



Management of Survey Requests from College Members and External Third Parties Policy and Procedures

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy is to manage requests from College bodies (including committees), members (including for the purposes of this policy, trainees) and external third parties for the College to facilitate the distribution of surveys. It requires that all surveys intended for distribution to any members of the College, other than those distributed from the RANZCOG Board and Council, must be reviewed and approved by the Continuing Professional Development and Revalidation (CPDR) Committee of the College.

This policy is intended to:

- enable the College to collect information considered necessary to its functions;
- assist College members and external third parties seeking to collect information for purposes considered legitimate and valuable by the College to do so;
- prevent 'survey fatigue' through a co-ordinated approach to surveying of College members; and
- maintain standards of practice.

This policy applies to all College members (including trainees), staff and external third parties, including those with which the College has a formally constituted relationship. This policy does not, however, apply to requests relating to matters such as those where the College is contacted to assist with recruiting College members or members of the public to be involved in clinical or other research related trials or programs. College Policy [Requests for Data and/or Lists for Use by \(External\) Third Parties](#) should be consulted in relation to such matters.

1. Policy

It is College policy that the College may facilitate the collection of information for its purposes through the distribution of surveys to members (including trainees). The College may also facilitate the distribution on behalf of College members (including trainees) or external third parties of a limited number of surveys for research activities, providing that the policy guidelines described in this document are met. In facilitating the distribution of surveys, the College's name and reputation must be protected from damage or unauthorised use by organisations or individuals and it must be clear to participants that the research and/or survey is not conducted by the College for the purpose of College activity, and that, unless specifically stated, the College does not support or endorse the results emanating from any survey distributed by the College for third parties.

The College is under no requirement to assist individuals or groups with the distribution of surveys and may, due to considerations such as concerns in relation to survey fatigue, limit the maximum number of surveys that will be distributed by the College on behalf of College members or external third parties each year; including limiting the number of surveys approved for distribution in any given period to zero. As a general guide, a limit of two (2) surveys per quarter will be approved for distribution to College membership groups on behalf of College members or external third parties. This limit may, however, be varied where such variation is considered to be in the best interests of the College and/or its membership.

Surveys originating from the Board require no further approval and may be distributed at any time. Other College committees who wish to distribute surveys to College members (including trainees) must, however, have the survey approved by the CPDR Committee, which will consider each request and recommend to the Board whether or not the survey in question should be distributed. Relative to surveys originating from third parties (including College members), surveys originating from a College body (including the College Council) in relation to College activities, services and policies will take priority and may be distributed at any time as deemed appropriate by the RANZCOG Board.

Where the distribution of a survey originating from third parties (including College members and trainees) is considered by the Board to be of significant importance to any College membership group(s), the Board may approve its distribution and, at its discretion, waive any fee(s) normally associated. In such circumstances, the CPDR Committee shall be informed of the decision(s) taken by the Board.

2. Procedures

2.1 Surveys

There are three categories of surveys that will be considered by the College as originating from third parties:

1. Surveys submitted by College members (including trainees) for the purposes of collecting information to inform advice to the College or completion of College activities/requirements.
2. Surveys submitted by organisations (external third parties) with which the College has a formally constituted relationship (eg a Memorandum of Understanding or similar).
3. Surveys submitted by individuals who are non-College members or organisations with which the College does not have a formally constituted relationship, including those submitted by College members on behalf of or as a representative of an external third party.

All such surveys submitted need to be considered for approval and prioritised for distribution by the CPDR Committee. Where approved as suitable for distribution, surveys submitted by organisations with which the College has formally constituted relationship will be prioritised for distribution over those originating from other sources listed above.

The following information must be submitted in order for a survey to be considered for approval.

- a) Survey Request Form (*refer Survey Request Form*).
- b) A copy of the final survey.
- c) A copy of the covering letter to be sent to participants with the survey.
- d) A letter to the Chair of the CPDR Committee detailing the purpose of the survey and identifying the group/subgroup of members that are to be surveyed and the specific region(s) involved (ie Australia or specific State/Territory or region and/or New Zealand or specific region).

The documents listed above should be forwarded to the College, marked for the attention of the Chair, CPDR Committee. All requests received will be coordinated by the CPD Department for dissemination to the Committee and facilitation of associated recommendations to the RANZCOG Board.

3. Survey content

The survey application form must include contact information (name, e-mail address, telephone number) for the survey author or other designated contact person should the participants have any questions about the content of the survey or about the use and/or publication of the results.

All participants must be notified that their participation is voluntary.

Participants must be advised if the data collected will not be anonymous.

Participants must be protected from the risk of unreasonable harm, including any risks regarding confidentiality or privacy.

