

Web-based Student Satisfaction- Priorities Surveys

Implementation Guidelines

Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI)

Adult Student Priorities Survey™ (ASPS)

Adult Learner Inventory™ (ALI)

Priorities Surveys for Online Learners™ (PSOL)

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Web-based Student Surveys Implementation Guidelines

Measuring student perceptions with Ruffalo Noel Levitz surveys is a powerful way to address your students' concerns and priorities. To assist you, we've assembled this information. We are also available for free telephone consultations at 800-876-1117 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Central time. Please feel free to call or email us at SPS.Tech@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 survey instruments that are available for online administrations: The Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS), the Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) and the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL). The SSI and ASPS are also available for paper administrations. Contact Ruffalo Noel Levitz for more information.

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 Ruffalo Noel Levitz 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 Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 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 personal or the Parent Satisfaction Inventory (PSI), 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 appropriate benchmarking.

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

For more information of the PSI, please visit www.RuffaloNL.com/PSI.

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.

Getting started

To order the web-based surveys, 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 business days to provide you with access to your online account. Please be aware that all invoicing will be done once your online account closes, based on the actual number of students that were invited to complete the online survey and the actual number of surveys that were completed.

For online administrations, 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 information on ways that you can improve your 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 will be requesting Target Group Reports, you'll want to be sure your sample represents each identified target population adequately.

Order your survey/request your online account be created

For pricing quotes or to place your order:

- **Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)** www.RuffaloNL.com/orderSSI

The SSI is appropriate for traditional student populations. 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. The SSI is available for paper and online administrations.
- **Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS)** www.RuffaloNL.com/orderASPS

The ASPS assesses the satisfaction and priorities of adult students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs, including evening and weekend students, continuing education, and credit non-credit courses. 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 optional graduate and undergraduate specific comparisons. The ASPS is available for paper and online administrations.
- **Adult Learner Inventory (ALI)** www.RuffaloNL.com/orderALI

The ALI measures the satisfaction and priorities of adult students completing undergraduate programs, identifying an institution's strengths and areas for improvement. It is based on the Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners, from CAEL (the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning). The survey is available in both a four-year version and a community college version and includes national benchmarking. The ALI is only available for online administrations.
- **Priority Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)** www.RuffaloNL.com/orderPSOL

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. Campuses receive national benchmark reports,

allowing for comparison to national norms for online learners. The PSOL is only available for online administrations.

Confirmation of your web-based administration

When you place your order through our website, by fax, or by phone for a web administration, your online account will be created and a confirmation will be sent via email from SPS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com within five business days.

Here are a few things to consider as you begin preparing for a web administration:

- **Determine your survey timeframe:** You will want to identify 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.
- **Student sample:** To invite and remind students via email, you will need the list of student names and email addresses.
- **Email messages:** Dates and content for emails will be necessary for the web-based administration. Sample text will be sent to you with your online account confirmation. The date of your invitation email will be the launch of your administration.
- **Campus-defined items:** You may add 10 campus-defined items to your survey (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.
- **Campus-defined demographic(s):** Two demographic items may be added to your SSI, ASPS, PSOL, and ALI. These are questions or statements (in a multiple choice format) that provide up to six response options for your student to select one answer.
- **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.
- **Classroom or computer lab administration:** As an alternative to email invitations, clients may prefer to create random passcodes for the survey and distribute them in a classroom or lab setting. Institutions also have the option to establish portal entry with a single-sign-on capability.

Considerations as you prepare to administer the student surveys

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 (see instructions below), 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 post announcements about the survey.

In your announcements, or in separate email messages, you may want to share the dates of when to expect 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.

You may also want to consider raising response rates by offering incentives for completing the survey. Examples include randomly drawn bookstore gift certificates, iPads, Amazon.com gift cards, Starbucks gift cards, etc. You can also consider incentives such as premium parking spots, early registration access, or other offers that do not cost the institution directly. 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 more offerings 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.

While email invitations can be effective to have students complete the survey on their own time, be aware that you will likely be able to achieve the highest completion rates with a classroom or computer lab administration. This is the most effective way to achieve the best completion rates and to control the sample population. The survey is mobile compatible and can be completed on students' own devices.

Instructions for administering the student surveys

Please keep in mind that any type of survey administration can introduce bias into the sample of respondents. To address the issue, the guidelines we provide will assist you with minimizing the potential for biased results. Here are five options for administering the survey:

1. Email your students to invite them to complete the survey on their own time. (Typical response rates range from 10 to 30 percent.) Ruffalo Noel Levitz typically sends the invitation and three reminder messages on your behalf. The email will appear to be coming from someone at your institution, and you will also be able to establish a reply email address to answer any questions or concerns that your students raise.
2. For a classroom or computer lab completion, ask faculty to have students complete the inventory during a regular class period. (Typical response rates range from 75 to 100 percent depending on class attendance and faculty participation.) Students can access their school email for the invitation message which includes their unique link to complete the survey. As noted earlier, the survey is mobile compatible and can be completed on students' own devices.
3. For an anonymous survey completion in a classroom or computer lab setting, you can ask faculty to distribute random passcodes provided by Ruffalo Noel Levitz and have the students log into <https://survey.RuffaloNL.com> to take the survey using that passcode. (Typical response rates range from 75 to 100 percent depending on class attendance and faculty participation.)
4. Consider a link at your student portal with direct connection to the survey. This option requires development of a campus-specific survey link for your school that can be programmed to add unique student information before reaching the Ruffalo Noel Levitz surveys. This option recognizes the student and skips the requirement for students to enter a passcode. The unique student information that is appended to this link must be pre-registered at the Ruffalo Noel Levitz administration site prior to successful student access. A portal programming fee may coincide with this option. (Response rates vary and are dependent on campus wide promotion of the survey. Again, keep in mind that this method may be more successful with additional promotion or a designated class time to access the survey through the portal.) For more information on this option, email SPS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com.
5. Consider a paper-and-pencil administration in conjunction with a web-based administration. To learn more about our paper-and-pencil administrations, please refer to the *Satisfaction Priorities Survey Administrations - Implementation Guidelines for Paper-and-Pencil Administrations* or contact Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

