



# The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

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## **Guidance for Preparing a Survey**

Surveys of members of the College can provide valuable information to inform policy and practice, reflect professional opinion and support research funding proposals. However, a poorly designed survey will generate unreliable findings, irritate recipients and reduce the likelihood of future (potentially worthwhile) surveys being completed and returned.

The College office will agree to send out emails on behalf of members if the relevant committee of the College (usually Quality in Emergency Care or Research and Publications) supports the application. Mailings requested from a trainee as part of a CTR will not be considered, unless this is under exceptional circumstances and supported by either the Training Standards or Education and Examination committee. Please refer to the policy on sharing members' information on the website for further details. This includes requests for lists of departments as well lists of individual consultants.

The text of the proposed survey should be submitted, along with a protocol and covering letter that clearly addresses each of the 14 recommendations set out below.

The college recommends that any proposed members survey should:

1. Address an important issue in emergency medicine.
2. Be salient to members of the College.
3. Be supported by a protocol that includes, at the very least, a rationale for the survey, specific objectives, methods and plan of analysis as well as plans for public sharing of the results.
4. Target a clearly defined population or sample, so that it will be possible to report the proportion that respond.
5. Have a justified sample size estimate.
6. Have been piloted on a group of potential recipients, with the results of this pilot described and acted upon.
7. Consider using a method for recording who has, and who has not, completed and returned the survey (e.g. a unique study number on the

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survey linked to the recipient's details), and if this is not done provide a clear justification for this.

8. State whether non-responders will be sent a reminder (ideally one or two reminders should be sent to optimise the response rate).
9. Have a covering letter or email that clearly states what the survey is about, why it is being done, how long it should take to complete and what is being done with the results.
10. Be comprehensible, written in plain language and easy to follow.
11. Have been reviewed by an ethics committee, if appropriate (for example, if it asks for information about individual patients, hospital data that is not routinely available, or professional opinions that may be controversial or addressing a sensitive issue).
12. Make the results publicly available regardless of what they show.
13. Offer respondents the opportunity to receive a summary of the results once they become available.
14. NOT ask for information that could be obtained via other sources (e.g. Hospital Episodes Statistics).

### **Contacting the College about surveys**

If you would like to make a request for the College to distribute a survey, please send details of the survey together with a short paper outlining how the survey meets the 14 points above and send to:

[Sam.McIntyre@rcem.ac.uk](mailto:Sam.McIntyre@rcem.ac.uk)

The proposal will be submitted to the QEC and R&P Chairs for approval and if successful will be circulated via e-mail to Fellows and Members and advertised on the College website.

Sources of further Information:

RCEM Privacy Notice: <http://www.rcem.ac.uk/Public/>