**Designing Survey Items – Fundamentals**

**Provide definitions** (if needed) that are accessible to participants if they need to refer back to what something means. Sometimes definitions are provided in the instructions, questions themselves, or as pop-ups in online surveys.

**Use** **full sentences.** Simply asking “education?”, for example, is inappropriate as it lacks context and could cause confusion even if you are providing answer choices.

**Be specific.** Asking “Would you consider yourself healthy?” is likely too vague. A question such as “Would you consider yourself physically active (i.e.: on average, you have at least 90 minutes of moderate physical activity a week)?” is more specific and much clearer. This will certainly depend on the aim of you questions but this is a general rule to follow.

**Avoid barrelled questions.** If you ask “Please describe how you deal with stress and anxiety” you are asking about both stress AND anxiety. Participants may interpret or experience these things differently. You could separate into two questions to be clearer.

**Avoid double negatives.** The human brain has trouble with double negatives. For example, asking the question “Do you oppose not providing naloxone for an overdose?” is more difficult and confusing than asking “Do you agree with providing naloxone for an overdose?”.

**Avoid leading questions.** If you only ask the question“Please describe any problems that you have within your team environment at your place of work.” of course you will only get negative answers. This is fine as long as you have another question about strengths that balances the negative question. Or, you may ask a more neutral question such as “Please describe your team environment at your place of work.”

**Include a time period if necessary.** If you ask “Have you ever felt depressed?” certainly you’d get everyone responding “Yes”. If you ask something more specific with a time reference this would make clear your boundaries clearer: “During the past four weeks starting today, how many times have you felt sad?”.