



Guide to Applying for IRB Approval/Exemption for the 2027 CUPA-HR Employee Retention Survey (ERS)

As your institution prepares to participate in the Employee Retention Survey (ERS), your institution may require you to submit an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application to comply with institutional research guidelines and ethical standards.

To assist with this process, we've created a guide that includes key information on the ERS to help you complete your IRB application efficiently. This guide covers essential details such as study objectives, participant population, data collection methods, confidentiality protocols, and justifications for exempt status.

Why is IRB Exemption Important?

The exemption ensures that your institution's participation in the survey aligns with ethical standards for research involving human subjects, even when minimal risk is involved.

How HR Professionals Can Use This Guide

The information provided in this guide is designed to help you navigate the IRB process. When completing your institution's IRB forms, you can use the details below to address most of the required questions.

For further guidance or support, contact research@cupahr.org.

IRB Exemption Request Checklist

Most institutions will require the following items when seeking IRB exemption:

- ✓ **IRB Exemption Request Form:** Obtain this form from your institution's IRB office. The format and requirements of the form may vary by institution. Use the information provided below to complete and submit the form to your institution's IRB office.
- ✓ **Survey Outline:** Email research@cupahr.org to request a copy of the survey outline to include with your IRB exemption submission.
- ✓ **Sample Respondent Consent Form:** CUPA-HR provides a sample consent form that will serve as the first page of the ERS survey hosted in the Alchemer survey platform. Respondents will give their implied consent to participate by continuing with the survey after reading the form.

After obtaining your institution's IRB form, you can use the following detailed information to complete the IRB exemption request process at your institution.

- **Study Title:** The 2027 CUPA-HR Employee Retention Survey (ERS)
- **Proposed Start Date:** April 1, 2027
- **Principal Investigator (PI) Information:** You should list your information as the Principal Investigator (PI) and note this study is part of a larger research initiative conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), a national nonprofit association dedicated to advancing HR practices in higher education.
- **Study Summary:** The purpose of this research is to investigate the factors that underlie employee retention in higher education. The study aims to collect data from institutional employees to identify key challenges and opportunities for enhancing retention strategies. Participants will complete a voluntary online survey designed to assess employment retention. The survey will include questions on employment plans, remote work practices and preferences, workplace satisfaction, and workplace culture. The study will produce insights to help higher education institutions address employee retention challenges and implement initiatives that reduce turnover and enhance employee well-being.
- **Participant Population:** Employees of higher education institutions, including faculty, staff, and administrators.
 - *Inclusion Criteria:* All institutional employees, staff and faculty, who are willing to participate voluntarily and are over the age of 18. The survey will be offered in Spanish and English.
 - *Exclusion Criteria:* Employees under the age of 18, temporary employees, or those unwilling to provide voluntary consent.
- **Recruitment Methods:** Institutions will distribute CUPA-HR's survey link via email. The survey may be promoted to employees via internal communication channels and/or social media. Participation is voluntary, and no incentives will be offered.
- **Data Collection Methods:** Data will be collected through an online survey platform, Alchemer. The survey is self-administered and is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participants may skip any questions or withdraw at any time without penalty. Data collection is scheduled to begin and end in April 2027, with participants having approximately two weeks to complete the survey.
- **Data Confidentiality and Privacy:** This survey's data is anonymous. Only members of CUPA-HR's research team will have access to the raw data. Potentially identifying demographic data will be reported in aggregate only. The survey platform, Alchemer, will not collect IP addresses or geographical location data. CUPA-HR will provide institutional custom reports for purchase. These custom reports will include aggregate data across both staff and faculty across an entire institution and will only be available if participation exceeds 10% of an institution's staff or faculty, OR 50 employees, whichever is higher.

- **Exempt Category Justification:** This study qualifies for exemption under **Category 2 (Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations)** of the federal regulations for IRB exemption. The research involves minimal risk to participants, participation is voluntary, and no personal identifying information (PII) will be collected, ensuring confidentiality.
 - **Consent Procedures:** Participants will review an electronic consent form at the beginning of the survey in either English or Spanish. The consent form will provide participants with the necessary information to make an informed decision about their participation. It will include the following key details:
 - **Purpose of the Study:** A clear explanation of the study's aim to understand factors related to employee retention in higher education.
 - **Voluntary Nature of Participation:** An assurance that participation is entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time by simply closing the survey browser.
 - **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** A statement affirming that survey data is anonymous and that any self-identifying information will only be reported in aggregate. Additionally, no IP addresses or geographical location data will be collected.
 - **Risks and Benefits:** An outline of anticipated risks (none expected) and potential benefits, such as contributing to improved workplace practices in higher education.
 - **Contact Information:** The email address of the CUPA-HR Research Team for participants to reach out with any questions or concerns about the study.
 - **Consent:** By clicking “Next” and proceeding to the survey, participants will provide their implied consent, indicating they have read and understood the consent form and agree to participate in the study.
 - **Data Analysis and Reporting Plan:** Data collected from the CUPA-HR Employee Retention Survey (ERS) will be analyzed in aggregate to identify trends and patterns related to employee retention in higher education. Statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analyses, and multiple regression analyses, will be used to explore relationships between variables. Findings will be shared in two formats:
 1. **Institutional Reports:** These for-purchase reports will include data specific to each participating institution that meets the qualification criteria. In addition to institution-specific insights, these reports will also include aggregate national results for comparison purposes, enabling institutions to benchmark their results against broader trends.
 2. **CUPA-HR’s National Aggregate Report:** Published by CUPA-HR, this report will present comprehensive trends and actionable insights based on data from all participating institutions. It will provide a high-level view of employee retention challenges and opportunities across higher education.
 - **Risks and Benefits:** There are no anticipated risks associated with this survey. Potential benefits include contributing to a greater understanding of employee retention issues in higher education and supporting institutional improvements.
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Sample E-mail Invitation to Participate in the 2027 Employee Retention Survey (ERS)

Subject Line: Participate in CUPA-HR's 2027 Employee Retention Survey

Email Body:

Dear Staff and Faculty,

{INSERT INSTITUTION NAME} is participating in the 2027 Employee Retention Survey (ERS) in partnership with the non-profit College and University Professional Association for Human Resources ([CUPA-HR](#)). This survey is designed to better understand employee experiences and retention.

Your feedback will help us:

- Understand the key factors influencing employee satisfaction and retention.
- Shape retention policies and initiatives that align with your needs and priorities.
- Build a more inclusive, satisfying, and supportive workplace.

The survey data are anonymous, and any self-identifying data will be kept confidential. CUPA-HR will host the survey and will have exclusive access to the raw data collected. Our institution will receive results only in aggregate form and only if enough employees participate to ensure the confidentiality of the data. You can decide to withdraw from the survey at any time.

How to Participate

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please complete the survey by April X, 2027. Click on the link below to access the survey:

[Insert Survey Link Here]

Thank you in advance for your participation. Your feedback is valuable, and we appreciate the time you take to complete the survey.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title/Role]

[Institution Name]