

Exploring Reminder Timing, Mode and Content Focus on Response to the Student Experience Survey: An Experimental Trial



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Acknowledgments

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Universities and Non-University Higher Education Institutions that participated in the 2018 Student Experience Survey.

Student respondents from participating institutions.

Experiments

Invitation: mention reminder vs. no mention

Reminder 1: long text vs. short text

Reminder 2: normal text vs. emphasise member of special group

Reminder 3: gain vs. loss (various combinations)

Reminder 4: weekend vs. Monday morning

Reminder 5: prize draw emphasis vs. altruism emphasis

Background

The Student Experience Survey (SES) provides national data as part of QILT.

Telephone based in-field reminder calls and SMS used to boost response among lower performing study areas.

Little quantitative evidence on the incremental value to response that can be attributable to the timing, mode and content focus of the email reminders.

Maximising response, particularly across sample members known to respond at lower levels, is important as part of a total survey error approach to survey research and minimising non-response error.

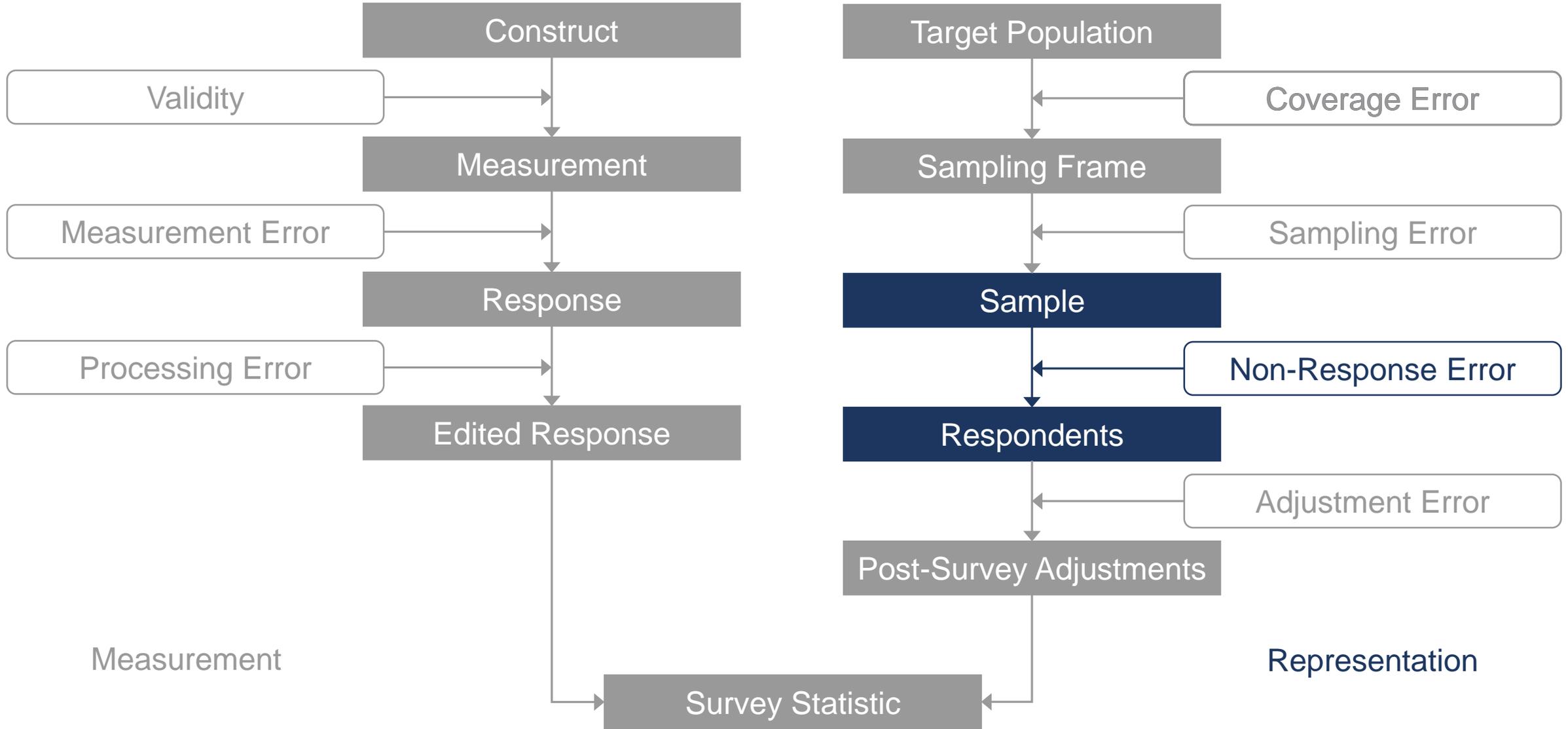
Context and scene setting

Changing nature of contact dynamics.

