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**RESOURCES**

**Policy XX.xx and Procedure Xx.xx.xxx *Management of Student Surveys***

**Student Surveys**

The oversight and coordination of **student** surveys at VIU is the responsibility of the Student Survey Management Committee in accordance with Policy Xx.xx and Procedure XX.xx.xxx *Management of Student Surveys.*

**All Surveys**

It is preferable to conduct surveys anonymously – if no personal information is being collected, there are no privacy issues.

If personal information is being requested on a survey, the FIPPA requirements must be met regarding collection, storage, use, and security of the information.

**Authority to Collect Personal Information**

Personal information is defined as recorded information about an identifiable individual other than business contact information; for example:

* Personal identifiers (including the IP address of a respondent’s computer);
* Personal contact information such as residential address, phone number, and email address;
* Information about ethnicity, religion, political views, or income level; and,
* Personal opinions.

Collection of personal information through surveys is normally authorized under one of the following sections of the FIPPA:

Section 26(c) The information relates directly to and is necessary for a program or activity of VIU;

Section 26(e) The information is necessary for the purposes of planning or evaluating a program or activity of VIU.

Personal information may only be collected under sections 26(c) and (e) if the collection is “necessary” for a program or activity of for the purposes of planning or evaluating a program or activity. To determine whether the collection is “necessary”, three factors should be considered:

a. How sensitive is the personal information being collected?

b. Are there legitimate business purposes for the collection?

c. Is only the personal information that is minimally required to achieve legitimate business purposes being collected?

Sections 26(c) and 26(e) provide VIU with authority to conduct surveys of students and alumni for a variety of purposes connected with the planning or evaluation of programs or activities. Keep in mind, however, that **all of the students’ information, including their names and contact information, is considered to be personal information** and must be protected under the FIPPA.

Sections 26(c) and 26(e) also authorize VIU to conduct surveys of faculty and staff members. Normally, they should be contacted at their workplace (through their work email address or phone number) rather than at home. When conducting surveys of faculty and staff, it must always be made clear whether information is being collected from them in their official or personal capacities. **Information they provide in their personal capacities (e.g. information about their commuting behaviour) is personal information** and must be protected under the FIPPA.

**Privacy Notification**

A Survey must contain a “privacy notification” that explains the legal authority for collecting the personal information, why it is being collected, and the contact information of somebody who can provide more information about the collection.

***Sample Privacy Notification:***

*Your personal information is being collected under the authority of Section 26(e) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). This information will be used for the purpose of evaluating VIU’s food services program. All information that identifies you will be kept confidential. Questions about the collection of this information may be directed to .*

**Using Online Survey Tools**

The FIPPA restricts VIU and its service providers from storing, accessing or disclosing personal information outside Canada, unless the survey participants have provided their written consent.

This significantly limits the ability to use popular online survey tools that are based outside Canada, such as *Survey Monkey*. If a foreign-based online survey tool is being used, it is preferable to refrain from collecting any personal information, but if it is necessary to do so, the survey participants’ written consent to store their personal information outside Canada must be secured. Without such consent, the survey company cannot collect even the personal email addresses or IP addresses of the survey participants.

Consent must be in writing (online “click-through” consents are acceptable). The consent must specify:

a. what information will be collected using the survey tool;

b. what jurisdiction the information will be stored in; and,

c. how the information will be accessed and used.

To avoid the foregoing restrictions, it is highly recommended that a Canadian-based tool be used for online surveys. VIU currently holds an institutional license for *FluidSurveys,* a Canadian-based survey tool.

**Use and Reporting of Survey Results**

Personal information collected in surveys should only be used for the purpose it was collected and should only be reported in an aggregated, non-identifying manner. Care should be taken to ensure that individual survey participants are not re-identifiable. Normally, this means that detailed information must be aggregated to a less detailed level to avoid the risk of identification.

**Security of Survey Results**

The FIPPA requires VIU to make reasonable security arrangements to protect personal information from unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure or disposal. Survey results containing information about identifiable individuals must be stored in a secure location.

If large volumes of personal information are being stored on network drives, encryption is highly recommended. Personal information should not be stored on mobile devices, such as laptops and USB keys (flash drives).