Learner Satisfaction Survey 2013/14

Technical Report

This report was undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency

August 2014

Of interest to colleges, training organisations and the general public interested in research, analysis and calculation phases of the 2012/13 Learner Satisfaction Survey

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1.   Introduction

Purpose of this Report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to give the Skills Funding Agency, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department for Education and other interested parties detailed descriptions, analysis and explanations of all phases of the research, analysis and calculation stages of the 2013/14 Learner Satisfaction survey.

1.2   It is intended that this report should enable the Agency and others to replicate precisely the approach adopted. As a result it contains necessarily technical information but, wherever possible, this is accompanied by explanations that will assist non-specialist readers.

2.   Methodology

Overview of the survey

2.1   The main survey mechanism was an online survey, available 24 hours a day, accessible by learners from 18 November 2013 to 13 April 2014 using a link to a dedicated survey page. Colleges and training organisations could either distribute the link separately or embed it in their intranets, with the latter offering them the option of posting an accompanying link to internal surveys. Guidance on how to do this was contained in the provider guidance notes posted by the Skills Funding Agency on the FE Choices pages on the .gov.uk website.

2.2   In order to complete a survey learners needed their provider code (UKPRN number) and individual learner number (LearnRefNumber field of the Individualised Learner Record or ILR) or Unique Learner Number (ULN). Both Learner Reference numbers and ULNs were accepted this year. It is understood that Learner Reference numbers are being phased out with ULNs becoming the universal method of learner identification. The UKPRN was validated in real-time using an online database and respondents were only able to continue with the survey if they input a valid UKPRN. However UKPRNs are issued consecutively, meaning that learners mistyping the number could easily submit a valid but incorrect identifier. This potential error was detected and corrected for during the validation phase using ILR details (see Section 5).

2.3   As full learner records are submitted by colleges and training organisations retrospectively, learner codes cannot be subjected to real-time validation.   Learners were therefore asked to provide personal details that were later matched into the ILR during the extensive post-survey validation and checking phase (see Section 5).

2.4   Colleges and training organisations with learners for whom it was impossible to complete online surveys, for example those based in locations where there was no internet access, were able to apply to use paper questionnaires. These were provided as a printable template with embedded, scannable, provider codes. Colleges and training organisations applied to use this approach via the FE Choices Information pages on .gov.uk website or via the Provider Extranet.   The deadline for applications was 22 November 2013. The closure date for the paper survey was set at 10 March 2014 to allow for the longer processing period required for paper surveys.

2.5   The survey contained the same nine core questions as used in previous versions and a new question was added to ascertain whether learners would recommend their learning provider to their friends and family.

2.6   Learners completing the survey online were invited to select the environment in which they learnt from:

- learning at a college;
- learning programmes, such as Apprenticeships; and
- training programmes for employees being trained in their work place.

The questionnaires had an identical structure but related to three different learning environments and used language that would be understood by those learners in each environment.

Similarly colleges and training organisations of those learners completing the paper-based survey were asked to decide which version or versions of the questionnaire were most appropriate for their learners.

Three versions of the paper questionnaire template in pdf format were sent to staff co-ordinating the paper surveys. These co-ordinators were invited to select the most appropriate version for their learners.

The questionnaire

2.7   The survey questionnaire had the same nine scoring questions as used for the 2012/13 Learner Satisfaction Survey, retaining the 0-10 rating scale with bipolar labels only (very bad and very good). In addition a new question was added this year.

2.8   The new question asked learners how likely they were to recommend their course to friends and family had a five response options of extremely likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, extremely unlikely and does not apply. Responses to this question were not included in the final overall score; this allowed continued comparison of scores year-on-year.

2.9   All versions of the survey contained clear data protection statements developed as a result of long-term dialogue with the Skills Funding Agency legal team. These are evident in the explanatory copy at the start of the survey. (Please see Annex 7 for details). Legal and ethical issues are discussed further in Section 6.

Technical aspects of the online survey

2.10   Technical issues relating to completion of questionnaires online were tested extensively during the 2007/08 Framework for Excellence pilot and the subsequent 2007/08 (Version 1) and 2008/09 (Version 2) surveys. Specifically, 2008/09 technical testing on providers' premises included:

- testing the survey web link and questionnaire accessibility from different provider locations and checking successful transmission to Ipsos MORI's survey analysis system;

- testing the in-built validation checks and checking arrangements to ensure that learners could enter provider codes and individual learner numbers;

- matching learner details from test submissions using dummy learner numbers and provider codes;

- monitoring the live online survey navigation and completion process;

- discussing, where applicable, the testing of the questionnaire from multiple sites and/or remote access to the survey for off-site learners;

- testing user navigation through the survey and any technical issues relating to this; and

- testing completion of the questionnaire using different input devices and screen resolutions including Desktop PCs, Laptop PCs and BlackBerrys.

2.11   The testing process confirmed the full technical functionality of the survey and the ability of learners to transmit responses from a wide range of devices in a range of settings. Further testing took place in September 2009 of the ability of providers to run links to the survey alongside their own internal surveys. This linking approach was governed by a set of guidelines republished as part of the 2013/14 Learner Satisfaction Provider Guidance Notes. (These can be found in Annex 8).

Technical aspects of the paper survey

2.12   A paper-based survey was available for those learners for whom it would be impossible to complete a web-based survey. This option was only available with the prior agreement of the FE Choices team and completed applications had to be received by the Skills Funding Agency by 22 November.

2.13   Three versions of the paper questionnaire template in PDF format were sent to staff co-ordinating the paper surveys. As mentioned earlier, providers were asked to decide which version or versions of the questionnaire were most appropriate for their learners. Survey co-ordinators were also sent a set of guidelines on how to reproduce the questionnaires and conduct the survey with learners.

2.14   All three versions were designed to be printed in landscape format on A3 double-sided paper to ensure compliance with minimum type size guidelines. RCU staff liaised directly with survey co-ordinators in colleges and providers using paper questionnaires and made arrangements for the completed surveys to be collated in to sealed envelopes and collected by courier to ensure there was no risk of them going astray.

2.15   At the end of the survey process, RCU arranged for a secure courier to pick up the completed survey forms and deliver them to the company's headquarters. On receiving the questionnaires RCU carried out an initial checking process to assess the suitability of questionnaires for scanning. Wherever possible, the surveys were processed using a high specification scanner using Formic optical character reader software. This software scans and captures the data from each survey response and also has the added advantage of retaining a full image of the document. Where scanned entry was not possible (for example because providers had photocopied the questionnaire in A4 or used staples) responses were hand-entered and subject to 10% re-entry validation. An electronic image of all hand entered questionnaires was also captured for secure electronic storage.

Provider communications

Extranet guidance and daily updates

2.16   A letter was sent by the Skills Funding Agency to the Principals/Chief Executives of all providers in October 2013. This set out the details of the 2013/14 survey and included a reminder of the provider's UKPRN number and personalised password (new providers were supplied with a password for the first time). This information allowed each in-scope provider to access a specially-designed extranet site (Provider Extranet) containing survey information specific to their organisation. The site was hosted by Ipsos MORI and included updates for the Learner Satisfaction, Community Learning and Employer Satisfaction surveys.

2.17   For the Learner Satisfaction survey the Provider Extranet also hosted guidance to help providers meet their minimum sample requirements; this included a Sample Size Calculator for providers to work out the overall minimum target for responses to the survey.