Historical work.

Looking to the future.

Total survey error



Response propensity model

A response propensity model factors in demographic variables and sample member characteristics that are known and for which data exists pertaining to their relationship to response.

Allocates each sample member a propensity to respond 'score' from 0 to 1.

Importantly, ensures that groups of respondents are matched on those characteristics that we know relate to response.

Method

SES has a pre-determined budget for response maximisation activities.

Propensity model used to allocate sample members.

The budgeted amount of infield reminder calls and SMS were allocated across treatment conditions for SMS and in field reminder calls.

Invitation

Mention of reminders to come



Invitation: rationale

Klofstad, Casey A., Shelley Boulianne, and Danna Basson. 2008. 'Matching the Message to the Medium: Results from an Experiment on Internet Survey Email Contacts.' *Social Science Computer Review* 26(4):498-509.

- University of Wisconsin-Madison survey of student, faculty and staff commuting
- Response rates for students increased by 7.2 percentage points for reminder text
- 'Your response is very important to us, so if we do not hear from you in three days, we will send you a reminder.'

Invitation: text

Mention of reminder

(50% of sample)

Complete this confidential 10 minute survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into ALL four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000. There is a total prize pool of \$32,000! The earlier you submit your survey the more chances you have of winning the weekly prize! Your response is very important to us, so if we do not hear from you in three days we will send you a reminder.

No mention of reminder

(50% of sample)

Complete this confidential 10 minute survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into ALL four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000. There is a total prize pool of \$32,000! The earlier you submit your survey the more chances you have of winning the weekly prize!

Bold in original

Invitation: results

	Reminder mentioned	Reminder not mentioned	Total
Not completed	58.0%	58.0%	58.0%
Completed	42.0%	42.0%	42.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students who were sent the invitation.

No effect ($\chi^2 = 0.194$; 1 DF; $p > .1$)

Reminder 1

Length of email



Reminder 1: rationale

Observed that emails are quite wordy

Test effect of shorter text

Kaplowitz, Michael D., Frank Lupi, Mick P. Couper, and Laurie Thorp. 2012. 'The Effect of Invitation Design on Web Survey Response Rates.' *Social Science Computer Review* 30(3):339-49.

- No effect of length on students (short = 80 words; long = 182 words)
- Higher faculty response rate for longer version

Reminder 1: text

Long

(50% of sample)

290 words

Dear %%E403**student%%,

I recently invited you to provide feedback about your experiences of your <qualification> at <your institution> through the Student Experience Survey (SES). Don't forget to let me know what you have to say about your %%Course**course%%.

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into all four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

<link>

As a thank you for participating in the survey you also have a chance to elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. The SES is the only source of national data on student experience and satisfaction with their course. By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.

If you are unable to access the survey by clicking on the link, please copy and paste the link into a new browser window. Alternatively, go to www.ses.edu.au, click 'start survey' and enter your unique login details as below.

Username: %%Username%%

Password: %%Password%%

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has commissioned the Social Research Centre (HYPERLINK: <http://www.srcentre.com.au>) to undertake the SES. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and your responses will be kept confidential.

More information about the research is provided at www.ses.edu.au including contact information if you have any queries or technical issues with the survey.

Thank you in advance for being part of the SES.

Graham Challice

Executive Director, Major Projects

The Social Research Centre

See [here](https://www.srcentre.com.au/sestcs) < <https://www.srcentre.com.au/sestcs>> for prize draw terms and conditions.

Short

(50% of sample)

116 words

Dear %%E403**student%%,

I recently invited you to provide feedback about your experiences of your <qualification> at <institution> through the Student Experience Survey (SES).

