# Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys

## Implementation Guidelines

Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI)
Adult Student Priorities Survey™ (ASPS)
Priorities Surveys for Online Learners™ (PSOL)

# Contents

# Student Surveys Implementation Guidelines

Measuring student perceptions with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) surveys is a powerful way to address your students' concerns and priorities. To assist you, we've assembled this information. We are also available to answer any questions you may have. Email us at StudentSuccessTech@RuffaloNL.com with any questions or issues you would like to discuss. Using the surveys takes some planning, but the outcome is worth the effort.

These guidelines are for the following RNL survey instruments: The Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS) and the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL).

## Items to consider prior to placing your order

### Which SSI version should we use, Form A or Form B?

For the SSI, there are two options: The original 70+ item Form A and the shorter 40+ item Form B. You will want to select the version that is the best fit for the data you want to capture from your students and allows you to compare with the appropriate institutions in the external national comparison group. We encourage you to review the samples of the surveys and the lists of schools in the norm group to inform your decision. Contact RNL for more information about the options.

### When to administer

The use of these surveys is appropriate at any time during the academic year. However, we suggest you avoid surveying during intensive testing times (e.g., mid-terms and finals), during the first three to four weeks of the term (so entering students have time to become familiar with your campus before responding to the survey items), or on the day before or the day after a school break such as Thanksgiving or spring break when many students may be absent from class. If you are using multiple survey instruments from RNL, we recommend administering the surveys during similar timeframes during the academic year, or within a few weeks. This ensures that data from the different surveys, especially the combination of the SSI and the Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) for campus personnel, will be gathered from a nearly identical campus environment. You may also want to plan to survey at the same time period over multiple years for comparable benchmarking.

For more information regarding the IPS, please visit www.RuffaloNL.com/IPS .

Here are some additional guidelines:

- **Fall surveying**: Among the advantages of fall surveying: 1. More entering students can be surveyed before attrition takes effect, while decisions to stay or leave are still being formed; and 2. You'll have time to effect changes with the survey findings during the same academic year.
- **Spring surveying**: Among the advantages of spring surveying: 1. Students have more experiences on which to base their responses; and 2. You can use the late spring and summer for follow-up planning.

We have found that there is approximately a 40/60 split between institutions that survey in the fall and those that survey in the spring. You will want to select the time period that works best for your academic calendar, your strategic planning activities, and your accreditation requirements. Ideally,

you will want to keep this same timeframe for future administrations so you can benchmark to similar times in the academic year.

# Getting started

To order, all you need to know is the approximate number of students you plan to survey. Once you place your order on our website, we will be in touch within five to seven business days to provide you with access to your online account. Please be aware that all invoicing will be done upon ordering. Invoices are sent about a week after your order is placed.

We recommend inviting 100 percent of your student population. Typical response rates are approximately 20 percent but may be higher or lower for your institution. These implementation guidelines will provide additional guidance on ways that you can achieve the very best response rates.

Keep in mind that Ruffalo Noel Levitz recommends that you strive to achieve a representative sample of your population. To be representative, your sample should generally reflect the percentage of students that make up your student population by class level and other characteristics such as your enrollments in majors/programs and day and evening classes. **Also, consider that if you plan to generate reports of demographic subpopulations, you'll want to be sure your sample represents each identified target population adequately**. (We recommend a minimum of 10 students in a data set for the data slice to be worthwhile).

## Order your survey(s)

For pricing quotes or to place your order please visit **www.RuffaloNL.com/orderSPS**.

**Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)** The SSI is appropriate for traditional student populations at four-year and two-year institutions.  It provides valuable data for strategic action planning, strengthening student retention initiatives, meeting accreditation requirements, identifying areas of strength for institutional marketing, charting progress toward campus goals, and improving the quality of student life and learning. The instrument is available in four-year, two-year, and career school versions. National benchmarks specific to the institution type are provided.

**Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS)** The ASPS assesses the satisfaction and priorities of adult students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs, including evening and weekend students, and continuing education students at four-year institutions. It includes survey items specific to the adult student experience and reveals what is important to adult students and how satisfied they are. The ASPS includes national benchmark data for comparison, with the option to isolate the national data for graduate students.