2.18   The Provider Extranet also included an information sheet in Excel which contained daily response rate information. The sheet was updated at the start of each day and told providers how many of their learners had successfully submitted survey responses by the end of the previous day. This response rate report also recorded the breakdown of responses between the sixteen learner sub-groups, which are detailed in paragraph 4.12. This level of detail was provided to help providers monitor the representativeness of their sample.

Technical and policy-related assistance

2.19   Colleges and training organisations had four main routes they could follow to gain assistance during the survey:

1. The first port of call was the provider's Skills Funding Agency area team/relationship manager who had the option of e-mailing the Skills Funding Agency's Service Desk for support.
2. Contacting the Skills Funding Agency Service Desk directly.
3. Visiting the Contact Us website page for the Learner Satisfaction and Employer Satisfaction surveys (http://fechoices.ipsos-mori.com/contactus).
4. Visiting the FE Choices Information pages on the .gov.uk website.

2.20   The Contact Us website page was part of the Provider Extranet but could be accessed by both providers and learners. Visitors were presented with answers to a series of Frequently Asked Questions and were able to submit a query to Ipsos MORI if they required further information; any queries relating to policy issues were then forwarded on to the Skills Funding Agency. It is not possible to present figures for the number of people who accessed the site, but as in 2013 the success of the system can be seen from a reduction in the number of queries submitted about the Learner Satisfaction Survey to the dedicated Ipsos MORI email address (learnerviewssurvey@ipsos-mori.com) compared to previous years (the mailbox for this address was staffed during office hours by the Ipsos MORI research team).

2.21   Where providers or learners submitted queries relating to policy or survey results, these were forwarded onto the Service Desk at servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk and answered by the Skills Funding Agency as appropriate. In total 28 queries were forwarded to the Skills Funding Agency, ranging from questions about eligible providers and learners, postal surveys, survey timescales, analysis, response rate methodology and learner identification.

2.22   In addition, there were 324 queries from providers to Ipsos MORI about the Learner Satisfaction survey and 85 queries about the Community Learning Survey. The two most common types of queries were requests for a new password to the Provider Extranet and questions about the daily response rate reports.

2.23   The Provider Extranet also presented providers with the opportunity to register their contact details to receive updates on issues relating to the FE Choices surveys. A total of 1,065 members of staff from 692 providers provided their details.

Technical operation of the online survey

Testing the on-screen survey

2.24   The on-screen survey was made available to providers for testing between 11th and 15th November 2013. During this window providers were able to test accessibility, functionality and compatibility of the on-screen survey with their own IT infrastructure. Providers were able to fully simulate the respondent experience and were allowed to submit responses containing 'test data'. This data was then wiped from the response database before the survey went live at noon on 18th November 2013. There were 166 test records attempted during the testing phase.

Delivering the on-screen survey

2.25   The on-screen survey was available for twenty-four hours of the day, every day of the week between noon on 18 November 2013 and midnight on 13 April 2014. In addition to the main on-screen survey, a 'British Sign Language' (BSL) version of the survey was available for 2013/14 for learners with literacy difficulties, learning difficulties or visual impairments (see section 7).

2.26   There were no reported technical difficulties with the on-screen surveys. The following table shows the number of visits to the main Learner Satisfaction survey and the BSL version of the main survey during the survey window. In total there were 672,743 visits to the survey websites and 393,428 of these visits (58%) resulted in a successful submission of a survey response. The remaining 279,315 (42%) of the visits are classed as incomplete response, which accounts for all occasions where the website was visited but no final response was submitted. However, on the vast majority of these occasions (82%), respondents did not progress to the log in stage of the survey and this suggests that some visitors had no intention of submitting a response.

2.27   A further 6% (15,377) of incomplete responses were failed attempts to log-in to the survey (a process that required the provider UKPRN number and their own learner reference number). This could indicate that some learners were trying to start the survey without the necessary information and it is likely that most of these learners subsequently returned to the site and made successful responses. The final 12% of the incomplete responses were from learners who successfully logged-in but did not complete the survey. These incomplete responses could have resulted from learners opting out of the survey, losing their internet connection while completing the survey or failing to select "submit" at the end of the process.

	Main survey	BSL survey	Total
Total Online Visits	**671,293**	**1,450**	**672,743**
Total complete responses (pre-validation)	393,217	211	393,428
Incomplete responses	278,076	1,239	279,315
Did not visit log-in screen	228,287	1,107	229,394
Failed log-in	15,310	67	15,377
Successful log-in but incomplete response	34,479	65	34,544

2.28   As shown in the table below, approaching three-quarters of the responses were submitted between February and April whilst only 7.7% were submitted prior to Christmas (compared with 6.6% in 2012-13; this modest increase may be due to a reduction in the fieldwork period (in previous years, fieldwork ended in May rather than April) and also as a result of the reminder communications issued by the Skills Funding Agency in their electronic newsletter Update and through Relationship Managers.

Month (Main survey only)	Number of responses	% total	Cumulative %
November 2013	9,094	2.3	2.3
December 2013	21,108	5.4	7.7
January 2014	74,066	18.8	26.5
February 2014	107,002	27.2	53.7
March 2014	141,222	35.9	89.6
April 2014	40,725	10.3	100.0
Total	393,217	**100.0**[1]	

Source: Learner Satisfaction Survey Data

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[1] Not all totals sum to 100 due to rounding.

Data storage and file transfer

2.29   The raw survey data was stored securely through the Dimensions (IBM SPSS Data Collection) research software.

2.30   The SQL server in Dimensions is only available through the Interviewer Server Administration portal and this greatly increases security.   Any code within surveys is contained on the server side so is not susceptible to common attacks such as SQL injection attack vectors. Access to the Interviewer Server portal is password controlled. Only staff that are assigned to the project have access to the password.

2.31   The survey database was hosted by the Internet Service provider Rackspace with the following security measures:

- strictly monitored access to all data centres using keycard protocols, biometric scanning protocols and continuous interior and exterior surveillance;

- access limited to data centre personnel only, without exception; and

- all data centre employees undergo thorough background security checks before being employed.

2.32   Having been extracted into a password protected SPSS file, 'raw data' was transferred to RCU from Ipsos Mori using a secure File Transfer Protocol website. This information was then used to produce weekly updates for the Skills Funding Agency project manager and to begin the process of response validation.

3.   Sample design

3.1   Sampling for the Learner Satisfaction survey rests entirely with providers, although they are expected to take account of guidance, which was shared on the Learner Satisfaction pages of the .gov.uk website, to generate a sufficient and representative sample. All eligible learners attending an eligible provider within the survey window (18 November 2013 and 13 April 2014) were potential participants (the "population"). There is a difficult trade-off between the wish to ensure all learners have a right to contribute to feedback on the quality of provision they experience and the wish to avoid placing unreasonable administrative burdens on providers.

3.2   The Skills Funding Agency's guidance notes for providers (which can be found in Annex 8) reflected this by advising providers of approaches that would help ensure "learners view participation as a right, rather than an obligation". The FE Choices Guidance 2013/14 referred to giving all learners the "right to fill in the survey". It referred "providers using a sampling approach" to use an online calculator[2] to identify the minimum required sample. Providers entered the number of eligible learners they expected to have in the survey period and the calculator showed the minimum required sample. The Guide stressed that it was wise to aim to exceed this minimum because some responses might prove to be duplicates or to be from ineligible learners.

3.3   The minimum sample size for all providers given by the calculator was based on the number of responses that would allow 95% certainty that the result that emerged would be within 3% of the result that would have been obtained had every learner responded to the survey (see Annex 5). The calculator also took account of the policy decision to set the maximum target as 70% of their learners where that resulted in a smaller value. The calculator reflected the standard market research formula for calculating minimum sample sizes. This is composed of four main elements.