Participants should be informed how the data or survey results will be published or distributed, including whether individual responses will appear in the published results.

In some circumstances, data may be confidential and may not be made available publicly or to the participants; this should be advised clearly to potential respondents at the time the survey is sent out.

If participants are promised anonymity and a login is required to access the survey, the researcher/data collector must ensure that login information will not be collected and stored in a way that it can be connected to survey results.

2.2 Approval process

The relevant documentation will be forwarded by the CPD Department to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the CPDR Committee for consideration. The Chair and Deputy Chair may refer the application to the full CPDR Committee for further consideration.

In order to determine if a survey is suitable for distribution a number of criteria will be applied including the validity and appropriateness of the survey as a whole. If approved for distribution, the survey will be prioritised for distribution through a consideration of factors including, but not limited to, whether it targets the same categories of members as have been excessively surveyed in the previous 12 months, and the extent to which the survey is viewed as informing areas that the College considers to be core business as defined through its Constitutional objectives and current strategic priorities. Where considered appropriate by the CPDR Committee Chair, advice regarding the survey shall be sought from the Chairperson(s) of committee(s) considered relevant to the intended respondent group

If a survey is considered not suitable for distribution, this decision will be communicated to the applicant(s) in writing by the CPDR Committee Chair.

Surveys may be approved for distribution subject to revisions being made. If revisions are required, the survey in modified form, having addressed the revision requirements will need to be submitted for review. If revisions have been implemented the survey will be processed for distribution.

Notification of approved surveys will be made to the RANZCOG Board on a regular basis.

A letter of declaration must be completed once a survey has been approved for distribution (*refer Letter of Declaration (Surveys)*)

Once approval has been obtained, surveys should be distributed within 12 months of the approval date for all surveys except those submitted by Trainees as part of their Research Projects. For surveys submitted by Trainees as part of their Research Project, 24 months will be permitted for distribution from the date of approval. In all cases, if surveys have not been distributed within the specified timeframes, then a new application will need to be submitted.

2.3 Distribution process

All surveys will be distributed from College House by College staff in an electronic format utilising e-mail. Hardcopies of surveys will not be sent. All surveys approved for distribution must be set up in the correct format or with a working link. The College will not be responsible for setting up, formatting or editing the content of any survey. While every endeavour is made by the College to hold accurate and current e-mail addresses, there may be a percentage of addresses that are not correct or held by the College.

All surveys distributed by the College for third parties must include the following statement:

This survey has been approved for distribution by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists; however, this approval in no way constitutes ethics approval nor endorses the statements or opinions expressed in the survey or any publication arising from the survey's data or its interpretation.

2.3.1 Follow-up of non-respondents

The College will send one follow-up reminder e-mail, if requested by the survey author, no less than two weeks after the survey is initially sent out.

If any further follow-up of non-respondents is required, the original survey author must seek the approval of the CPDR Committee Chair. An additional fee will be charged as detailed below.

2.4 Cost

A fee of \$700 plus GST will be charged for initial distribution of the survey. This fee includes one follow-up reminder e-mail. If further follow-up is undertaken (if approved by the Chair of the CPDR Committee) a fee of \$350 plus GST will be charged.

Payment must be received before a survey is distributed, or additional follow-up undertaken.

2.5 Categories for distribution

Surveys can be sent to a range of College members, including, but not limited to the following groups:

- Active Fellows
- Retired Fellows
- Fellows within a certain age group
- All Fellows, including Active and Retired
- Members (those who have obtained their Membership qualification)
- Trainees undertaking College training program(s)
- Diplomates
- Associate Members (including those based in the Pacific Islands)
- Educational Affiliates

Groups may be sorted by region, country, postcode or Remoteness Area grouping, as well as by clinical practice profile; e.g.

- Obstetricians*
- Gynaecologists*
- Subspecialty groups

*Information for each of these groups is taken from the Members Practice Profiles data, for which all Fellows and Diplomates maintain their individual listing. Ensuring information is up-to-date is the responsibility of each member.

4. Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information should be collected only as required in relation to the expressly stated purpose of the research or project.

The use of prizes or other incentives to encourage participation typically requires the collection of personal information from participants (i.e. name, address, etc.). If participants have been promised anonymity, collection of this information may appear to be a violation of the promise. Therefore participants will need to be advised that their responses will be confidential, but not anonymous.

5. Notification of the results of the survey to the College

The final results of each survey need to be provided to the College prior to their publication or release.

6. Related RANZCOG documents

- RANZCOG privacy policy and procedure
- Survey request form
- Letter of Declaration (surveys)
- Requests for data and/or lists for use by (external) third parties policy

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