

# Principles of Good Use: **AACP Curriculum Quality Perception Surveys**

2025 Survey Administration

At the request of the Institutional Research and Assessment Committee (IRAC), this guide was developed with the intent to provide member colleges and schools written guidance for the administration of the surveys and subsequent use of the survey results. The remainder of this guide will suggest appropriate administration, data analysis, and follow-up strategies for these four surveys.

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# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and Survey Development

Graduating Student, Preceptor and Faculty surveys were first released based on Standards 2007 in 2007. The purpose of these surveys was to help member colleges and schools gather data for both continuous program improvement and accountability (accreditation) purposes. These curriculum quality perception surveys were revised by the AACP Institutional Research and Assessment Committee (IRAC), AACP staff, and ACPE staff in 2024 to reflect the changes in Standards 2025. This includes the incorporation of the COEPA Outcomes and Entrustable Professional Activities 2022 into the survey. The first administration of these revised surveys occurred in spring 2025.

**TIP:** PDF copies of the surveys are available in the AACP online survey system within the “Resources” section. All surveys must be administered using the AACP online survey system. A PDF copy of the survey is available for review purposes only.

## 1.2 Assessment and Accreditation Management System

In 2025, institutions will no longer use the Assessment and Accreditation Management System to submit data for accreditation. ACPE’s Pharmacy Accreditation Report Management System (PHARMS) is the system institutions are expected to report under starting in 2025.

AAMS will run through the end of 2026 to facilitate this transition. No AACP data will populate automatically into the PHARMS system. Institutions will be expected to export data from the AACP systems for import into PHARMS.

For more information on how to access AAMS please visit [www.aacp.org](http://www.aacp.org), select Research ► Assessment & Accreditation Management System. Any questions regarding the use of AAMS may be directed to the AAMS Helpdesk at [aams@aacp.org](mailto:aams@aacp.org). Questions related to accreditation or PHARMS should be sent to ACPE.

## Section 2: Timing of Administration

### 2.1 Standard Recommendations

All four surveys are available for administration only through the AACCP online survey system and are open for a period of four months. It is the responsibility of the college/school to administer the survey during the specified months. The Faculty, and Preceptor surveys can be administered at a more frequent interval if the college/school institutes a major change in the curriculum, program, or leadership.

| Survey             | Available  | How Often to Administer <sup>a, b</sup>   | Who to Survey   |
|--------------------|------------|---|---|
| Graduating Student | March–June | Every year  | All students graduating from the Pharm.D. as a first professional degree program  |
| Faculty            | March–June | At least every three to four years to allow two data points per self-study          | All full-time and part-time faculty responsible for teaching in the Pharm.D. as a first professional degree program   |
| Preceptor          | May–August | At least every three to four years to allow two distinct data points per self-study | All introductory and advanced preceptors, or an appropriate representative sample, who have been assigned sufficient students to make informed judgments about student performance and education as well as had an opportunity to form an opinion of your institution |

*a. These are recommendations based on the potential range of a full accreditation cycle*

*(e.g., programs evaluated at the January 2012 ACPE Board meeting were eligible for an 8-year accreditation cycle)*

*b. See Section 3.3 on Survey Fatigue*

**TIP:** When developing the timeline for administering your surveys, consider opening the survey at least four weeks prior to the survey close date. This will help to ensure that you provide adequate time for survey takers to complete the survey and to schedule reminder messages.

**TIP:** Prior to administering the surveys, check with your institution's I/T department regarding any potential firewall or spam filter settings that could affect the ability of your students or faculty to access the surveys.

## 2.2 Considerations for Preparation for Your ACPE Self-Study

Timing of the administration of the surveys should be planned so that data can be forwarded to the appropriate internal committees with enough time to conduct thoughtful analysis, interpretation, and development of an action plan. For example, for a fall site visit planned in 2026 the surveys should be conducted no later than 2025 to allow for time to process, interpret, and make decisions about these data at your college/school.

**TIP:** Administer the surveys at least one year prior to your ACPE site visit in order to have adequate time to process and interpret survey data. While institutional reports are available within the survey system as soon as your school closes a survey, peer and national data reports will not be available until the fall once all schools have finished administering the surveys and the data have been processed.