The amount of time to complete the web-based surveys

For the web-based versions, students need approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete Form A of the Student Satisfaction Inventory, approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete Form B of the SSI, and approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete the Adult Student Priorities Survey. The PSOL and ALI are shorter in length and typically take 12 to 15 minutes to complete. The online surveys must be completed in one sitting. Students who exit the survey part-way through will need to start over when they access again.

Customize the surveys to include campus-specific information

You are encouraged to use the custom sections of the Ruffalo Noel Levitz 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.

1. The first section appears after the standard items rated for importance and satisfaction on the survey and contains 10 items on the SSI, PSOL, and ALI and 20 items on the ASPS. These items are rated for importance and satisfaction by the student.
2. The demographic section at the end of the surveys allows for additional customization. You may add two demographic questions (in a multiple choice format), with up to six possible responses.
3. An unlimited list of your specific major/programs can be included as the third area of customization.

All campus defined items are uploaded into the administration page so they appear seamlessly as part of the online survey. Customization can be completed by you or you can provide Ruffalo Noel Levitz with the information and we will customize the survey on your behalf. Contact SPS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com for assistance.

Customizing the campus-defined item section for importance and satisfaction

This section accommodates up to 10 (or 20 with ASPS) additional items you create. We can supply sample items upon request. The items must be able to be rated for a level of importance and a level of satisfaction. This section CANNOT accommodate yes-or-no questions, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank questions. One tip: be sure that every item you add is stated in positive terms. For example, write: "There are adequate remedial courses available." Do not write: "Remedial courses are inadequate."

Note: The online survey versions 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.

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 access to additional Target Group reports. 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 question(s) 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 this item (or 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. Note from example B below that the item you design can include up to six 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

Most institutions using this item will want to ask students to indicate their major or program. (The four-digit codes are ones you define to correspond to the appropriate major/programs for your campus.) Using this approach, you can then order a customized Target Group Report by major/program/department to view the data from each major/program/department separately. (Many campuses indicate this is a useful way to segment the data.) You could also view the data for entire academic departments by requesting an aggregate Custom Report using multiple major codes.

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.
- When assigning four-digit codes, **do NOT use code 0000**, since it is not recognized by our system.
- The students cannot select multiple options. For example, they cannot select Business and then select International as a subset of the business major.
- The code must be all numeric; alpha characters cannot be used.
- Be sure to proof your list to ensure that each four-digit code is listed only once. If you are doing a combination of both paper and online, make sure the uploaded lists are the same.

Finishing up the survey administration

The End Date at the Administration page marks the close of the survey and automatically notifies the Ruffalo Noel Levitz operations team you are ready for results. The close time is 6:00 a.m. 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.

Ruffalo Noel Levitz prepares your results as originally ordered. If changes or additions are necessary, contact SPS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com anytime thought out the process and adjustments will be made. If you determine the need for additional reports, these can be requested after standard results are delivered and reviewed.

Results

Results will be delivered electronically to you approximately 10 to 12 business days after your online account closes. Your reports will be delivered to you electronically through the Ruffalo Noel Levitz secure “Safemail” in your myRuffaloNL account. If you request a paper copy of your report(s), please allow and additional three to five business days for standard FedEx delivery.

Please contact Ruffalo Noel Levitz at 800-876-1117 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 the data. This phone 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/OnlineAdminResources includes sample formats for uploading and suggestions for ways to communicate with students.
- www.RuffaloNL.com/SatisfactionSurveyTutorials has a series of 7 to 10 minute recorded tutorials on a variety of topics, including online administrations and reviewing your results.

The satisfaction-priorities survey from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

- [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) – for your traditional student population
- [Adult Student Priorities Survey](#) – for your nontraditional undergraduate and graduate students
- [Adult Learner Inventory](#) – for your adult students in undergraduate programs; part of the CAEL Adult Learning Focused Institution Toolkit
- [Priorities Survey for Online Learners](#) - for your students enrolled primarily in online courses
- [Parent Satisfaction Inventory](#) – for the parents of currently enrolled students at four-year institutions
- [Institutional Priorities Survey](#) – for the faculty, administration and staff at your institution; to assess their perceptions of the student experience; this instrument is directly parallel to the Student Satisfaction inventory

Also available from Ruffalo Noel Levitz

- [College Employee Satisfaction Survey](#) – to access 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 Ruffalo Noel Levitz at 800-876-1117 or email SPS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com.

A word about Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Ruffalo Noel Levitz is a nationally recognized higher education consulting firm that focuses on strategic planning for enrollment and student success as well as fundraising management. Each year, campus executives from throughout the United States meet regularly with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to accomplish their goals for student recruitment, marketing, student retention, financial aid, strategic enrollment management and fundraising.

For more information, visit www.RuffaloNL.com.

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