

Survey of Former Students 2017: How is data protection incorporated?!

In the context of quality development in study and teaching, the University of Freiburg regularly conducts surveys of different target groups. In winter 2017, the survey of former students aims to support the design of interventions to decrease the study dropout rate due to study-related reasons.

Process of the student survey

The survey is conducted as an own project by the University of Freiburg using the software EvaSys and is developed as an online and paper-based form. Responsible for the survey is the department for teaching development (Abteilung Lehrentwicklung) at the rectorate for studies and teaching (Prorektorat für Studium und Lehre). At the beginning of the survey, the department for teaching development creates an individual access authorisation (personalised link) to the questionnaire via EvaSys. This is transmitted to the students alongside an invitation to participate in the survey via email. Additionally, paper-based questionnaires and closable reverse envelopes will be handed to the Service Center Studium. The data is evaluated and the result reports are compiled by employees of the department for teaching development at university computers. The data will be evaluated anonymously in strict accordance with data protection regulations.

At the end of the survey, the participants can voluntarily give their email address to participate in a prize draw. This happens in a separate questionnaire, thus, students who would like to participate in the prize draw have to send two questionnaires. This construct makes it technically impossible to connect answers to email addresses.

Protection of personal data

The connection that transfers the survey data is secured by an SSL encryption (HTTPS).

From the start, only data that are absolutely necessary in order to achieve the survey's aims are collected. The survey consists of several parts regarding the reasons for break of study/change of study, study requirements and conditions, consultation services at the University of Freiburg, and personal career. Political opinions, religious or philosophical convictions and things that concern a possible affiliation with a trade union will not be collected.

The aforementioned individual link is created in EvaSys. In order to prevent unauthorized access by people wanting to fill in the survey instead of the actual respondents, the link is designed as a case-sensitive alphanumeric combination. This way, several million combinations are possible, thus preventing someone from guessing someone else's access link. The personal data are saved and processed exclusively on university computer systems. The central university administration's (Zentrale Universitätsverwaltung, ZUV) servers have so-called "private sub-nets" which cannot be routed and thus are not accessible from the outside. Beyond that, the administration's nets are secured by a two-level firewall. Personal data are generally not saved on data storage devices outside of the University of Freiburg.

Only as many employees of the department for teaching development as are absolutely necessary for conducting the survey have access to personal data. It is defined precisely which persons are

authorized to access the data at which point in time. There are no anonymous or guest accounts which mean that every access has to be authorised personally.

After the survey is completed, but at the latest on 31 December 2018, all address data of the department for teaching development will be deleted irretrievably. The paper-based questionnaires will be destroyed directly after importing the data into the computer. All deletions will be protocolled. The address data will obviously not be relayed to third parties resp. unauthorized persons.

Evaluation of the survey

During the survey stage, the replies will first be saved on a University of Freiburg server and the data will then be transmitted through an encrypted SSL connection. After the survey stage, the department for teaching development will process and statistically analyse the survey data to achieve the survey's aim. For this, only established evaluation and research methods are used in order to answer the quality management questions. The data will be aggregated (for example on the level of grouping courses of study) so that the identity of single survey participants cannot be inferred from it.

The department for teaching development compiles result reports in the basis of the survey data. The overall report will be directed to the rector, the rector for teaching and central institutions. Deans, Deans of Studies and study commissions will receive additional reports for individual courses of studies. The overall reports will be published on the department for teaching development's website. Personal data will only be published in aggregated form in the reports so that they cannot identify single persons.

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