**Priority Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)** The PSOL assesses the satisfaction and priorities of online students with questions that specifically address aspects unique to the online learning experience. The survey is suitable for both online only programs as well as programs that combine online and classroom learning.  The PSOL is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate online students. National benchmarks are specific to online learners, with the option to isolate the national data for online graduate students.

## Confirmation of your administration

When you place your order through our website, your online account will be created and a confirmation will be sent via email from StudentSuccessTech@Ruffalonl.com within five to seven business days. If applicable, your previous administration will be duplicated, carrying over your custom campus items. You can make edits at that time.

# Preparing for your survey administration

Here are a few things to consider as you begin preparing for your administration. More information is provided later in this document regarding the customization.

## Determine your survey timeframe

You will want to identify when you plan to survey your students. This includes when you would like the first invitation message to be sent, dates for the reminder messages, and a tentative closing date for the online account.

## Determine your survey customization

You are encouraged to use the custom sections of the RNL surveys, which are available at no extra charge. There are three areas of the surveys that can be customized to meet your institution's needs. They are up to you to define.

All campus defined items are uploaded into the administration site so they appear seamlessly as part of the online survey. Customization can be completed by you or you can provide RNL with the information and we will customize the survey on your behalf.

1. Campus-defined items: You may add up to 10 campus-defined items to your survey (up to 20 items on the ASPS). These are items that are rated on the same importance and satisfaction indicators as the standard items of the survey.
2. Campus-defined demographic(s): Two demographic items may be added to your survey responses. These are questions or statements (in a multiple-choice format) that provide up to fifteen response options for your student to select just one answer. You will be able to data-slice your results with these responses.
3. Campus defined major/program code: This is a list of majors or programs (assigned with a four-digit numeric code) for your students to self-select their area of study. This item is highly recommended since it is a powerful way for you to isolate your data and share it with departments on campus. Be sure your designations are large enough to have adequate representation. (Remember, you will want a minimum of 10 students in a demographic subgroup for a data slice).

## Pull your student sample

To invite and remind students via email, you will need the list of student names, email addresses and passcode (more details below).

## Plan your implementation

Determine which implementation plan you want to use. You can use one or all of the outlined implementation plans including:

**Email messages from SPS admin:** Dates and content for emails will be necessary for the web-based administration. Sample text can be found at: https://ruffalonl.com/OnlineAdminResources. The date of your invitation email will be the launch of your administration. Scheduled emails are sent at 9:00 AM Central on their scheduled send date.

**Local Implementation:** Local implementations tend to boost completion rates a bit more than stand alone SPS admin emails. Options include:

- **Personal URL Link:** After uploading your list of survey recipients, you may export your survey recipients' personal URL and send your email communications locally.

- **Standard Survey Link**: As an alternative or in addition to email invitations, you may use a survey link that is unique to your institution but generic to students. This approach requires students to self-identify using a passcode. A Student ID or email address may be used as a passcode that students will know.  You will include that passcode as part of your uploaded student file. *Important*: You will want to decide upon this approach *before* you do your initial upload of students into the online administration system.
- **QR Code:** The survey URL link can be used to generate a QR code to be posted around campus, within classrooms or on social media. This approach will require your institution to generate the QR code with the survey specific URL address generated by RNL.  You will need to upload a Student ID or student email address as the unique passcode that students will use to enter the survey.
- **Campus portal administration:** As an additional alternative, you may choose to post a survey link in your student portal. The Personal URL could be used if you have the functionality to post a unique link for each student. Or you may post the survey specific URL link in your student portal. The key is that each student must know their passcode that you have uploaded into our system (student email address or Student ID).

## Plan to achieve high completion rates

You have several options for how to administer the surveys, and you will want to select the administration method that is going to work best for your campus. Depending on how a survey is presented to students, response rates will vary.

To achieve the highest survey response rates, consider publicizing your survey administration well in advance. You will want to fully inform everyone on campus about why you are conducting the survey so they can help encourage student participation. You may want to post flyers around campus or have faculty members make announcements during class time to build interest in completing the survey. Be sure to use social media to make students aware of the survey as well. For students in online only programs, you can post information on your institutional website and have faculty share information about the survey.

