

<b>Division:</b>	<b>Education Development &amp; Assessment</b>	<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>EDA-EDR-001</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Education Development &amp; Research</b>		
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Approval to Conduct Surveys</b>		

## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Surveys may be generated within RACS or brought to RACS by external researchers. This policy applies to surveys intended to gather information from RACS Fellows, Trainees, IMGs and staff to better understand issues affecting them and to evaluate RACS programs. It describes the management of surveys to ensure the quality of survey questions, minimise repetitive polling and highlight the importance of implementing relevant survey findings into program evaluation and improvement.

## 2. KEY WORDS

Quality assurance, census, ethics, privacy, qualitative, quantitative, questionnaire

## 3. BODY OF POLICY

### 3.1. Survey objectives

Surveys are principally used for the following objectives:

#### 3.1.1. Quality Assurance

RACS is committed to quality assurance through the ongoing evaluation, feedback and monitoring of programs and educational processes. Surveys can provide evaluation and feedback through the routine gathering of people's experiences and opinions about regularly conducted activities (e.g., courses, workshops and examinations) or about RACS departmental performance of service delivery.

#### 3.1.2. Research

Surveys are used as research instruments to collect information for quantitative and qualitative studies. Surveys may be one-off data collection exercises, or sequential components of longitudinal studies. Data collected from surveys are often used to answer specific research questions.

#### 3.1.3. Census

Censuses are usually conducted intermittently to collect information from the RACS membership. RACS census of Fellows is conducted biennially to ascertain information about Fellows and workforce issues and is governed by a separate policy and procedure. Refer to RACS Census policy and procedure.

#### 3.1.4. RACS surveys and 'external' surveys

RACS surveys are initiated internally (e.g. by RACS departments, divisions, boards or committees). External surveys are initiated by other organisations or individuals (e.g. specialty societies, hospitals, individual researchers, government, universities).

#### 3.1.5. Ethics approval

It is the survey initiators' responsibility to gain Ethics Committee approval, where required. Activities that are purely for quality assurance or clinical audit purposes and will not be published or presented outside RACS may not require ethics approval. Also, consistent with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) ('National Statement'), a survey may not require formal ethical review if the survey research:

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- a. is deemed 'low' or 'negligible' risk as defined in sections 2.1.6 and 2.1.7.
- b. does not involve categories of participants identified in section 4 or falls under the types of research outlined in section 5.1.6b.
- c. satisfies all conditions outlined in section 2.2 requiring participation to be voluntary and based on informed consent.
- d. complies with the Commonwealth and Information Privacy Principles (s95 and s95A guidelines) on the use and storage of response data.

In addition to NHRMC requirements RACS may require formal ethical review if the outcomes of the survey research are to be made publicly available (e.g., presented at a conference, or in a journal publication). Whether a survey requires formal ethics review is at the discretion of RACS.

### 3.2. Approval

#### 3.2.1. RACS surveys

The scope of each survey/census must be approved by the initiating department manager or divisional director. The content and methodology of each survey must then be reviewed by the Evaluation and Survey Coordinator in the Education Development and Research Department (EDRD). Final approval to conduct the survey is the responsibility of RACS Directors.

#### 3.2.2. External surveys

Requests from external organisations or individuals to conduct survey-based research in relation to Fellows, Trainees, IMGs and staff are co-ordinated through EDRD. Initial review is conducted by the Evaluation and Survey Coordinator. Final approval to support external survey proposals is at the discretion of RACS Directors.

Where relevant, surveys may be reviewed by RACS committees (e.g., Education Board Executive) prior to being submitted to RACS Directors. The Dean of Education is authorised to endorse these requests, as the EB representative.

Surveys emanating from courses that are co-badged by RACS (such as the Masters of Surgical Education) are considered to be RACS surveys.

Specialty societies may contact and survey their own members without approval from RACS but may choose to consult RACS/EDRD regarding survey proposals and distribution.

Requests to support surveys for commercial market research will not be supported.

### 3.3. Distribution

#### 3.3.1. RACS surveys

The initiating department is responsible for coordinating distribution of RACS surveys. RACS surveys may be distributed using a range of methods, including email, paper copy, electronic newsletter (e.g. Fax Mentis), and RACS website "[Research at RACS](#)".

#### 3.3.2. External surveys

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External survey initiators are responsible for distribution of their surveys. RACS supports consultation and collaboration with external researchers to survey the surgical workforce, however, RACS involvement in the distribution of external surveys is normally limited to promotion on the RACS website "Research at RACS" as advertised in Fax Mentis.

Due to privacy considerations RACS will not provide personal contact information of RACS Fellows, Trainees, IMGs or staff.

Any costs incurred in survey distribution are the responsibility of the researcher.

### 3.4. Survey research results

#### 3.4.1. Results for RACS surveys

The initiating department responsible for the survey may request EDRD to analyse and report on the resultant survey data. Statistical analyses will be limited to quantitative survey data, and will only include descriptive and inferential statistics as outlined in the Surveys Manual. Participant feedback and comments will be prepared for the initiating department to carry out qualitative analyses. Interpretation of qualitative data is the responsibility of the initiating department.

#### 3.4.2. Results for external surveys

Data preparation, statistical analyses and reporting of results from survey data is the responsibility of the researcher.

### 3.5. Intellectual Property

#### 3.5.1. RACS survey intellectual property (IP)

RACS survey projects', intellectual property will reside with RACS. Survey results cannot be reproduced or published in a private capacity without permission of RACS.

#### 3.5.2. External survey intellectual property (IP)

The cooperation of RACS must be acknowledged in any publication. RACS may require joint ownership of intellectual property by RACS and external agency or researcher.

## 4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Privacy and Disclosure of RACS Information Policy

**Approver** Education Board  
**Authoriser** Council

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