, including any negative information.

Maximising response rates

In your REC application, we will be looking at how the survey is conducted and how you have tried to maximise the response rates.

You may want to think about:

- A communications strategy supporting the survey to ensure staff and students are aware of it, who it is targeted at, and the importance of responding to it. This might include the following.
 - Posters
 - Email communications and information in staff and student newsletters and bulletins.
 - Briefing line managers and heads of departments on the importance of the survey and ask them to highlight it to their staff.
 - Send communications about the survey (and the survey itself) from senior management to highlight the importance the institution places on the results.
 - Use staff and student networks to maximise impact. If the networks (and students clubs and societies) are involved in advance and are aware of the survey and why

the institution is undertaking it, they are likely to be willing to help disseminate it to their contacts.

- Explain how the survey is just one element of a wider communications plan and how else staff and students will be able to get involved and input into the institution's race equality work.
- Plan in advance how the responses will be managed and analysed to ensure confidentiality and make it clear to respondents how their responses will be handled and who will have access to them.
- Consider different options for completing the survey. Staff who are office based may prefer an online survey, but staff in other roles, for example, security, catering, cleaning, may have different preferred methods of engagement.
- Make the landing page and/or introduction to the survey as clear as possible so that people understand what it is, how it is set out and how much personal information they will need to provide.
- Ensure you have a copy of the survey ready to send to people who need to respond in an alternative format and proactively offer this as an option.
- Leave the survey open for as long as possible. If possible, try to leave the survey open for at least three weeks.
- Explain to staff and students how the information collected will be used so that they are able to see the benefit of responding. This is equally important after the survey has closed. Sharing the results, and what the institution plans to do in light of them, may help to increase responses when your institution comes to repeat the survey.
- Send out targeted reminders about the survey to groups who are underrepresented in responses. For example, it will be important to have a good response rate from UK staff and students as well as international staff and students.

More information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey then please contact us at racecharter@advance-he.ac.uk.