1.   The population (in this case the total number of eligible learners).
2.   The confidence level (how certain you want the result to be).
3.   The confidence interval (the margin for error you are willing to accept).
4.   The estimated true level of the figure you are trying to measure (in this case the satisfaction level of learners which was assumed to be 80%[3]).

3.4   This approach is based on the assumption that all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected to take part in the survey. Where this appears not to have been the case, and when the pattern of responses differs clearly from the make-up of the population, the sample is said to be biased or "skewed".

3.5   Providers were asked to aim for a sample size that would give a margin for error or "confidence interval" 3% either side of the true level of learner satisfaction. However, samples up to a confidence interval of 5% were accepted, following the approach agreed with BIS and the Skills Funding Agency, provided they were not badly balanced i.e. skewed.

3.6   A secure online website "the Provider Extranet" allowed providers to monitor the absolute number of responses as the survey progressed.

3.7   Providers were advised, in the guidance notes for providers, to *"ensure that the balance of responses is broadly representative of your learners in terms of age, gender and level of study."* It also encouraged, without defining the term, a *"random sample".*

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[2] Available on the FE Choices pages on the .gov.uk website.
[3] The figure of 80% was established as a conservative estimate of satisfaction levels based on the results of the Version 1 survey. The calculator has been based on this figure since then.

4.   Post-survey data preparation and quality checks

Data preparation

4.1   396,189 learners (95.5%) completed the main online survey in 2013/14 and a further 18,573 (4.5%) completed paper surveys. After validation checks were completed and duplicates removed, there were a total 379,532 responses by eligible learners attending eligible providers. The number of paper-based surveys showed a reduction of around 3,000 from last year, indicating that online methods continue to become increasingly embedded year on year. RCU supplied results for 855 providers who were either on the final eligible provider list or took part in the survey if they had been eligible at some point in the survey period.

4.2   Annex 3 records the ILRs used in the validation process that followed the closure of the survey. The validation work used the ILR return, R06 2013/14, which covered the period of learning from the start of the academic year to 6 February 2014.   The validation process ensured:

- the removal of duplicate responses (the last response was retained);
- the reallocation of learners who had wrongly completed the UKPRN number; and
- the removal of the responses of learners known to be ineligible.

- As in previous years, the small percentage of unmatched learners was assumed to be from valid respondents. This was based on the premise that providers would only ask eligible learners to participate.

4.3   The data from the paper based survey questionnaires were entered using a combination of electronic scanning and manual data entry. The print quality of the questionnaires was variable and a large proportion could not be scanned successfully using the automatic electronic scanning process. The main barriers to automatic scanning were:

- incorrect print size (reduced to A4 paper size or printed portrait on A3);
- poor printing quality – too faint or patchy;
- misaligned or skewed printing;
- image size shrunk or expanded beyond scanner tolerances;
- printing on individual A4 sheets with staples;

4.4   The Formic Survey Design and Data Capture System was used for scanning questionnaires and the process was followed by a 100% manual verification and editing procedure. The questionnaires that could not be scanned were entered manually using Snap software. Snap has built-in data validity checks that ensure all entered data are within set parameters which are pre-defined when setting up the survey. In addition, all the manually entered data were subject to a 10% re-entry and verification check by a supervisor.

4.5   The two datasets from the electronic and manual data capture processing were combined and a further verification check was carried out to ensure consistency between the two sets of data.

4.6   Annex 4 describes the process of matching responses to the ILR and gives the fields used in order to make matches. All 120 of the automatic matching combinations were applied, followed by a final manual matching process in which "near-misses" in aspects such as surname or date of birth were checked. Following these processes, 93% of all respondents were matched to the ILR.

4.7   Within the final dataset there were a substantial number of duplicate responses which were required to be removed.   These were removed through a two stage process. The first stage was to focus on respondents who had been matched through to the ILR and therefore had an accurate unique learner reference. The dataset was flagged to identify any repeated learner references. Following the identification the response which was entered last was taken to be the valid response and all other responses were removed. For the responses which were not matched into the ILR, duplicates were identified by tracing instances where respondents had inputted exactly the same information for the surname, forename, date of birth, gender, age band, learner reference and UKPRN. Again the first instance of duplicate records was used and all other responses were removed.

4.8   In the next stage, invalid responses were removed from the dataset. These were:

- where the word `Test` was in any name field (except if the forename was entered correctly for example a respondent called 'Richard Test');

- any response using a clearly obscene or spurious name; or

- responses were under UKPRN 99999999 (the Skills Funding Agency dummy code).

4.9   The next process identified whether respondents were eligible during the survey window. Following the matching of respondents to the ILR, each record was updated to indicate if the respondent fell into one or more of the following funding groups:

- 16-19 EFA Funding;

- Adult Skills Funding;

- Other Skills Funding Agency Funding;

- Other EFA Funding;

The only exceptions were:

- learners under 16;

- learners on OLASS provision;

4.10   All linked responses had their key characteristics updated from the ILR to ensure accurate comparison of response levels to the 16 learner groups used for the weighting and skew calculations. Respondents not linked to the ILR, were presumed to be eligible and it was presumed that the entered data were correct.

4.11   The 16 learner groups were: -

1.   16-18 Females with a highest level at Entry Level or unknown level

2.   16-18 Females with a highest level at Level 1

3.   16-18 Females with a highest level at Level 2

4.   16-18 Females with a highest level at Level 3 and above

5.   16-18 Males with a highest level at Entry Level or unknown level

6.   16-18 Males with a highest level at Level 1

7.   16-18 Males with a highest level at Level 2

8.   16-18 Males with a highest level at Level 3 and above

9.   19+ Females with a highest level at Entry Level or unknown level

10.   19+ Females with a highest level at Level 1

11.   19+ Females with a highest level at Level 2

12.   19+ Females with a highest level at Level 3 and above

13.   19+ Males with a highest level at Entry Level or unknown level

14.   19+ Males with a highest level at Level 1

15.   19+ Males with a highest level at Level 2

16.   19+ Males with a highest level at Level 3 and above.

4.12   The final calculation of eligible learners and provider profiles was based on the Individualised Learner Records:

- R06 2013/14 which was provided by the Skills Funding Agency.

- The calculation took into account the number of eligible learners who were at the provider during the survey window. The final element of this process was to calculate the provider learner profiles. Each learner within each of the relevant datasets was flagged into one of the 16 categories.

Data quality checks

4.13   The following quality checks were carried out by Ipsos MORI on the raw learner response data.

- Checked all questions were present;

- Ran frequency counts for each question to check that (i) all codes were included and (ii) the correct number of people had answered the question ;

- Checked the total number of responses for each provider matched the daily updates;

- Sense checked the distribution of responses against the previous year's data.

4.14   RCU also carried out the quality checks below prior to the delivery of the final Learner Satisfaction survey data set to the Skills Funding Agency;

- Created the data outputs using two different production processes and compared the data outputs for any differences. Data was only delivered to the Agency when there is a 100% agreement between the two independent production processes carried out by different personnel;

- Ensured that final outputs met RCU defined validation rules (e.g. mean scores had to be between 0 and 10);

- Experienced personnel manually sense checked scores and missing score reason codes in comparison with previous years' results to identify any anomalies;

- Peer reviewed all syntax used for the production of outputs.

4.15   In addition to the above, the quality checks listed below were carried out by RCU prior to the delivery of Interim Report 3 to the Skills Funding Agency.

- Compared outputs in Interim Report 3 and equivalent outputs in the main data set;

- Experienced personnel manually sense checked reports.