Note that the data can benefit many different departments on campus.  We have assembled the types of data that will be available with your results that you can share as you build awareness among your staff and faculty on WHY it is going to be important for them to assist you with the data gathering.  We encourage you to get your faculty and various departments on-board by addressing what's in it for them.  The survey results will provide relevant data for:

- Enrollment Managers
- Academic and Student Affairs,
- Directors of Retention and Student Success,
- Faculty at the departmental level (if you capture the majors/programs)
- Accreditation

We recommend highlighting any changes that have been made since your last administration to help students understand that the data does in fact get used. An email or a short video introducing the survey, noting its importance and highlighting the changes, can make a huge impact. The video can feature your President, various leadership or even students.

In your announcements, or in separate email messages, you may want to share the dates of the email invitations to assure students are checking their campus email. These communications help to prevent messages from landing in junk or spam folders or being immediately deleted.  Some students are sensitive to the messages coming from the RNL system appearing to be PHISHING

attempts, so you can make them aware of what to expect and/or send the email messages directly from your own email systems using mail merges. (We can provide guidance).

You may also want to consider raising response rates by offering incentives for completing the survey. One caution, if you offer incentives to students to increase response rates, be careful that you do not introduce bias by promoting incentives that have extra appeal for certain types of students and not others. There are different schools of thought regarding offering more of a lower ticket item or fewer offerings of a larger ticket item; you will need to determine what incentives will be the most attractive for your population.

**Examples of incentives:**

- Bookstore gift certificates
- iPads
- Amazon.com gift card
- Starbucks gift cards

**Other creative ideas:**

- Lunch with the president
- College swag (apparel, stadium blanket, umbrella)
- Parking pass for a semester or year
- Extra credit
- Priority registration
- Prime room draw/room assignment
- Experiences (social media feed)
- Partner with local events for tickets
- Something for everyone

While email invitations can be affective to have students complete the survey on their own time, be aware that you will likely be able to achieve the highest completion rates if you are able to partner with faculty to allow for a classroom time to complete the survey.

The survey is mobile compatible and can be completed on students' own devices. Generating a QR code using your survey's URL link can expand your administration's visibility. This approach will require the students to self-identify using the passcode you uploaded (Student ID or email). As indicated earlier, your institution will be responsible for creating the QR code.

## Additional information about your customization

### Customizing the campus-defined importance and satisfaction item(s)

This section accommodates up to 10 (or up to 20 with ASPS) additional items you create. Items must be able to be rated for a level of importance and a level of satisfaction. Be sure that every item you add is stated in positive terms. For example, write: "There are adequate student support services available." Do *not* write: "Student support services are inadequate." Samples and the upload template can be found at: https://ruffalonl.com/OnlineAdminResources. This section CANNOT accommodate yes-or-no questions, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank questions.

### Customizing the campus-defined demographic question(s)

The demographic area on the inventory provides an opportunity for you to gather additional demographic information. Be sure to choose these items carefully because your choices will determine your ability to generate reports on demographic sub-groups. Before you determine your items, be sure to review the standard demographic items that are captured on the survey so you do not repeat items.

The demographic questions can be used for any purpose you deem appropriate. The only requirement is that each question should be written to elicit just one response – not multiple responses (see examples below). You can use these items to collect information such as how far the student travels each day to attend class, the particular campus the student attends (if your institution has multiple campus locations), the student's native language or involvement in campus activities, etc. Two other popular options are indications of student-athletes and whether the student is first generation. Note the item you design can include up to fifteen response options.

**Example A:**
*I receive financial Aid.*

1. Yes
2. No

**Example B:**
*I attend most of my classes at the:*

1. Main campus
2. Downtown campus
3. North campus
4. South campus
5. East campus
6. West campus

## Customizing the list of majors/programs

Uploading your list of program/majors allows students to self-select their current program. This item is highly recommended. You will want to be intentional that the indicated programs are broad enough to get an adequate number of students for data slicing purposes. (Remember, you will want a minimum of 10 students in a demographic subgroup for a data slice). Using this field will allow you to generate reports for specific majors/programs.

The reason this data can be so powerful is you will be able to identify specific strengths and challenges at the major/program level which can be extremely valuable.  You may find that faculty and deans will pay more attention to the results when they know the data is specific to their student population. The data can also be used for program-specific accreditation activities.

To use the program or major field, you will upload an Excel file containing a four-digit numeric code (defined by your institution) and the program title. The upload template can be found at: https://ruffalonl.com/OnlineAdminResources.