# 2025

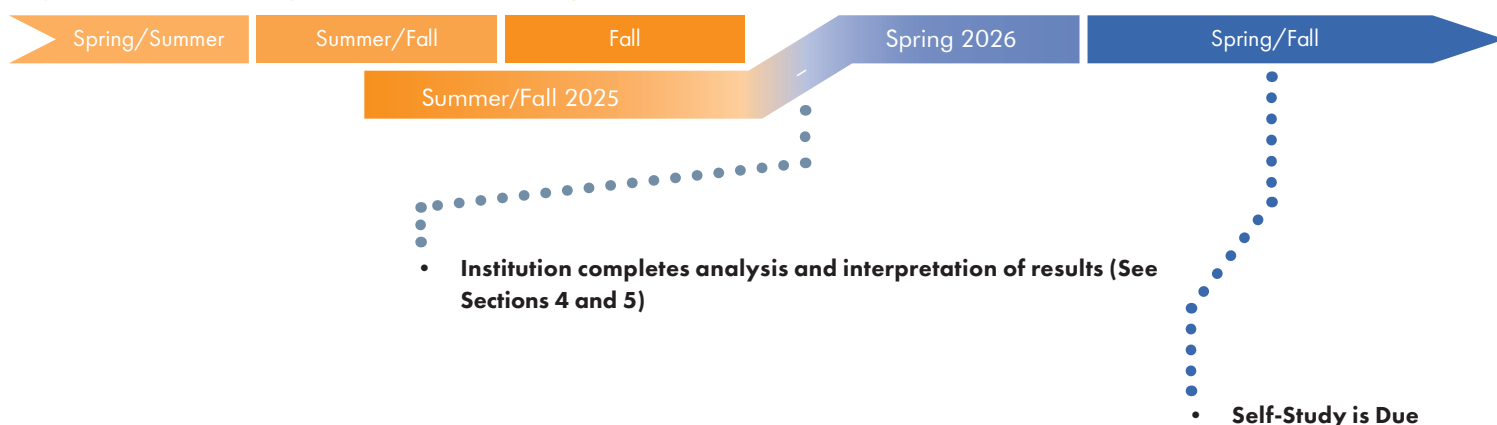
- **Institutions administer Curriculum Quality Surveys**

- » Graduating Student and Faculty Surveys Open March
- » Preceptor Survey Opens May

- **Individual school reports are available for download within the survey system**

- » Graduating Student and Faculty Surveys Close June
- » Preceptor Survey Closes August

- **Peer and national data are available for download within the survey system**



# 2026

## 2.3 Adding Items

The current AACP survey instruments allow users the ability to add a link to their own surveys using an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics. The link directs participants to an online survey instrument that is developed by the college/school. Each college/school collects, analyzes, and interprets responses to these data. The additional items essentially form a second survey in that they are not linked to the AACP survey items. In responding to additional items, respondents leave the AACP survey system so references to specific items on the AACP survey should be avoided (e.g., if you strongly agreed on item 38...). Individual responses to specific items on the AACP survey cannot be linked to the same individual on specific additional items because they are de facto two separate surveys.

By adding your own questions, you can specifically investigate issues of local importance related to the program. A series of open-ended questions may also be informative in terms of gathering the most important issues from the student perspective. For example, students might be asked what aspects of the Pharm.D. program were most or least valuable and how the curriculum could have better prepared them for their 4th year experiences.

Before adding additional questions, the appropriate individuals or committee(s) should review the existing items on the AACP surveys to determine the necessity of asking additional items. The survey questions can be accessed through the AACP online survey system at <http://aacp.vainc.com>. An email address and password are required for access. If you are not a survey coordinator of the AACP surveys, the dean or designate can send an email request to [data@aacp.org](mailto:data@aacp.org) requesting copies of the surveys. Timing of survey administration and survey burden should also be considered before creating additional survey items.

## Section 3: Survey Methodology

While this section is not intended as an exhaustive review of the literature on proper survey methodology the following is a resource to guide your efforts, containing recommended references.

### 3.1 Four Sources of Error in Survey Research

When conducting survey research it is important to address the four potential sources of error in survey research. The four sources of error are coverage, sampling, measurement, and non-response (Salant & Dillman 1994, Dillman 2000). Coverage error occurs when the sampling frame does not include all the salient features of the target population. Sampling error is potentially operating when a researcher samples only a subset of a population instead of conducting a census of the entire population. Measurement error occurs when a respondent provides an answer that is inaccurate or lacks precision to the degree that varies from the “correct” answer. Non-response error occurs when a significant number of subjects do not respond to the questionnaire and the extent to which the non-responders differ from those that did participate in the survey.

