	University of North Carolina Wilmington **Institutional Review Board**	**Standard Operating Procedure**
	Anonymous Surveys/Questionnaires	**#6.3**

The purpose of this SOP is to explain the requirements for research that involves anonymous paper or online surveys/questionnaires.

I. General Requirements

Anonymous paper or online surveys/questionnaires are generally reviewed by the IRB for a determination of exemption as allowed by 45 CFR 46. The UNCW IRB does not require written consent for completely anonymous surveys/questionnaires. However, the IRB may require a more detailed informed consent statement at the beginning of surveys/questionnaires that ask subjects to react or respond to scenarios, photographs or information that may cause upset or distress, even when those surveys/questionnaires are anonymous.

II. Scope

This SOP pertains to all human subjects research reviewed by the UNCW Institutional Review Board (IRB).

III. Applicable Definitions

A. Anonymous

Of unknown authorship or origin; not named or identified; lacking individuality, distinction, or recognizability.

B. Deductive Disclosure

Deductive disclosure is the identification of an individual's identity using known characteristics of that individual. Even though direct identifiers (e.g. name, addresses) are not solicited or removed from survey data, it may be possible to identify subjects who have unique characteristics, particularly if a sample size is small.

C. Distress

Pain or suffering affecting the body, a bodily part, or the mind: a painful situation.

D. Upset

To trouble mentally or emotionally.

IV. Procedures

A. Researchers may not refer to surveys as "anonymous" if the surveys solicit responses that may identify subjects, such as names or email addresses.

B. The introductory statement of any anonymous survey/questionnaire must, at minimum, include a statement similar to, "Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or you may stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits."

C. Researchers are encouraged to include additional information that might be helpful to subjects.

D. When researchers send recruitment emails to campus populations, or other populations where subjects may desire reassurance of ethical oversight, the IRB may require researchers to include a statement in the recruitment email and/or introductory statement for the survey that the study was approved by the UNCW Institutional Review Board, along with the study's IRB identification number.

E. Researchers collecting data from studies with small sample sizes must take precautions so that other characteristics collected from subjects will not identify them through deductive disclosure. If adequate precautions cannot be taken, researchers must include language in the introductory statement of the survey to inform subjects of the possibility of deductive disclosure as a risk.

F. Additional requirements may apply if the survey is conducted online. Researchers should refer to ***UNCW IRB SOP 6.2 Online Research*** for additional requirements.

V. References to Other Applicable SOPs

SOP Title	SOP #
Exempt Research	5.1
Online Research	6.2

VI. Responsibilities

Title	Responsibility
IRB Co-chair	N/A
IRB Staff	Responsible for conducting initial reviews of applications to conduct human subjects research, assisting PIs with including relevant information in

	applications and attachments, and for directing applications appropriately for determinations of exemption or approval.
Research Compliance Manager	Responsible for reviewing applications for determinations of exemption.
Principal Investigator (PI)	Responsible for submitting applications to conduct human subjects research to the IRB prior to initiating activities, representing proposed activities accurately, and conducting research in accordance with methods and procedures identified in the approved application.

VII. Resources

A. UNCW IRB Website: http://uncw.edu/sparc/integrity/irb.html

B. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections website: https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/

C. 45 CFR 46 ("Common Rule"): https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=75addf8360492a28075e3a218631fcdc&pitd=20180719&node=pt45.1.46&rgn=div5

D. Belmont Report: https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html