**A couple of notes about the major/program codes:**

- The list of responses to this item is unlimited but you will want to be sensitive to the number of options your students need to read through to select the appropriate answer.
- Students see only the title that is loaded and not the four-digit code.
- The list will appear in the order it is uploaded.
- The students cannot select multiple options. For example, they cannot select Business and then select International as a subset of the business major.
- Be intentional with how broad or narrow your program indicators are in order to have enough students in the demographic group to be able to run reports for the subpopulation. RNL recommends having a minimum of 10 students for a report to make sense.
- At this time, the reporting system does not allow you to combine individual programs into a larger group for reporting purposes.  Instead, you may want to also use the campus defined demographic item to ask for a College / Department indication for reporting purposes, in

addition to the major/program indicator in this section. You also have the option of combining individual majors together into larger groups by using the raw data files.

- When assigning four-digit codes: A four-digit code is required. If you don't have a numeric code on campus, simply create random codes. Do NOT use code 0000, since it is not recognized by our system (we would suggest starting with 1001). Review your list to ensure no duplicate codes are present. The code must be all numeric; alpha characters cannot be used.

# Additional notes regarding the surveys

## The amount of time to complete the surveys

The surveys can be started and exited. If a student returns, they will pick-up near where they left. (The system saves every ten responses). The time taken to complete the survey varies based on survey type and version. Approximate times are:

- SSI Form A and ASPS: 20 minutes
- SSI Form B: 15 minutes
- PSOL: 10 minutes

## Open-ended comments

Note: The RNL surveys offer an open-ended comment section that appears as the last item on the survey. Responses will be sent to you in an Excel table with your reports. The statement says, "Please enter any comments you would like to share with this institution."

## Modification of Standard Survey Items

Keep in mind that standard survey items cannot be removed but minor modifications may be approved by RNL (if the meaning of the item is not changed). Contact RNL for additional information.

# Launching your surveys

Once you have accumulated all the necessary pieces to launch your survey, you will want to login to your SPS admin page and import all the information. Our online admin resource page will walk you through the necessary steps to launch your survey. Please review:

- The SPS Video Tutorial (top of the page on the right) which walks you through the whole setup process.
- The SPS FAQ document/Users Guide (written in question answer format) – Review the table of contents to get started.

Visit https://ruffalonl.com/OnlineAdminResources for more information.

## Finishing up the survey administration

The End Date at the Administration page marks the close of the survey and automatically notifies the RNL operations team you are ready for results. The close time is 6:00 a.m. Central on the stated day. Be sure your communications, including email messages, are clear about survey access times. Extending this end date is an option and can be accomplished through the Administration page. Be sure to extend the survey before the current close date.

Please also note that our team may be in touch with you if your survey closes with a low response rate to see if you would like to extend the survey for an additional period of time.

### Results

Results will be delivered electronically to you approximately three weeks after your online account closes. Your reports will be delivered to you within the RNL Client Portal, along with the raw data files provided through RNL's secure email system.

Please contact RNL if you would like to schedule a time to review your results. This conversation can be one-on-one, or you can gather a team on your end. We will be happy to provide you with guidance on how to best interpret your results and provide suggestions on next steps with your data. This virtual one-hour consultation is complimentary.

## Resources to support your efforts

Additional resources and guidance for a successful administration can be found on our website www.RuffaloNL.com/SPSClientResources:

- Online Implementation Resources includes sample templates for upload, video tutorials and suggestions for ways to communicate with students.
- Reporting Resources include tutorials for reviewing your results, complete Interpretive Guide documentation, templates for Infographics, PowerPoints and Executive Summary word documents, along with a variety of other supporting materials to assist you with using your results on campus to inform action steps.

### Also available from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

College Employee Satisfaction Survey – to assess the satisfaction of your campus personnel with their employment.  Visit www.RuffaloNL.com/Toolkit for more information.

### Accreditation Documentation

The Ruffalo Noel Levitz items have been mapped to accreditation criteria for the regional accreditors.

For more information, visit www.RuffaloNL.com/accreditation .

### Additional questions?

We hope you found this document helpful and informative. If you have questions that were not answered here or would like to have a discussion on any of the implementation guidelines, please contact RNL at StudentSuccessTech@Ruffalonl.com