

A checklist for writing online questionnaires

Adapted from Robson (2011)

The completed questionnaire **should match the following criteria:**

Some introductory or accompanying text explains the purpose of the questionnaire to the participant.

Short questions with a simple structure. The questions should be self-explanatory in recognition of the fact that the researcher is not present to offer clarification.

Professional presentation, including correct spelling and use of grammar as well as clear layout on the page.

Clear instructions should be given on what the participant is expected to do e.g. 'put a tick...'

Language that is simple without being condescending.

Language that will hold the same meaning for all participants. Where necessary, specific terminology is defined.

Questions that participants will have the knowledge or experience to respond to.

Open-ended questions should be kept to a limit. Instead, pilot work (for instance using interviews) can provide possible responses.

Provides a clear frame of reference when required, for instance when asking participant to comment on a particular time period.

A 'No opinion' option is included in order to avoid forcing participants into a position they might not believe in.

Questions progress in a natural order so that participants are inclined to respond in the intended sequence, but without technically forcing them to do so (which can cause non-completion).

Where possible, the questionnaire should be short (in terms of time required to complete) in order to benefit from higher response rates.

The questionnaire ends by thanking respondents and highlights how their participation is valued.

The format is simple in order to recognise the different operating systems and computer proficiency of different users.

The questionnaire is incomplete if it matches any of the following criteria:

Negatively framed questions combined with agree/disagree response e.g. 'Do you agree that x is not a good response to situation y'

Uses jargon

Includes unnecessary details

Double-barreled questions that ask the participant two questions

Leading questions that promote a particular response e.g. 'Do you agree it is the case that...'

Prior alternatives where possible responses are suggested before the question is asked

Elaborately constructed questions that might produce ambiguity

Response sets that promote an agree/disagree response

Questions that promote a social desirability response, for instance where a positive response to the question will present the respondent in a positive light.