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into all four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

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Bold in original

Reminder 1: results

	Long	Short	Total
Not completed	62.3%	62.3%	62.3%
Completed	37.7%	37.7%	37.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students who were sent reminder 1

No effect ($\chi^2 = 0.213; 1 \text{ DF}; p > .1$)

Reminder 1: results before reminder 2 sent

	Long	Short	Total
Not completed	93.9%	92.8%	93.4%
Completed	6.0%	6.5%	6.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion prior to sending reminder 2.

Base: students who were sent reminder 1.

Higher response for short text ($\chi^2 = 67.070$; 1 DF; $p \leq .001$)

0.5 percentage point difference across sample as a whole yields 3,182 fewer students not receiving the next reminder email

Reminder 2

Unique group



Reminder 2: rationale

SES and GOS have, at times, sent email with special wording for certain groups with low response rates (e.g., law student)

Pedersen, Mogens Jin and Christian Videbæk. 2016. 'Improving Survey Response Rates in Online Panels: Effects of Low-Cost Incentives and Cost-Free Text Appeal Interventions.' *Social Science Computer Review* 34(2): 229-43.

- Tested egotistic and altruistic appeal against baseline in an online non-probability panel
- Significant increase in response vs. baseline for egotistic appeal
- Increase in response from altruistic appeal was not significant

Reminder 2: text

Normal

(50% of sample)

As a current student of <institution> I would be very grateful if you could spare the time out of your busy schedule to complete the Student Experience Survey (SES).

Unique group

(50% of sample)

You are from a unique group of students who are studying the <qualification> at <institution> and it is really important that you complete the SES. Please give us a hand – some of your classmates have already helped us out but we still need a few more responses from students like you to be able to publish your area of study on the QILT website (www.qilt.edu.au) for the SES (www.ses.edu.au).

Reminder 2: results

	Normal	Unique group	Total
Not completed	66.6%	65.8%	66.2%
Completed	33.4%	34.2%	33.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students who were sent reminder 2.

Unique group wording increased response rates ($\chi^2 = 47.615$; 1 DF; $p \leq .001$)

Reminder 3

Loss framing



Reminder 3: rationale

Tourangeau, Roger and Cong Ye. 2009. 'The Framing of the Survey Request and Panel Attrition.' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73(2):338-48.

- 'Unfortunately, the information you have given us will be much less valuable unless you complete the second interview.'
- 'The information you've already provided us will be a lot more valuable if you complete the second interview.'

Kreuter, Frauke, Joseph W. Sakshaug, and Roger Tourangeau. 2016. 'The Framing of the Record Linkage Question.' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 28(1):142-52.

- 'The information you have provided would be [a lot more / much less] valuable to us if we [could / can't] link it to public voting records.'

Gain wording in green
Loss wording in red

Reminder 3: text

Gain

Complete the SES to contribute to improvements in the <qualification> at <institution>. Because of student participation in the SES, institutions have improved student life and teaching.

Loss

If we don't receive enough responses from students like you, we won't be able to publish your area of study on the QILT website and future students won't know what it's like to study at <institution>.

Variations

- Gain + Loss (12.5% of sample)
- Loss + Gain (12.5% of sample)
- Gain + No Loss (25.0% of sample)
- Loss + No Gain (25.0% of sample)
- No Gain + No Loss (25.0% of sample)

Reminder 3: results

	Gain + Loss	Loss + Gain	Gain + No Loss	Loss + No Gain	No Gain + No Loss	Total
Not completed	71.8%	71.5%	71.6%	71.8%	71.7%	71.7%
Completed	28.2%	28.5%	28.4%	28.2%	28.3%	28.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students who were sent reminder 3.

No effect ($\chi^2 = 2.778; 4 \text{ DF}; p > .1$)

Reminder 4

Day of week



Reminder 4: rationale

Limited research on day-of-week effects and results unlikely to be true for all populations. Nevertheless, possible benefit of urgency given prize draw.

Sauermann, Henry and Michael Roach. 2013. 'Increasing Web Survey Response Rates in Innovation Research: An Experimental Study of Static and Dynamic Contact Design Features.' *Research Policy* 42(1):273-86.

- No effect for day of week

Zheng, Jill. N.D. 'What Day of the Week Should You Send Your Survey?' SurveyMonkey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/day-of-the-week/> (retrieved 18 October 2018)

- Declines steadily from Monday to Friday

Reminder 4: timing

Saturday

(50% of sample)

Prize draw on Monday – complete the survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST Monday 13 August I will enter you into three weekly prize draws, and could win a weekly prize of \$1,000!