4.16   In the process of matching responses to the ILR, a number of learners were identified as having responded to the survey using Community Learning Survey questionnaires, although they were funded by the Skills Funding Agency but not on Community Learning provision. Therefore, to ensure the views of as many learners as possible were included, these responses were counted within the main Learner Satisfaction Survey results. There were a total of 3,032 valid respondents (0.8% of all valid survey respondents) from 111 providers which were included in the results who used the Community Learning questionnaires.

5. Data analysis following the preparation of the survey data

Introduction

5.1   The key quantitative elements of the data analysis phase were:

- calculating base sizes and minimum sample size targets;
- applying corrective weightings for sample skew and survey method;
- applying tests for sample validity; and
- calculating final scores.

Validation

5.2   The latest available ILR datasets were used to calculate the number of eligible learners attending each provider in the survey period (18 November 2013 to 13 April 2014). This figure was then used to calculate the minimum returned sample size that would generate 95% confidence that the measured results were within 5% of the estimated true value, providing the sample was broadly representative. During the course of the survey, Ipsos MORI hosted a Provider Extranet giving daily updates on the total number of returned online surveys broken down by the 16 learner categories to help providers to take action to ensure their sample was not skewed.

5.3   Following validation of the response data and the removal of ineligible learners and duplicate submissions, 558 providers passed the threshold for either sample that gave a 95% confidence level with a 5% confidence interval or the threshold of at least 70% of all eligible learners providing valid responses. Sample sizes with a confidence interval of 3% or less automatically passed the quality test whereas those with confidence intervals between 3% and 5% and those who had 70% of all eligible learners providing valid responses were checked for skew. Any provider with less than 10 eligible learners or who had less than 10 responses were deemed to have failed the quality test.

Skew testing

5.4   The skew test was used to ensure that the degree of bias within the sample submitted by individual providers was within acceptable parameters. Analysis of ILR data for the population (see 4.2) produced a profile of learners for each individual provider, based on the 16 categories listed in 4.11.

5.5   The measure for skew was derived from comparing the spread of a provider's returned sample across these categories to its population profile based on the ILR.   In a perfectly representative sample, the percentage of learners within each of the 16 categories would be exactly the same as the percentage of learners within each category based on the ILR data. The skew factor was defined as the sum total percentage of respondents within each category that were above or below the required percentage for a perfectly representative sample (Annex 5 records the formula used). Following an approach agreed with the then LSC and BIS, skew factors up to 40% were defined as correctable with the application of appropriate weighting. Skew factors above 40% were regarded as not correctable.

5.6   The exception was samples that were well in excess of the minimum required to generate a confidence interval of 5%. In these cases skew resulted from over-sampling, where providers appeared to have followed the guidelines to encourage as many learners as possible to take part in the survey but had had particular success with some groups (typically 16-18 year-olds). Where the returned sample was large enough to generate a confidence interval or 3% or less, the sample was deemed valid regardless of its initial skew.

Corrective weighting

5.7   Due to the nature of the sampling process, which was managed by providers at the time of the survey, rather than being based on the ILR after the learning was completed it was inevitable that most samples would be skewed to a greater or lesser degree. In order to ensure that no provider was advantaged or disadvantaged by the skew in their sample, weightings were applied to all returned samples. These ensured that samples were rebalanced to be representative in terms of age, gender and highest level of study prior to the calculation of a score. This allowed a fair comparison between providers. The combinations of age, gender and level of study produced 16 different categories listed in Section 4.11, and returned samples were compared to population profiles for each provider using these categories. The formula used to calculate skew is set out in Annex 5.

5.8   The results from the 2007/08 Learner Satisfaction Pilot survey reinforced evidence from research literature that responses to surveys are influenced by the response method. The Pilot responses produced a consistently higher satisfaction level among paper responses compared to online responses, which could be assumed to reflect the perceived degree of anonymity. Crucially, providers had a free choice during the Pilot on whether to use paper or online methods. As a result, the relative variation in responses is a reliable guide as to the level of method bias. The average satisfaction score on paper questionnaires was 2.45% (variance, not percentage points) higher than the average satisfaction score for online questionnaires. Therefore, for the 2013/14 Learner Satisfaction survey, a corrective weighting factor of 0.9755 was applied to all paper responses to effect a reduction of 2.45% in their score.

Scoring

5.9   All the scoring questions in the survey have eleven-point response scales, running from "0" representing "very bad" through to "10" representing "very good." No intervening points on the scale are labelled. Responses of "not applicable" (or missed questions in the case of paper responses) were removed from the numerator and denominator before any score calculations were made, ensuring they had no impact on the calculation of the provider's score.

5.10   Each provider's weighted total of valid survey responses was calculated after the application of the paper method adjustment (see 5.8) and the net effect of any correction for skew (see Annex 5), although the latter was typically neutral.

5.11   The points total from the weighted scoring responses was divided by the total number of weighted scoring responses to give a mean score out of 10. Annex 6 provides a flow chart to explain this process. All questions were given equal weightings in the score calculation.

Reporting of results

5.13   RCU produced three detailed interactive reports tailored for each individual provider that were downloadable from the Provider Extranet:

- Report 1 was shared in January 2014 was based on the first six weeks of survey responses.
- Report 2 was shared in March 2014 and
- Report 3 was shared in June 2014. This final report included all survey data and was available to providers within two months of the closure of the survey.

5.14   Through these reports providers were also given feedback on the new question introduced for the 2013/14 survey which asked learners how likely they were to recommend their learning provider to friends and family. Responses were analysed to show the percentage of learners that were extremely likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely or extremely unlikely to recommend their learning provider. A combined percentage score was also produced to show the proportion of learners that were likely or extremely likely to recommend their provider

Course-level feedback

For the 2013/14 survey, a more robust methodology was devised for obtaining subject level information using data recorded on the ILR and LARS databases. The new methodology removed the need for learners to complete additional course-level questions as they had been asked to do for previous surveys.

6. Legal and ethical issues

Compliance issues

6.1   The contractors appointed to deliver the 2013/14 Learner Satisfaction survey, RCU Ltd. and Ipsos MORI, both adhere fully to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and are accredited under the international market research industry standard ISO 20252. These both place a heavy emphasis on ensuring that survey respondents give informed consent to their involvement in any survey and that the uses that will be made of respondents' answers are made clear to them before they participate.

6.2   The Code of Conduct and ISO 20252 also require full compliance with Data Protection legislation, which ensures that the arrangements for the holding and possible sharing of a respondent's answers are made clear to the individual before they consent to take part. In the case of public bodies such as the Skills Funding Agency, this requirement has to be taken into account alongside the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, under which an organisation can be asked to make data it holds available to a third party.

6.3   During the development of the 2008/09 version of the survey, the then LSC's Learner Satisfaction performance indicator lead worked closely with the LSC's solicitor to ensure compliance with all these aspects. A particular challenge was to ensure that any form of wording required by legislation was presented to learners in clear and accessible language, so that the learner could be judged to have given informed consent to their participation. Almost inevitably these parts of the questionnaire had a higher standard measure of gobbledygook (SMOG) test rating. (Summaries of the SMOG and how it works are available across the internet, for example -http://www.readabilityformulas.com/smog-readability-formula.php).

6.4   It was particularly important to make clear to learners that although the survey was confidential it was not anonymous. This is because the identification of learners was essential to allow validation and to support linkage to ILR data in order to enhance analysis (without asking a long series of cross-referencing questions).

