

ETHICS CHECKS FOR LAW FIRMS

Instructions for survey managers at participating (volunteer) law firms

It is imperative that participating law firms appoint a survey manager to oversee the process. It is not a difficult or time consuming role but it's crucial to the success of the exercise and best fulfilled by someone who has management authority within the firm (a senior partner, say) or alternatively someone who has clear delegated authority to see the process through to completion.

The survey manager has six key tasks as follows:

Key tasks	Tick when completed
<p>1. to assign the firm a secret firm code and, if it has more than one office, to assign each branch office a code.</p> <p>The firm code should comprise 4 letters of the alphabet – all in lower case – and 2 numerals (for example, ab12cd).</p> <p>Branch office codes should comprise the firm code followed by a dash and a further numeral for each branch office (for example, ab12cd-1, ab12cd-2, etc)</p> <p>This is the mechanism that allows us to calculate the survey results for the firm as a whole and, for those firms that have more than one office, to calculate the results for each of its branch offices and so to gauge the consistency of its culture across its various offices. Crucially it's also the mechanism that allows us to publish a firm's results without identifying the firm to anyone outside the firm.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. to encourage as many as possible of the firm's employees to complete the survey.</p> <p>The surveys work best when all or most of a firm's employees take part, and if it has more than one office, all or most of its employees at each of its offices.</p> <p>This allows the firm to gauge the consistency of its ethical culture by testing whether the different levels and classifications of its employees and where relevant employees at its different branch offices are all 'on the same page' in relation to the issues being surveyed. The more people who complete a survey, the better and more reliable the results.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>3. to give the firm’s employees clear instructions about how to complete the survey.</p> <p>Send them an email that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ attaches the Instructions for Employees at Participating (Volunteer) Law Firms ▪ includes the link to the survey instrument ▪ gives them the firm’s and, where applicable, their branch office codes to enter at question 2 ▪ gives them the answer to question 3 (which asks them to identify their firm’s business structure) ▪ gives them the answer to question 4 (which asks them how many people at their firm hold practising certificates). 	
<p>4. to set an end date by which the survey must be completed.</p> <p>Experience tells us that we get the best results when survey managers ask their firm’s employees to complete the survey by a set date, and a set date only a week or ten days into the future - and that it helps to send reminders.</p> <p>We note that the surveys sometimes work best when everyone at a firm does them at the same time - at a particular time on a particular day.</p>	
<p>5. to notify the Commission when the end date has passed and the survey has been completed.</p> <p>This tells us when to pull off the results and to post them against the firm’s secret code on the Commission’s website.</p>	
<p>6. to consider convening a staff meeting or other relevant forum to discuss the results.</p> <p>Consider also asking the Commission to produce more detailed cross-tabulated results comparing, for example, how more senior and more junior people at the firm or people from the firm’s different branch offices answered the questions.</p> <p>The results can be very useful in helping the firm identify ways and means by which the firm can strengthen its ethical culture.</p>	

Please don’t hesitate to contact the Commission’s Practice Compliance Manager on 3406 7737 or by email at lsc@lsc.qld.gov.au if you have any queries.