While coverage and sampling error are separate considerations they are often addressed together. Both can be minimized by using appropriate sampling techniques that consider sufficient sample size and key relevant features of the larger population that should be reflected in the sample (e.g., gender, age, educational background). The goal of minimizing coverage and sampling error is to increase the confidence that results from the sample are sufficiently representative in order to generalize to the greater population. Measurement error can occur when there are potentially sensitive items that may cause social desirability bias. For example, respondents provide answers they believe those administering the survey want to hear or that might make them “look bad” if they answered truthfully. With regard to non-response error, research has shown that individuals responding to surveys differ from those that do not such that they can essentially be self-selected and may no longer reflect the sample that was determined to be representative of the larger population. The lower the response rate, the higher the probability that those that did respond differ significantly from those that did not respond, thus limiting the ability of the researchers to make valid generalizations to the entire population in question. Strategies for reducing potential survey error are addressed in more detail in the references listed below in Section 3.2 – Selected references on survey research.

### 3.2 Selected References on Survey Research

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, and Joint Committee on Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association; 2014.

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Salant P, Dillman DA. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 1994.

Teeter DJ, Brinkman PT. Peer Institutional Studies/Institutional Comparison. In: Muffo JA, McLaughlin GW, eds. *A Primer on Institutional Research*. Tallahassee, FL: Association for Institutional Research; 1987: 89–100.

### 3.3 Frequently-Asked-Questions About Survey Research Methodology

#### What is the difference between sampling and using the entire population?

A sample is used to obtain data from a small, but representative group, in order to describe the entire population (Salant & Dillman, 1994). It is not necessary to survey the entire population of preceptors to obtain the desired information but rather appropriate sampling techniques could be used. In the case of students and faculty however it is desirable to survey the entire population. For example, if your college/school has additional items that are tracked longitudinally those items can be added to the end of the AACCP surveys and thus it would make sense to survey the entire group of graduating students every year. Faculty at a particular college/school can represent a diverse group based on discipline, background, and/or appointment therefore making it more difficult to maintain a representative sample. However, sampling would be appropriate for preceptors.

#### What if the response rates are low?

The lower the response rate for a survey the greater the possibility of bias operating in the results of the study. As noted by Draugalis and colleagues (2008), response rates less than 60% should be explained. If the sample is representative of the larger population in question, response rates greater than 60% should generally provide greater confidence in those data produced from the surveys. In addressing low response rates it is important to ask how different or similar are those that responded from those that did not respond. For example, suppose you sample preceptors one year but achieve only a 22% overall response rate. If your sample is 60% female and 40% male, reflecting your original population, but the respondents are 90% male and 10% female, there is potential non-response error operating since the respondents are not representative of the sample. As noted earlier, non-response error can occur when a significant number of subjects do not respond and the extent to which those that did respond differ from those that did not respond. In this example, given the distribution of male to female respondents relative to the original representative sample and the overall low response rate, the potential for non-response error needs to be addressed in interpreting and reporting the results of the survey. In addressing potential non-response error it is important to describe the respondents and how they compare to the larger population you are attempting to generalize to in the survey. In this example, it would be critical to explain

that the original population of preceptors had a certain gender distribution and that the actual respondents differed from that distribution as well as the potential impact that has on the ability to generalize to all preceptors in that year.

#### How can survey fatigue lead to non-response bias?

Surveying the same group multiple times can lead to non-response bias given all the requests for information different groups receive on a regular basis. Repeated requests can lead to survey fatigue where respondents either do not respond at all or do not attend to the items being asked with the same attention they would otherwise. For example, a given preceptor may have students from multiple schools and they would need to complete the preceptor survey for each school since it is curriculum dependent. The table in section 2.1 provides some suggested timelines for administration to reduce survey fatigue based on recommendations from ACPE.

**TIP:** Your respondents' demographic data for the graduating student, and preceptor surveys are available in the summary and raw data reports. These reports can be downloaded as soon as you close your survey by selecting the "download summary" and "download raw data" links within the survey system. Use the demographic data in these reports to describe your sample. This makes your results more transparent.

#### **TIP:**

- Prior to administering the survey, create a timeline of when you will open the survey, send reminder emails, and close the survey.
- Make sure you have a clean, up-to-date list of survey takers prior to uploading your files into the survey system. This will help to minimize bounce-back e-mails and error messages and may help to boost survey response rates.
- The survey system allows you to send reminder emails to non-respondents. Utilize the "reminder" link to help boost your response rates.