6.5   The protections built into the survey were as follows:

- a statement on the opening page that "your answers will go directly to two survey companies - Ipsos MORI and RCU";

- a statement on the next page to reassure respondents that the survey analysis would produce aggregate results, not identifiable responses, and that "None of your lecturers, trainers or supervisors will be able to see your answers";

- explanation of the prime purpose of the survey, namely that the results would be used "to tell future learners what different colleges are like";

- confirmation at the end of the survey that the process had followed the rules of the Market Research Society and provision of a direct e-mail address for Ipsos MORI that respondents could use if they had any concerns;

- guidance on the proposed length of time for which the data would be retained and an opportunity to accelerate this: "Ipsos MORI and RCU will keep your answers for no more than 18 months"; and

- a final check that learners were happy with their responses before they hit the submit button.

Undertakings given to learners

6.6   The FE Choices Learner Satisfaction survey is a complex logistical and methodological exercise, with 889 providers eligible for the 2013/14 survey. In order to ensure that the results

of the Learner Satisfaction survey gave a fair and consistent assessment of the views of learners, the circumstances in which learners made their responses had to be as consistent as possible. Sections 2 and 3 of this report explained the approaches taken to ensure that the survey was undertaken at a standard time, towards the end of the learning period, and that there were no biases resulting from the selection of learners and that the survey was as accessible as possible. However to be confident in the robustness of the results it was important that the atmosphere in which learners' views were gathered (such as the way the survey was introduced to learners by staff and how it was administered) was as consistent as possible.

6.7   The Skills Funding Agency made available[4] guidance notes for providers (which can be found in Annex 8).

Opt-out on data storage

6.8   The ability of learners to opt out on having their responses stored for 18 months is a standard approach in surveys that allows respondents who have any concern about the security and confidentiality of their responses to have them wiped. Normally this does not preclude the respondents' answers from contributing to the survey outcomes.

6.9   Incoming data from the online survey were subject to daily encrypted backups which were stored off-site in-line with the RCU Information Security Policy. All the responses from the survey are now stored in password protected areas of secure data servers with limited access rights for authorised personnel. All backups are encrypted and stored-off site. Paper surveys are stored securely at RCU with back-up scans on a secure server. Electronic copies will be wiped and paper copies shredded 18 months after the survey closed.

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[4] Via the Learner Satisfaction pages of the .gov.uk website.

7.   Equality, diversity and accessibility issues

Compliance with web accessibility standards

7.1   The questionnaire was designed to be user friendly. In-survey navigation buttons allowed respondents to return to questions and review their answers before submitting their final responses and a progress bar appeared at the top of each screen, which provided respondents with a continuous update on how many questions remained. The 2008/09 testing confirmed that the navigation was fully accessible to non-mouse users.

7.2   The survey was compatible with handheld computers such as BlackBerry devices and smartphones.

7.3   Learners were also able to change the background colour (particularly important for learners with visual impairment or dyslexia) and size of the font using prominently placed 'accessibility buttons'. This aspect was informed by guidance obtained from the Royal National Institute for the Blind website.

7.4   The main online questionnaire was developed to minimise respondent error and increase its accessibility for all ability levels. Where possible, checks were put in place to make sure that respondents were not inputting incorrect data (for example the date of birth format was illustrated and the program corrected for minor deviations from this). Respondents were also informed automatically if they had failed to complete an essential field. When such errors were made, prompt screens appeared to inform respondents of what corrective action was needed to continue with the survey.

7.5   A 'British Sign Language' (BSL) version of the survey was developed for 2012/13. This was designed for learners with literacy difficulties, learning difficulties or visual impairments and was developed with the accreditation of the Campaign for Plain English. The BSL version of the survey incorporated a video in to every page of the online survey; each video provided a signed version of the text with a voiceover that read out the question and instruction wording.

7.6   The provider guidance notes made clear that providers were to use discretion when deciding whether or not to include individual learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in their sample. Where the application of such discretion would significantly impact on the potential population (total number of eligible learners) for the survey, providers were advised to notify the Skills Funding Agency. Providers also had the option (see Section 3) of applying to use paper questionnaires for learners for whom on-screen completion would be impossible.

8.   Timescales

8.1   The survey took place as planned between 18 November 2013 and 13 April 2014.

8.2   Paper surveys were collected following the survey closure on 10 March 2014.

8.3   The technical report was completed on 16 July 2014.

8.4   The data, as required by the data specification, was submitted by the agreed date to the Skills Funding Agency on 20 June 2014.

9.   Summary of key methodological aspects

- **Population base**: all eligible learners

- **Required confidence level**: 95%

- **Required confidence interval**: 5%

- **Small provider concession**: sample over 70% deemed sufficient

- **Acceptable skew level**: up to 40% providing the achieved confidence interval is 5% or lower (or 70% for small providers). Any provider with a confidence interval of 3% or less is not tested for skew.

- **Basis for corrective weightings**: sixteen categories (two genders, two age bands, four levels)

- **Assumed satisfaction level in sample calculator**: 80%

- **Observed satisfaction level for confidence interval calculation:** 84%

- **Rating scale**: 0-10 for 9 scoring questions, 5-point agreement scale for provider recommendation question

- **Downward weighting of paper response**: 0.9755

- **Approach to unvalidated respondents**: allow

- **Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**: provider discretion based on guidance provided to encourage participation where appropriate.

Annex 1: Identification of eligible providers

The list of eligible providers was produced by the Skills Funding Agency and updated at different points during the survey window. These lists were used to inform providers that they were required to take part in the Learner Satisfaction Survey.

Following the closure of the survey window the Skills Funding Agency produced a final provider list which was used to calculate the final results.

The table below is taken from the Skills Funding Agency website and shows which provider types are eligible for the survey.

Provider grouping	Learner Satisfaction
General FE Colleges	Yes
Independent Specialist Providers	No
Specialist Colleges (including Art & design, and Land based)	Yes
Dance and Drama Academies	No
Specialist Designated Institutions	Yes
Higher Education Institutions	Yes
Private training providers	Yes
Other Public Funded Institutions	Yes
Private Sector Public Funded Institutions	Yes

Annex 2: Identification of eligible learners

The criteria that determined which learners were eligible for the survey were set out in the Further Education Public Information Learner Satisfaction Survey provider guidance 2013/14.[5] Learners attending eligible providers and their sub-contractors between 18 November 2013 and 13 April 2014 were eligible for the survey if they met any one of the following criteria:

- 16-19 EFA Funding
- Adult Skills Funding
- Other Skills Funding Agency Funding
- Other EFA Funding

The only exceptions were:

- learners under 16
- learners on OLASS provision

While all eligible learners were entitled to take part in the Learner Satisfaction survey, providers were free to decide whether to attempt a census of all such learners or to attempt to achieve a representative sample.

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[5]https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learner-satisfaction-survey-information-document

Annex 3: Dataset used in sample verification

1.   Single Individualised Learner Record (R06) 2013/14

Annex 4: ILR fields used to match and validate survey responses

RCU used a two stage process to link the survey responses through to the Individualised Learner Records for 2013/14. In Stage 1, RCU designed a protocol to link the survey responses to the ILR using key fields in each dataset. The fields used were surname, forename, initial (derived from forename), date of birth, gender, age band, learner reference, unique learner number and Provider Reference Number. To allow for this process fields were re-coded to enable a direct match between the datasets, for example in the survey data, gender was coded 1 for Female and 2 for Male, while in the ILR these are coded F and M.

RCU then designed a process hierarchy which used the most robust matching first, with all the possible fields for matching, then removed fields in order of least impact. This resulted in 120 different matching combinations which linked the survey data and the ILR. Following the automated matching, a further manual process was undertaken to match responses that could not be done automatically. Once a match was established the survey data were then updated to include the learner identifier from the ILR and the process used to match.