Monday morning

(50% of sample)

Prize draw tonight – complete the survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST Monday 13 August (that's tonight) I will enter you into three weekly prize draws, and could win a weekly prize of \$1,000!

Bold in original

Reminder 4: results

	Saturday	Monday morning	Total
Not completed	76.5%	76.5%	76.5%
Completed	23.5%	23.5%	23.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students sent reminder 4.

No effect ($\chi^2 = 0.313$; 1 DF; $p > .1$)

Reminder 4: results within four days of sending

	Saturday	Monday morning	Total
Not completed	91.8%	90.6%	91.2%
Completed	8.2%	9.4%	8.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students sent reminder 4.

Higher response for Monday morning ($\chi^2 = 240.979$; 1 DF; $p \leq .001$)

1.2 percentage point difference across sample as a whole yields 6,327 fewer students not receiving the next reminder email

Reminder 5

Prize draws and altruism



Reminder 5: rationale

Prize draws

Robust literature on effectiveness of prize draws on web surveys

- Increased response rate (Bosnjak and Tuten 2003; Gøritz 2006b; Gøritz and Luthe 2013b,c; Gøritz and Wolff (2007); Heerwegh 2006*; Laguilles, Williams, and Saunders 2011*; Pedersen and Nielsen 2016; Sarraf and Cole 2014*; Sauermann and Roach 2013; Zhang, Lonn and Teasley 2017)
- No effect (Cobanoglu and Cobanoglu 2003; Gøritz 2006a; Gøritz and Luthe 2013a; Marcus et al. 2007; Porter and Whitcomb 2003*)

* Research on tertiary student populations

Altruism

Pedersen and Nielsen (2016)

Reminder 5: text

Prize draw

(50% of sample)

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 20 August I will enter you into the last two weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

<link>

You can also elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. The SES is the only source of national data on student experience and satisfaction with their course. By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.

Altruism

(50% of sample)

As a thank you for participating in the survey you also have a chance to elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. The SES is the only source of national data on student experiences and satisfaction with their course. **By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.**

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

<link>

If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 20 August I will enter you into the last two weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

Bold in original

Reminder 5: results

	Prize draw	Altruism	Total
Not completed	80.8%	80.8%	80.8%
Completed	19.2%	19.2%	19.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Completion by end of survey.

Base: students sent reminder 5.

No effect ($\chi^2 = 0.395; 1 \text{ DF}; p > .1$)

Discussion

- Invitation: Mention of reminders
 - No statistically significant difference.
 - More transparent.

Invitation: text

Mention of reminder

(50% of sample)

Complete this confidential 10 minute survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into ALL four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000. There is a total prize pool of \$32,000! The earlier you submit your survey the more chances you have of winning the weekly prize! Your response is very important to us, so if we do not hear from you in three days we will send you a reminder.

No mention of reminder

(50% of sample)

Complete this confidential 10 minute survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into ALL four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000. There is a total prize pool of \$32,000! The earlier you submit your survey the more chances you have of winning the weekly prize!

Bold in original

www.srcentre.com.au

Discussion

- Reminder 1: Length of email
 - No difference by the end of the study in overall response.
 - Small (0.5 pp) difference prior to sending Reminder 2 across sample as a whole means that 3,182 fewer students would receive the next reminder.
 - Reduced burden and cost.

Reminder 1: text

Long (50% of sample)

290 words

Dear %E403% student%,

I recently invited you to provide feedback about your experiences of your -qualification- at -your institution- through the Student Experience Survey (SES). Don't forget to let me know what you have to say about your %E403% course%.

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into all four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

-link-

As a thank you for participating in the survey you also have a chance to elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. The SES is the only source of national data on student experience and satisfaction with their course. By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.

If you are unable to access the survey by clicking on the link, please copy and paste the link into a new browser window. Alternatively, go to www.ses.edu.au, click 'start survey' and enter your unique login details as below.

Username: %E403% student%
Password: %E403% student%

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has commissioned the Social Research Centre (HYPERLINK: <http://www.srcentre.com.au>) to undertake the SES. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and your responses will be kept confidential.

More information about the research is provided at www.ses.edu.au including contact information if you have any queries or technical issues with the survey.

Thank you in advance for being part of the SES.