## Section 4: Interpreting Data and Results

*This section will outline for survey users some basic principles to keep in mind after the data are collected, including appropriate and inappropriate uses of these data, and creating action plans.*

### 4.1 Appropriate Uses for Survey Results

These surveys are intended to help colleges and schools with collecting data about their programs for the purposes of programmatic improvement for the preparation of the accreditation self-study reports. Results from these surveys can be used to identify areas of strength or opportunities for improvement. In general, the survey items were designed to assess broad areas of focus rather than to specifically pinpoint the source of an issue. For example, assume a large percentage of students answered “disagree” to the questions about student services meeting their needs. In this case these survey data could help programs identify student services as an area needing further data collection from students in order to clarify what the specific issues are (see Section 5 for suggested follow-up strategies). The survey may also be used to provide data to answer questions of local interest. For example, take the case where a couple of vocal students have raised concerns about the introductory pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs). If the survey results all indicate that a large majority of these students agree or strongly agree with all of the positive statements related to IPPEs then further follow-up may not be necessary in this case.

**TIP:** A raw data report is available within the survey system. You can use the raw data report to run further analysis of groups and subgroups.

Data from the surveys should be used in combination with data from other sources in a process known as triangulation to form a more complete assessment of a given issue. For example, student responses on the curricular items show that students feel that they are not being prepared to achieve the stated outcome area related to promoting wellness and disease prevention services. This particular outcome could be linked to the program’s curricular map to form a more complete assessment of the situation. Another source of data on this subject may come from student performance evaluations during the APPEs. Caution should be taken when using demographic data to ensure data integrity and minimize the potential identification of respondents. Demographic data should only be used in aggregate form, looking at trends over time and in data triangulation with other sources. For example, survey responses may differ based on a demographic variable, but this may not be due to the demographics. Instead, there

may be a hidden or unknown variable underlying the issue. Additionally, data from the surveys are perception-based and influenced by multiple confounding factors. For example, individual’s responses on race/ethnicity or first generation identity can change over time or situation.

### 4.2 Selecting Comparison Colleges or Schools

Comparisons with the national averages and peer groups can be a valuable basis for identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the administration cycle AACP closes the surveys to compile a summary report that includes all colleges/schools that participated in the surveys. The summary report is published on the AACP web site for your use.

In addition to the national report, participating institutions may run customized peer comparison reports within the survey system. These reports are available within the “Reports” section shortly after the survey administration period has ended.

An aggregated summary report is compiled within the system using a minimum of five peer schools. Each school designates their peer group and should make selections based on criteria such as, but not limited to, size of student enrollments, mission, curriculum structure, and geographic location. Considerable thought should be taken when selecting a peer group and the process should be a collaborative effort among individuals that will be utilizing the data. Accounting for varied perspectives will make the comparisons more meaningful. Peer groups should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the institutions chosen are still relevant peers based upon the selection criteria chosen (Teeter and Brinkman, 1987).

**TIP:** National, public, and private institution summary reports are available on AACP’s website about one month after the surveys close. Visit [www.aacp.org](http://www.aacp.org), click on Resources, Research, then Institutional Research.

### 4.3 Inappropriate Interpretation of Data

These surveys are not intended to provide cut scores for “good versus bad” outcomes but rather to identify areas in need of further exploration. These surveys ask respondents for their level of agreement concerning various facets of the program – essentially asking for their opinion. Opinions represent the reality of perception of the respondents so there are no right or wrong answers per se. It can be just as important to determine why respondents strongly agreed with an item as it is if they strongly disagreed.

The survey items are keyed to specific accreditation standards (see Table 6.2). Item responses are ordinal data and are summarized as frequency counts. Summing the percent of agreement or disagreement is a common and appropriate method of collapsing the data. Application of more advanced inferential statistical analyses are not appropriate for use with the curricular quality survey data. The data do not meet the assumptions of, for example, parametric statistical tests (e.g., interval or ratio, randomly sampled, normally distributed) and are not intended to be summed across items. Although the standards are grouped into three large categories, those categories do not represent latent variables. It would not be appropriate to conduct an exploratory factor analysis to seek underlying data structure or group items that measure, for example, standards 1 through 4 into an ‘educational outcome’ score. For these and other reasons, the raw data are categorical, as opposed to continuous. More sophisticated analyses beyond frequency counts are not appropriate.

Having the same items across the different surveys does not necessarily mean that these items should be compared across all four groups of respondents (students, preceptors, and faculty). In the version of these surveys available in 2007 where there were 23 curricular content items in common across all four surveys, the Rasch analysis demonstrated that each group was interpreting the items differently or using the rating scale in a different manner. Based on this information it would not be appropriate, for example, to calculate a mean rating scale score for each group of respondents and run a one-way ANOVA across to determine differences for the 2007 data.