In each process the UKPRN was used to filter by provider, however in some later processes this was excluded to catch any respondent who had entered the UKPRN wrongly but other check list information correctly.

Order	UKPRN	Learner Ref	Unique Learner Number	Surname	Date of Birth	Forename	Initial	Ageband	Gender
1	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
4	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
5	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
6	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
7	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
8	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
9	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
10	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
11	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
12	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
13	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
14	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
15	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
16	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
17	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
18	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
19	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
20	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
21	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
22	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
23	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
24	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
25	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
28	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
29	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
30	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
31	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
32	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
33	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
34	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
35	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
36	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
37	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
38	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
39	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
40	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
41	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
42	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
43	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
44	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
45	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
46	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
47	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
48	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
49	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
52	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
53	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
54	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
55	✓	✓	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✓
56	✓	✗	✓	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✓
57	✓	✓	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✗
58	✓	✗	✓	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✗
59	✓	✓	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✓
60	✓	✗	✓	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✓
61	✓	✓	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✗
62	✓	✗	✓	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✗

Order	UKPRN	Learner Ref	Unique Learner Number	Surname	Date of Birth	Forename	Initial	Ageband	Gender
63	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
64	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
65	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
66	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
67	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
68	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
69	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
70	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
71	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
72	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
73	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
74	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
75	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
76	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
77	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
78	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
79	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
80	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
81	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
83	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
84	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
85	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
86	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
87	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
88	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
89	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
90	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
91	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
92	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
93	✓	✗	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✓
94	✓	✗	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✓	✗
95	✓	✗	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✓
96	✓	✗	✗	Forename	✓	Surname	✓	✗	✗
97	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
99	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
100	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
101	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
102	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
103	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
104	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
105	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
106	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
107	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
108	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
109	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
110	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
111	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
112	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
113	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
114	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
115	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
116	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
117	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
118	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
119	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
120	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
99	Manually Matched								
null	Not Matched								

Annex 5: Formulae used to calculate confidence intervals and skew

Confidence interval (minimum sample size)

Sample Size Calculation (as used in the Sample Size Calculator)

$$Sample\ Size = \frac{z^2\ x\ p\ x\ (1-p)}{c^2}$$

Correction for Finite Population (for known population size)

$$Adjusted\ sample\ size = \frac{Sample\ Size}{1 + \frac{Sample\ Size - 1}{N}}$$

Confidence interval of a returned sample

$$Confidence\ Interval = Z\ x\ \sqrt{\frac{px(1-p)}{n}}\ x\ \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1}}$$

Where:

Z = Z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = Assumed / observed % expressed as a decimal (e.g. 84% satisfied = 0.84)

c = Confidence interval, expressed as decimal (e.g. ± 5% = 0.05)

N = Number of eligible Learners on provider's ILR

n = Number of valid responses

Skew formulae

Skew calculation

$$Skew = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{16} |r_i - s_i|}{2}$$

Where:

        i = Each individual learner category, ranging from 1 to 16

        r = Percentage of learners on the provider's ILR in the ith category

        s = Percentage of learners in the sample in the ith category

        | | = Absolute value

Weighting

The first stage of producing a weighting factor was to calculate a quotient for each of the 16 categories by taking the percentage of learners in the sample and dividing by the percentage of learners on the provider's ILR. A value greater than one would mean that the provider had over-sampled in that particular learner category and a value of less than one would mean the provider had under-sampled.

The inverse of this quotient was then calculated to produce the weighting factor for each of the 16 categories.   Every individual learner in the sample was then assigned a weighting factor depending on the category to which they belonged according to their age, gender and level of study. The assigned weighting factor was then applied to the individual's score.

In effect, the scores of individual learners in under-represented categories had a slightly greater impact on the overall provider score than the scores of individual learners from over-represented categories.   However, because this is a neutral weighting system the overall net effect on sample base size is zero where all learners could be assigned to one of the 16 categories. In practice, not all learners could be matched to a category and so these were assigned a weighting factor of one, producing slight variations in sample base sizes when weightings were applied.

Annex 6: Formulae used to calculate scores for valid samples

How an example provider's score was calculated

340 eligible learners from Provider X completed online surveys and 122 completed paper surveys, giving a total of 462 valid respondents. 100 other learners from the provider responded but were either not eligible or had already submitted responses.

↓

The 462 respondents answered 3,810 questions. Paper responses were subject to a 0.9755 correction factor, resulting in an adjusted total of 3,784.9 responses.

↓

The sample was then subject to corrective weightings to remove any bias resulting from comparison between the mix of learners attending the provider and the returned sample. After correction there were 3,792.3 weighted responses.

↓

The answers from these 3,792.3 responses gave 29200.7 weighted points, which were converted into a mean average score of 7.7 out of 10 (where 0 equals *very bad* and 10 equals *very good).*

↓

Finally, the returned sample was compared back to the number and mix of eligible learners attending the provider during the survey period to test if the sample was large enough and sufficiently free from bias for a score to be awarded.

Providers who were not awarded a score were allocated a Missing Score Reason Code (MSRC) to describe the reason why a valid score could not be given. These are shown in the table below, along with the number of providers receiving each MSRC.

Missing Score Reason Code	Description	Providers
NULL	Score is robust and can be shown	588
66	No ILR available to assess the sample reliability of the responses to the survey	19
67	Provider did not participate in the survey	53
68	Only invalid responses to the survey were received	3
69	The Skew % test was not passed	7
70	The Confidence Interval % test was not passed	172
71	There were fewer than 10 eligible learners on the ILR	13

Annex 7: Copies of each questionnaire

Skills Funding Agency

FE Choices
Learner Satisfaction Survey 2013/14

Welcome to this short Learner Satisfaction Survey. Learners all over England are answering these questions. Your answers are very important. The Skills Funding Agency will use your answers to tell future learners what different colleges are like.

In the questions that follow we use the word "college" to mean a further education college, adult learning provider or university.

Your completed survey will go to two survey companies - Ipsos MORI and RCU. Ipsos MORI and RCU will add your answers to the answers from other learners. They will send us, the Skills Funding Agency, the results. None of your lecturers, trainers or supervisors will see your answers.

The survey follows the rules of the Market Research Society. If you have any worries about the survey, you can contact the research company, Ipsos MORI at http://fechoices.ipsos-mori.com/contactus.

Ipsos MORI and RCU will keep your answers for no more than 18 months. If you want us to destroy your answers before then, please email us at servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk.

If you are happy to take part in the survey, please carry on.

Examples of qualifications for question (i)

Read the list of qualifications below and tick the relevant box to tell us the highest level of qualification you are taking now. If you are not sure, ask a member of staff.

Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3
(For example: Entry Level Award, Entry Level Certificate, Entry Level Diploma)

Level 1
(For example: Level 1 Award, Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 Diploma)

Level 2
(For example: Level 2 Award, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, Apprenticeship, GCSE)

Level 3
(For example: Level 3 Award, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeship, Access to Higher Education, A level, AS level)

Level 4 and above
(For example: Award, Certificate or Diploma in level 4 or above, Degree, Higher National Diploma, Higher National Certificate)

Provider Code

1	0	0	1

(a) What is your personal learner number?
(Please ask your college if you do not know it).

(b) First name

(c) Surname or family name

(d) Date of birth (dd/mm/yy for example, 15/02/82)

d d / m m / y y

Please answer the following questions by marking [x] in the box.

(e) Are you writing in the answers yourself?