Graham Challice
Executive Director, Major Projects
The Social Research Centre

See [here](https://www.srcentre.com.au/estests) < <https://www.srcentre.com.au/estests> > for prize draw terms and conditions.

Short (50% of sample)

116 words

Dear %E403% student%,

I recently invited you to provide feedback about your experiences of your -qualification- at -institution- through the Student Experience Survey (SES).

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 6 August I will enter you into all four weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

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Bold in original

www.srcentre.com.au

Discussion

- Reminder 2: Unique group
 - Unique wording increased response rates (33.4% v 34.2%).

Reminder 2: text

Normal

(50% of sample)

As a current student of <institution> I would be very grateful if you could spare the time out of your busy schedule to complete the Student Experience Survey (SES).

Unique group

(50% of sample)

You are from a unique group of students who are studying the <qualification> at <institution> and it is really important that you complete the SES. Please give us a hand – some of your classmates have already helped us out but we still need a few more responses from students like you to be able to publish your area of study on the QILT website (www.qilt.edu.au) for the SES (www.ses.edu.au).

Discussion

- Reminder 3: Loss framing
 - No difference.
 - Testing clearer differences in help / harm wording.

Reminder 3: text

25

Gain

Complete the SES to contribute to improvements in the <qualification> at <institution>. Because of student participation in the SES, institutions have improved student life and teaching.

Loss

If we don't receive enough responses from students like you, we won't be able to publish your area of study on the QILT website and future students won't know what it's like to study at <institution>.

Variations

- Gain + Loss (12.5% of sample)
- Loss + Gain (12.5% of sample)
- Gain + No Loss (25.0% of sample)
- Loss + No Gain (25.0% of sample)
- No Gain + No Loss (25.0% of sample)

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Discussion

- Reminder 4: Timing
 - No difference by the end of the study in overall response.
 - Small (1.2 pp) difference within four days across sample as a whole means that 6,327 fewer students would receive the next reminder.
 - Reduced burden and cost.

Reminder 4: timing

Saturday

(50% of sample)

Prize draw on Monday – complete the survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST Monday 13 August I will enter you into three weekly prize draws, and could win a weekly prize of \$1,000!

Monday morning

(50% of sample)

Prize draw tonight – complete the survey early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST Monday 13 August (that's tonight) I will enter you into three weekly prize draws, and could win a weekly prize of \$1,000!

Bold in original

www.srcentre.com.au

Discussion

- Reminder 5: Prize draw and altruism
 - No difference.
 - Important to appeal to the breadth of possible motivations.
 - Future possible experimentation with institution specific examples.

Reminder 5: text

Prize draw

(50% of sample)

Participate in the study early to have more chances to win! If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 20 August I will enter you into the last two weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

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You can also elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. The SES is the only source of national data on student experience and satisfaction with their course. By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.

Altruism

(50% of sample)

As a thank you for participating in the survey you also have a chance to elect to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete. **The SES is the only source of national data on student experiences and satisfaction with their course. By contributing your views and experiences, you can help the Australian Government improve higher education and benefit other students in the future.**

To start the survey, please click on the link below:

<link>

If you submit your survey before 11:59pm AEST on Monday 20 August I will enter you into the last two weekly prize draws, and you could win a weekly prize of \$1,000.

Bold in original

How we're using these findings

Attribution and quantifying value.

Directing resources most efficiently.

Actionable themes:

- Transparency.
- Volume of text.
- Unique membership.
- Timing.
- Altruism and prize draw as appropriate.

References on prize draws

- Bosnjak, Michael and Tracy L. Tuten. 2003. 'Prepaid and Promised Incentives in Web Surveys.' *Social Science Computer Review* 21(2):208-17.
- Görizt, Anja S. 2006a. 'Cash Lotteries as Incentives in Online Panels.' *Social Science Computer Review* 24(4):445-59.
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Sauermann, Henry and Michael Roach. 2013. 'Increasing Web Survey Response Rates in Innovation Research: An Experimental Study of Static and Dynamic Contact Design Features.' *Research Policy* 42(1):273-86.

Zhang, Chan, Steven Lonn, and Stephanie D. Teasley. 2017. 'Understanding the Impact of Lottery Incentives on Web Survey Participation and Response Quality: A Leverage-Salience Theory Perspective.' *Field Methods* 29(1):42-60.

Thank you



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