### 4.4 Evaluating Multiple Perspectives

While statistical comparisons of these data among respondent groups may not be appropriate they still allow for the consideration of multiple perspectives as it is important to recognize and address discrepancies between stakeholder groups. For example, if a majority of students disagreed that the curriculum prepared them to interpret and apply drug use and health policy while a majority of faculty agreed with that same statement then follow-up is probably necessary. The school may want to investigate why students do not feel this outcome is being delivered in the curriculum while faculty feel that it is. Again, other assessment data such as curricular maps or measures of student performance may be useful in this investigational process. Where data exists for the same issue from multiple stakeholders, it may be helpful to look across those groups for general agreement on important issues (see section 6.3). For example, students and faculty may both indicate disagreement with the items related to the adequacy of the physical facilities for the program. Corroborating data from multiple perspectives can be helpful in determining high priority areas for follow-up or action plans.

## 4.5 Non-Response Versus “Unable to Comment”

The rating scales used in the surveys have an “unable to comment” category to allow respondents to indicate that an item asks for information that does not apply to them. The “unable to comment” choice was necessary in order to keep the surveys as general as possible for use across all possible respondents and curricular structures. Use of this response choice is different from non-response because by using the “unable to comment” category users are indicating that as their response they are indeed unable to answer for a variety of reasons. If a substantial percentage of respondents indicate that they are “unable to comment” you should consider whether the item represents an area that the respondent should know about. If the items address an area respondents should be able to answer it is important in interpreting the results to consider why they chose “unable to comment”.

Non-response occurs when the respondent does not choose any of the available response options. This could occur for a variety of reasons such as lack of attention to detail, not wanting to answer the item for fear that their response will cause an adverse action, or not understanding the item. While it is difficult to know exactly why a respondent did not answer a particular item, ensuring confidentiality of responses for example, can help reduce non-response to potentially more sensitive items. In the AACCP online survey system, respondents are not allowed to move on to the next section of items without answering all the items in the current section. This is to ensure that no items within a given section are inadvertently missed. In this case answering “unable to comment” may be used by respondents as an alternative to not responding to an item. Therefore, a response of “unable to comment” may be due to either situation and should be considered when interpreting results (Dillman, 2000).

**TIP:** Follow up surveys and/or focus groups can be utilized to gather more information on areas of concern from the AACCP surveys. Seek out resources on campus to assist you.

## Section 5: Following Up on Action Plans

### 5.1 Creating an Action Plan

The assessment process does not stop with the reporting or interpretation of these survey data. A key component of completing the assessment loop is creating an action plan based on survey findings. Creating an action plan is essential in addressing both continuous improvement efforts as well as accountability to stakeholders such as ACPE so that these data can be used for both purposes. An important goal of the survey assessment process should be to ensure that the results of the data collection are used to inform changes to the program. As with any plan or goal, creating specific and measureable action plans are helpful in achieving change.

### 5.2 Post Survey Follow-Up

One way to obtain more detailed information from stakeholders about areas or items of concern is to develop a more detailed follow-up survey. While this method can provide valuable additional information, follow-up surveys will still be subject to the same potential limitations as noted earlier in the survey guide. Other follow-up methods described below may provide more dynamic information.

Another strategy for following-up on survey findings is to conduct focus group discussions with stakeholders. The advantage of this methodology is the ability to obtain detailed information as well as to ask for clarification. The disadvantages include the time involved and the potential volume of qualitative data generated. The following reference provides useful information about qualitative data methods for assessment purposes (Chism & Banta, 2007).

There are several other follow-up techniques that can be useful for gathering additional information on survey findings. The first is via a “town hall” meeting. In this technique a facilitator calls a general meeting on one or more specific topics. For example, the Dean may announce a meeting to discuss student affairs survey findings. The meeting is usually publicized and open to all who wish to attend. Among the advantages of this technique are that it is less formal and includes the potential for broader participation than a focus group even though not all in attendance may choose to participate.

Another valuable resource for survey follow-up can be found in campus based Human Resource offices and Teaching and Learning centers. These offices often offer consultants to help campus units with problem solving and can provide a valuable, more impartial perspective.

### 5.3 Communicating Results

Communicating survey results is important both to inform and to build rapport with stakeholders. You may want to consider using a targeted approach to communicate results to various internal stakeholders. Share relevant results with each group and present the results in a manner that allows each group to focus on areas of interest or targeted areas for improvement. For example, student affairs offices may be most interested in data on student services in the student survey while experiential directors may be most interested in the results of the preceptor survey. Reports should help stakeholders understand the interpretation as well as the potential implications of the results. These data can also help programs to determine both the areas most in need of attention and strengths of the program.

Assessment results from these surveys can also be shared externally such as through the ACPE self-study process. For the purposes of accreditation it is as important to collect these data as it is to provide thoughtful analysis and plans of action based on the results. Other external audiences may include prospective students and campus level governance bodies.