



# How to write your own survey questions

# 1 | What are you trying to find out?

Before you jump into writing your survey questions, you need to think about what it is that you're trying to find out. You can do this by writing down the aims of your activity or careers programme, which you can refer to and specify what outcomes you would expect to see following the activity. For example, the aims of a meaningful employer encounter or work experience opportunity might be:

- For learners to have a better understanding of the range of opportunities in their locality.
- For learners to have a better understanding of the range of roles and responsibilities within a company.
- For learners to have a better understanding of growth sectors and the changing economy.
- For learners to develop their self-awareness of the knowledge and skills needed by employers.
- For learners to develop and apply essential skills in the workplace (i.e. listening, speaking, problem solving, creativity, adapting, planning, leadership, teamwork).
- For learners to feel increasingly confident and career ready.
- For employers to develop their talent pipeline through connecting with young people.
- For staff members to upskill on the local labour market.
- For staff members to understand how their subject links to the world of work.

These aims can then be converted into questions to measure if they have been achieved.

Following an activity, it can also be helpful to gather feedback on organisation, implementation and engagement, these factors can affect how impactful an activity is and may help you improve the activity moving forward. For example, you may want to ask the extent to which: about:

- Students felt prepared for the activity.
- Students understood the purpose of the activity.
- Students thought the activity was relevant to them.
- Students enjoyed the activity.
- Employers thought students were engaged in the activity.

It can also be helpful to ask participants what they thought went well or could be improved about the activity.



**Remember, student surveys about experiences are useful insights to inform your planning, but are not sufficient in terms of a meaningful work experience, where learners should be given the opportunity to reflect on the experience, their learning and skill development.**

# 2 | Writing your survey questions

Once you've decided on what you want to ask, it's time to think about how you are going to ask it. There are a number of considerations when designing your questions.

## 1. Types of questions

There are two ways you can ask your question:

- a. Open-ended questions: ask respondents to provide their own comments.
- b. Closed questions: give respondents a fixed set of answers to choose from.

Both open and closed questions could have a place in your survey. Generally, it's good practice to make the majority of questions closed, as they require less mental effort from the respondent and are easier to analyse. For example:

**This event improved my understanding of the knowledge and skills needed by employers:**



However, including one or two open-ended questions can be useful if you don't know the range of possible responses, or you want to hear the answers in the respondents own voice. They can provide additional detail and context to closed questions. Only include open-ended questions if you have time to analyse the responses. Ensure that open-ended questions are clear and specific, for example:

What did you learn about the pathways into the creative industries from this event?  
[open text]

## 2. Survey length

As a general rule- try to keep your survey short. When asked too many questions respondents get fatigued and are less likely to give considered answers. Focus on quality questions rather than quantity!

The number of questions in your survey should depend on the intensity of the activity you're getting feedback on. For a short 1-hour activity, you may only want to ask a one question on students experience, but for a 2-week work experience you would expect to ask more. This reflects the level of your investment in the activity as well as how much you might realistically expect to see change.



## 3. Language

Once you've decided on your question type, you need to craft your question. There are a couple of key things you should keep in mind when doing this:

### 1. Keep questions clear and specific.

- a. Use simple language and make sure your questions is specific. Consider the intended audience, you might simplify the wording of questions for your Y7 students but this may not be necessary for staff members.

### 2. Keep your questions neutral.

- a. Asking a leading question (a question that guides the respondent to answer in a certain way) can influence respondents to answer in a way they don't really feel. This will affect the accuracy of the data you collect.

### 3. Don't ask two things at once.

- a. Using 'double-barrelled' questions (e.g. I was well prepared for and understood the purpose of the event) will push respondents to evaluate one topic, or attempt to 'average' their response across the two topics. This can be easily resolved by separating the topics into two questions.

## 4. Scales

If you're creating a closed question, you will need to consider your answer options. There are a couple of key considerations:

### 1. Use balanced scales.

- a. Scales should have an equal number of positive and negative responses to prevent influencing the respondent to answer one way or another.

### 2. Include all reasonable responses.

- a. Scales should include all reasonable responses, for example, may the respondent not know, or could the question be unapplicable to them?

### 3. Response categories shouldn't overlap

- a. All response options in your scale should be mutually exclusive.

# 3 | Sharing your survey

When sharing your questions be sure to explain the purpose of the survey and how you will use the information upfront. This includes if the respondent will be identifiable and who else the results will be shared with.

You can share your survey digitally or with paper copies. If your respondents have access to digital devices then sharing the survey via a link or QR code can save you time as the data will automatically be populated on a spreadsheet. There are a number of websites you can use to create your own surveys including:

**1. SurveyMonkey**

**2. Google Forms**

**3. Microsoft Forms**



