

# Asking Questions: Questionnaires

## Questionnaire Data Design Principles cont

- Core Participant Data
- Counting or Meaning
- Mind your language
- Agree or Disagree
- Facts, Attitudes and Opinions
- Maintain Integrity
- Changing attitudes over time
- Introductions first
- Return to Sender

## Basic Styles

- Tick boxes
- Likert Scale

## Design Principles

- Question Order
- Single not double barrelled questions

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php>



# Questionnaires

**What information do I want to get from this method?**

**How do I want to analyse the information:**

- **Do I want to count or measure**
  - **basic non-ambiguous quantitative data from larger samples or**
- **Do I want to interpret meanings and understandings**
  - **qualitative – deeper and richer data from smaller more purposive samples**

# Basic Styles of Questionnaire 1

## Tick boxes:

- Should present options clearly with no ambiguity
- Should probably not contain any 'open' questions
- Should probably not rely on implicit understanding
- Should probably have questions grouped into topics.

Often used for surveys and to cover a range of information

Often contains lots of questions in order to cover all the topics required

# Basic Styles of Questionnaire 2

## Attitude Lines / Likert Scales:

- May use more open questions with a graded scale of response
- Uses the same rule for the responses throughout the questionnaire
- Will often have a scale of 5 on a continuum of response
  - where 1 is low (totally disagree) and 5 is high (completely agree)
  - OR where 1 is high (the best) and 5 is low (the worst)
  - A scale of 5 allows people to choose 3 (not-committed, undecided, not sure, don't know)

# Basic Styles of Questionnaire 3

## Open Questions:

- This type of questionnaire usually has less questions than a survey
- It is likely to give a detailed statement and ask for comments
- Analysis may be more difficult since you will need to interpret the view of the person from their statements about a given topic
- You could however get richer and less predictable data than that produced by a survey
- You could use this method with a small sample to get a *'feel'* for the sort of information that might be available to you so that you can design your approach more precisely.

# Design Principles 1

## Order

- Put your questions in the best logical sequence,
- Start with easier, salient, interesting and non-threatening items.

**Don't leave the most important items to the end!**



People will give the most attention at the beginning, and are likely to try to give their most thoughtful responses. By the middle their interest is waning. By the end they just want to get it finished.

# Design Principles 2

## Single not double barrelled questions

- If you are using a tick box be sure that the question you are posing has a single obvious answer, it is very easy to pose 'double barrelled' questions without realising it.

- *Would you prefer to study or live at a campus or a city university?*
- *Are you generally satisfied with your course, or are there some things about it that you don't like?*

# Design Principle 3

## Mind your language

- **Be careful to use non-contentious language, try to be neutral in your wording.**
- **Use language that is easy to understand and as far as possible cannot be mis-interpreted.**
- **Do not present only one side of the argument such as:**
  - **Do you agree that a woman's place is in the home?**
  - **Do you agree girls shouldn't do engineering?**
- **Substituting the word 'believe' for 'agree' can help take the bias out of this type of question.**



# Design Principle 4

## Agree or Disagree

- Sometimes it is easier to create a sheet of statements drawn from another source of data, about which your respondents can ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’.
- This enables you to test data taken from a very small sample on a larger group – it is like a survey but uses real data rather than you having to design each question.

**See also:**

**7D Evaluation Methods: Dialogic Interviews**

# Design Principle 5a

## Facts, Attitudes and Opinions

- Think about your questions as those:
  - asking for **FACTS**
  - looking for **ATTITUDES**
  - requiring **OPINIONS**.

### Be aware that:

- The wording of a question can impose a straight jacket on a respondent especially in a tick-box system.
- It can also make a respondent think about something for the first time and form an opinion that s/he didn't know s/he had.

# Design Principle 5b

## Facts, Attitudes and Opinions

- **Facts** are easy to check against other data.
- **Attitude** accuracy relies on good question wording and subject knowledge to present the right potential questions.
- **Opinions** can very easily be swayed by:
  - the wording of the question
  - the respondents wish to influence or please the researcher.

Some questionnaires use multiple versions of the same question spread throughout the survey to test the issue

- 'I think the Labour party would produce good government'
- 'I would vote for the Labour party'
- 'The Labour Party best reflects my political views'

# Maintaining Integrity

- Names are not normally required for survey or questionnaire.
- If you think you would like to talk to people afterwards then you might include a statement at the bottom saying:

*'If you would allow me to follow up your responses please include your name and email contact information here.....'*

- It can be helpful to number questionnaires so that you know how many you are sending out, and can monitor their return.
- A reasonable return would be 40% +

# Changing attitudes over time

## Names and Contact Details

- These are essential if you need or want to compare answers from the same individual
- This can be a messy business unless you think through the logistics
- Pilot any systems you intend to use
- A name is not always enough to match answers especially as people do not always complete in a consistent style!
  - **Jane B – Jane Brown – J Brown – John Brown – JB**
- Think about pre-naming questionnaires and giving out to named individuals
  - **Remember to explain why you are doing this**

# Introductions First

## Remember to:

- include a title for the survey
- a simple explanation of:
  - the purpose
    - why should they bother filling it in
  - confidentiality
    - say who will or will not see their answers

## How to complete questions

- Make sure you explain
  - If they should ✓ ✗ ○
  - How many to ✓ ✗ ○

Any details not covered in return to sender

# Return to Sender

## Remember to:

- include contact details of where to send the questionnaire
  - Even if you include a reply paid envelope this can get lost
  - Try to cover every eventuality
- thank participants for taking part
- If appropriate explain what will happen with their questionnaire

# Evaluation Capacity Building in Widening Participation Practice



## ECB Toolkit Website:

[www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php)

## The Team:

Paul Davies, Ann-Marie Houghton,  
Lesleyann Morgan, Murray Saunders  
Deena Jayousi, Rebecca Marsden, Shealagh Whytock