

# Tool #13: Inquiry Form Builder

COE units face a daunting set of decisions when constructing their inquiry or “request for information” forms: should they use a short form that reduces barriers to completion but collects incomplete information or a long form that intimidates some prospective students but provides rich data on those who follow through and submit the form? Still other units divide their traditional inquiry questions among several sequential forms pushed to prospects through e-mails throughout the recruitment pipeline. This tool outlines essential and secondary information, tips for constructing an inquiry form, and guidelines for selecting the form format that best matches your prospect audience.

## Most Essential Information

The sample form below includes the essential questions that will serve as the entirety of a short inquiry form or as the first half of a long form (see below for secondary information that make up the latter half of a long form). This form is designed as a general inquiry form accessed from the COE unit main website.

### Request-for-Information Form: Example University

*Please complete the questions below, and we will send more information to the e-mail address you provided.*

1. Please enter your name.\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
[First Name]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
[Last Name]

2. Please enter your e-mail address.\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
[address@example.com]

3. Please indicate your military status if applicable:

- ☐ *Active duty*  
☐ *Veteran*  
☐ *National Guard reserve*  
☐ *Military family member*  
☐ *DOD civilian*

4. Please select the area of study you are most interested in pursuing. If you're having a difficult time selecting just one interest, please check the “undecided” box and a recruitment advisor will be in touch.\*

- ☒ *Allied Health*    ☐ *Teacher Preparation*    ☐ *Business*  
☐ *Criminal Justice*    ☐ *Undecided*

If you know the name of the specific program to which you will apply, please select the program name from the drop down menu below in addition to checking one of the boxes above (e.g., check “Allied Health” above and select “PhD in Nursing Science” from the menu above):

\_\_\_\_\_  
▼

5. What is your current state of residence?

\_\_\_\_\_  
▼

*\*Required*

#### Make Clear Required Fields

If required fields are clearly marked, the form appears more manageable. Prospects who want personalized outreach can still complete easy-to-find optional fields.

#### An Implicit Welcome Message

Asking about military status is a subtle way to show the community that the university works to accommodate military members and their families.

#### Discipline versus Program-Specific Data?

Broad disciplines allow for e-mail customization without forcing prospects to commit to a specific credential. Consider collecting part 2 of question 4 over the phone or in a subsequent form.

#### Implementation Note

Gathering information about home state helps staff prepare to meet state authorization requirements.

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## Secondary Information

### For a Long or Subsequent Inquiry Form

COE units typically feature the following questions in longer version of the basic inquiry form, in which a combination of the questions below are marked as optional. Other units gather the answers to the questions during phone conversations with prospects, and still others send prospects incremental surveys featuring the questions below at various points in the recruitment pipeline.

6. If you would like to receive a phone call from a recruitment advisor, please enter your phone number.

[101-011-1100]

Contacts report that making fields like “phone number” optional can bolster prospects’ trust in the institution.

7. What is your intended program start date?

☐ *Fall 2013*   ☐ *Spring 2014*   ☐ *Undecided*

8. What is your highest level of education?

☐ *High school or GED*   ☐ *Some post-secondary course*  
☐ *Bachelor’s degree*   ☐ *Some graduate courses*  
☐ *Associate’s degree*   ☐ *Some undergraduate courses*  
☒ *Graduate or professional degree*   ☐ *Unsure*

**To save space**, consider building a drop-down menu for responses.

9. Have you ever enrolled at Example University?

☐ *Yes*  
☒ *No*

10. What is your intended program start date?

☐ *Fall 2013*  
☒ *Spring 2014*  
☐ *Undecided*

#### Implementation Tip

Institutions with flexible start dates may frame the options as such:

- ☐ In eight weeks  
☐ In sixteen weeks  
☐ In more than sixteen weeks

11. Who is your current employer

Type employer name here:

12. In what year were you born?

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## Choosing between Long Initial Form or Series of Subsequent Forms

	Advantage	Disadvantage
<b>Single Short Form</b>	Prospects face minimal barriers to expressing interest	The recruitment office collects a bare minimum of contact information with little fodder for personalization of future communications
<b>Single Long Form</b>	Prospects may prefer to give as much information as possible in one form.	A long form may deter prospects from submitting an inquiry
<b>Series of Forms (2-3 Inquiries)</b>	Follow-up forms allow COE units to keep the initial inquiry form short while still collecting a wealth of information	Students may become annoyed with a series of surveys that collect personal information. A portion will never complete subsequent forms

The best approach to inquiry form delivery (single versus multiple) varies by student demographics and program type. For example, a career-advancing certificate program prospect might value a single, short inquiry form because he or she associates some urgency with enrolling and completing a certificate. However, a certificate program designed for enrichment (e.g., creative writing) attracts prospects who are willing to complete a long form and appreciate personalized communication.

### Conduct A/B Testing

Many units have found A/B testing to be effective in determining exactly the right inquiry form format. Test strategies against one another to determine whether the recruitment staff gathers more prospective student information with all non-essential questions as optional fields in a single inquiry form or whether a series of follow-up forms yield more responses and richer information. Additionally, use A/B Testing to test the sequence of questions and to determine the best size for your forms in terms of pixel size.

### Outline Intended Application of Prospect Responses

The COE Forum recommends that all information collected in inquiry forms or during conversations corresponds to a planned piece of personalized correspondence. In other words, collect information about military status only if marketing staff have dedicated resources to developing military-specific phone scripts, email campaigns, or military-oriented paragraphs that are incorporated into otherwise general email messages. Consider the role each piece of information collected from the inquiry form will play in planned correspondence before asking students to provide a response and before selecting the type of inquiry form most appropriate for testing.