☐ Yes
☐ Yes, with someone helping me
☐ No, someone is writing in my answers for me

(f) How old are you?

☐ Under 19   ☐ 19 to 24   ☐ 25 or older

(g) Are you:

☐ Female?   ☐ Male?   ☐ Prefer not to answer

(h) Does any part of your course lead to a qualification?

☐ Yes (please answer question (i) below)
☐ No (please go to Q1 opposite)
☐ Don't know (please go to Q1 opposite)

(i) If yes, what is the highest level of qualification you are taking now?

(Choose the level you think your highest course is at. If you do not know, check the examples on the back page or ask a member of staff at your college. Please choose one option).

☐ Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3
☐ Level 1
☐ Level 2
☐ Level 3
☐ Level 4 and above
☐ I don't know

To answer the following questions please give each a score out of 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good. Try to answer every question. If a question does not apply to you at all, choose the "Does not apply" option. (Some questions do not have this option.)

	Very Bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very Good 10	Does not apply
Q1 How good or bad was the information you were given when you were choosing your course?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q2 How good or bad was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Q3 How good or bad is the teaching on your course?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Q4 How good or bad is the respect staff show to you?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Q5 How good or bad is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q6 How good or bad is the support you get on this course?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q7 How good or bad is the college at listening to the views of learners?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q8 How good or bad is the college at acting on the views of learners ?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q9 Overall, how good or bad do you think the college is?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Q10 How likely is it that you would recommend the college to friends or family?

☐ Extremely likely
☐ Likely
☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
☐ Unlikely
☐ Extremely unlikely
☐ Does not apply

Thank you very much for your time.

Skills Funding Agency

Examples of qualifications for question (i)

Read the list of qualifications below and tick the relevant box to tell us the highest level of qualification you are taking now. If you are not sure, ask a member of staff.

Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3
(For example: Entry Level Award, Entry Level Certificate, Entry Level Diploma)

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(For example: Level 1 Award, Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 Diploma)

Level 2
(For example: Level 2 Award, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, Apprenticeship, GCSE)

Level 3
(For example: Level 3 Award, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeship, Access to Higher Education, A level, AS level)

Level 4 and above
(For example: Award, Certificate or Diploma in level 4 or above, Degree, Higher National Diploma, Higher National Certificate)

FE Choices

Learner Satisfaction Survey 2013/14

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Ipsos MORI and RCU will keep your answers for no more than 18 months. If you want us to destroy your answers before then, please email us at servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk.

If you are happy to take part in the survey, please carry on.

Provider Code

1	0	0	2

(a) What is your personal learner number?
(Please ask your college if you do not know it.)

(b) First name

(c) Surname or family name

(d) Date of birth (dd/mm/yy for example, 15/02/82)

d d / m m / y y

Please answer the following questions by marking x in the box.

(e) Are you writing in the answers yourself?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, with someone helping me
- ☐ No, someone is writing in my answers for me

(f) How old are you?
- ☐ Under 19
- ☐ 19 to 24
- ☐ 25 or older

(g) Are you:
- ☐ Female?
- ☐ Male?
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

(h) Does any part of your course lead to a qualification?
- ☐ Yes (please answer question (i) below)
- ☐ No (please go to Q1 opposite)
- ☐ Don't know (please go to Q1 opposite)

(i) If yes, what is the highest level of qualification you are taking now?

(Choose the level you think your highest course is at. If you do not know, check the examples on the back page or ask a member of staff at your college. Please choose one option).
- ☐ Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3
- ☐ Level 1
- ☐ Level 2
- ☐ Level 3
- ☐ Level 4 and above
- ☐ I don't know

To answer the following questions please give each a score out of 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good. Try to answer every question. If a question does not apply to you at all, choose the "Does not apply" option. (Some questions do not have this option.)

	Very Bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very Good 10	Does not apply
Q1 How good or bad was the information you were given when you were choosing your training programme?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q2 How good or bad was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks of your training programme?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q3 How good or bad is the teaching or training on your programme?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Q4 How good or bad is the respect training staff show to you?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Q5 How good or bad is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this training programme?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q6 How good or bad is the support you get on this training programme?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q7 How good or bad is the learning provider at listening to the views of learners?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q8 How good or bad is the learning provider at acting on the views of learners?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q9 Overall, how good or bad do you think the learning provider is?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Q10 How likely is it that you would recommend the learning provider to friends or family?
- ☐ Extremely likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Does not apply

Thank you very much for your time.

Skills Funding Agency

FE Choices
Learner Satisfaction Survey 2013/14

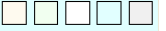Welcome to this short Learner Satisfaction Survey. Apprentices and employees in training all over England are answering these questions. Your answers are very important. The Skills Funding Agency will use your answers to tell future learners what different learning providers are like.

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If you are happy to take part in the survey, please carry on.

Examples of qualifications for question (i)

Read the list of qualifications below and tick the relevant box to tell us the highest level of qualification you are taking now. If you are not sure, ask a member of staff.

Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3
(For example: Entry Level Award, Entry Level Certificate, Entry Level Diploma)

Level 1
(For example: Level 1 Award, Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 Diploma)

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(For example: Level 2 Award, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, Apprenticeship, GCSE)

Level 3
(For example: Level 3 Award, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeship, Access to Higher Education, A level, AS level)

Level 4 and above
(For example: Award, Certificate or Diploma in level 4 or above, Degree, Higher National Diploma, Higher National Certificate)

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Welcome to this short Learner Satisfaction Survey. Your answers will go directly to two survey companies – Ipsos MORI and RCU.

Choose 'Next' to carry on.

Next →

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Ipsos MORI and RCU will add your answers to the answers from other learners. They will send us, the Skills Funding Agency, the results. None of your lecturers, trainers or supervisors will see your answers.

If you want to go back at any time choose 'Back'.

← Back   Next →

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What is the code number for your college or learning provider?

Please ask your college or learning provider if you do not know.

← Back   Next →

Skills Funding Agency

What is your personal learner number?

Please ask your college or learning provider if you do not know.

← Back   Next →

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Give the details below.

First name   [_____]

Surname or family name   [_____]

Date of birth
(dd/mm/yy for example 15/02/82) [_____]

Next →

Skills Funding Agency
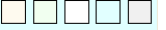
Please choose the relevant box below to tell us whether you are:

◉ at a college, adult learning provider or university
○ taking an Apprenticeship, or a Traineeship or on a workplace learning programme
○ being trained by your employer

Please ask your college, learning provider or training staff if you do not know.

← Back   Next →

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Mark
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Clarity approved by
Plain English Campaign

Skills Funding Agency

Learners all over England are answering these questions. Your answers are very important. The Skills Funding Agency will use your answers to tell future learners what different colleges are like.

In the questions that follow we use the word 'college' to mean a further education college, adult learning provider or university.

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Are you putting in the answers yourself?

◉ Yes
○ Yes, with someone helping me
○ No, someone is putting in my answers for me

← Back   Next →

Skills Funding Agency

progress

The questions start on the next screen. We ask you to give a score out of 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good.

Try to answer every question. If a question does not apply to you at all, choose the 'Does not apply' option. (Some questions do not have this option.)

Choose 'Next' below to continue.

← Back   Next →

Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad was the information you were given when you were choosing your course?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10	Does not apply
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Mark
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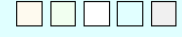Clarity approved by
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Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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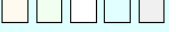Clarity approved by
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Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad is the teaching on your course?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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How good or bad is the respect staff show to you?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

← Back   Next →

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How good or bad is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10	Does not apply
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad is the support you get on this course?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10	Does not apply
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

← Back | Next →

Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad is the college at listening to the views of learners?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10	Does not apply
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

← Back | Next →

Skills Funding Agency

progress

How good or bad is the college at acting on the views of learners?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10	Does not apply
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

← **Back**   **Next** →

Skills Funding Agency

progress

Overall, how good or bad do you think the college is?

Very bad 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

← **Back**   **Next** →

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Agency

progress

How likely is it that you would recommend the college to friends or family?

○ Extremely likely
○ Likely
○ Neither likely nor unlikely
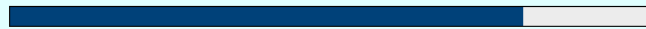○ Unlikely
○ Extremely unlikely
○ Does not apply

← Back   Next →

Skills Funding
Agency

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The last few questions are about you. They will help us to understand your answers.

How old are you?

○ Under 19
○ 19 to 24
○ 25 or older

← Back   Next →

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Are you:

◉ female?
○ male?
○ prefer not to answer

← Back   Next →

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Skills Funding Agency

progress

Does any part of your course lead to a qualification?

Please choose one option only.

○ Yes
○ No
○ Don't know

← Back   Next →

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Skills Funding Agency

progress

Read the list of qualifications below and tick the relevant box to tell us the highest level of qualification you are taking now.

If you are not sure, ask a member of staff.

Please choose one option.

○ **Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2 or Entry Level 3**
(For example: Entry Level Award, Entry Level Certificate, Entry Level Diploma)
○ **Level 1**
(For example: Level 1 Award, Level 1 Certificate, Level 1 Diploma)
○ **Level 2**
(For example: Level 2 Award, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, Apprenticeship, GCSE)
○ **Level 3**
(For example: Level 3 Award, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeship, Access to Higher Education, A level, AS level)
○ **Level 4 and above**
(For example: Award, Certificate or Diploma at level 4 or above, Degree, Higher National Diploma, Higher National Certificate)
○ **I don't know**

← Back | Next →

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Click here to change the background colour

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Skills Funding Agency

progress

If you are happy with your answers, and how the Skills Funding Agency will use them, please choose 'Submit' below.

If you want to change any of your answers please choose 'Back' below.

← Back   Submit

Skills Funding Agency

Your answers have been sent to us.

Thank you very much for your time.

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Annex 8: Learner Satisfaction Guidance

FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey 2013/14: Guidance for Colleges and Training Organisations

Contents

1. Guidance for colleges and training organisations
Introduction

The Learner Satisfaction survey for 2013/14 runs from 18 November 2013 to 13 April 2014. We will publish information and guidance on the FE Choices information pages on our website throughout the survey period and we will post notices in our Update newsletter.

Colleges and training organisations that are taking part in the survey will need to visit the Provider Extranet on a regular basis. The Provider Extranet will give regular updates on all aspects of the surveys, including near-live feedback to individual colleges and training organisations on their response rates. To access this site you will need your UKPRN code and your unique password, which we have sent to your principal or chief executive.

As a college or training organisation, what do you need to do?
Check whether you are in scope for the Learner Satisfaction Survey by consulting the Structure of FE Choices pages on our website.

How to support the survey
To participate fully in the survey and ensure you gain a valid score, colleges and training organisations will need to visit the Provider Extranet on a regular basis. We have sent to your principal or chief executive a web link, password and log-on that will allow your organisation to check response rates to the online survey at any time during the survey period. We will update these figures on a daily basis and will tell you your achieved responses and the extent to which your response pattern appears to be representative of your organisation.

New developments to the survey
New additional question
This year there will be a new question asking the learner if they would recommend the college or training organisation to friends or family.

New indicative reports to help inform you
This year we will share three indicative reports with you detailing your organisation's learner responses to the survey. For example, you will be able to see how different groups of learners are responding to each of the 10 core questions, by age, gender and level of study. The reports contain visually-engaging charts and tables which will allow you to easily identify key findings to help with planning your self-assessment.

An example of the type of information that will be shown against the overview of responses is detailed below:

These will be available in mid- January to report the period up to Christmas, early March to report the period up to February half-term and mid-May to report right up to the end of the survey.

The Provider Extranet also gives you the opportunity to let us have contact details for staff that are involved in the survey as well as giving us the dates that you plan to run the survey so we do not send you unnecessary reminders. For more details, please see the relevant pages on the Provider Extranet.

Consider the best way to give as many in-scope Skills Funding Agency and EFA-funded learners as possible the opportunity to take part in the survey
You will only be able to get a score in the survey if the number of learners responding is a sufficiently large and representative sample of all the in-scope learners in your organisation during the entire survey period. To check what your minimum sample size is likely to be, please estimate the number of in-scope learners you will have between 18 November 2013 and 13 April 2014 and use the online calculator, which is available on the Provider Extranet.

We recommend that you aim for a census approach to the survey rather than a sampling approach and start the survey early to allow enough time. By doing a census you will make sure that:

• you get enough valid responses to obtain a score and
• your responses are representative of your learner population with regard to age, gender and level of study.

We will correct minor imbalances but samples will be rejected if they are badly skewed, that is if some learner's groupings are over or under represented. The figure obtained should be used as a guide only and we strongly encourage colleges and training organisations to exceed this figure to ensure they achieve the minimum number of completed surveys. Your learners (and those of your subcontracted colleges and training organisations) can log in to the survey by entering your UKPRN and their personal Learner Reference Number, as entered on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Please ensure that your learners have access to this information. If you do not know what your UKPRN number is, please

visit the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) website, where you can access details. In the survey we refer to this number as the 'code number for your college or learning provider.'

It is important learners enter this number because it ensures that your learners' responses are correctly attributed to your organisation. Learners cannot access the survey without the UKPRN. Please note that you should also distribute this number to any subcontractors who deliver in-scope learning on your behalf and ask them in turn to communicate this to your learners who are with them. If this learning is part of your in-scope provision, it will be included when we calculate the number of eligible learners for your organisation.

In some colleges and training organisations, ULNs or Learner Reference Numbers are used routinely as intranet log-ins and appear on learner ID cards, meaning learners will have the number easily available to them. If this is not the case in your organisation, please give consideration to the best way to get this information to learners in readiness for the survey. Some learners may not be familiar with the terminology and know their ULN or personal learner reference number as the 'learner id'.

Please note that learners will still be able to complete the survey if they have lost or forgotten their Learner Reference Number but if this happens for a high proportion of survey respondents, it will delay our ability to turn the survey results around quickly. Accurate ULNs or Learner Reference Numbers will also increase the value of response breakdowns we will be able to give you at the end of the survey. We use the ULN or Learner Reference Number to confirm that the learner is in scope for the survey and serve as a protection for you as the provider by ensuring that learners cannot enter duplicate submissions.

Please note that the ULN and personal reference number are both allocated to learners at or shortly after the time of enrolment. Please ensure your learners use either the ULN or their personal learner reference number. This is essential to ensure the accuracy of the survey. Learners will complete the survey by following a link to the dedicated survey webpage. Colleges and training organisations could distribute the link in emails, messages on their intranet, and letters or posters, depending on the approach that will get the best response.

Decide if it would be beneficial for some of your learners to complete the survey on hand-held communication devices such as BlackBerrys
You can access the survey and complete it from any internet-enabled communication device. The survey will be available 24 hours a day from 18 November to 13 April and can be completed from any internet linked computer, palm top, BlackBerry or other smart phone. More guidance on this is available on the Learner Satisfaction web pages of our website.

Consider how you want to integrate the Learner Satisfaction survey with your own survey processes
If you want learners to complete one of your own surveys after the Learner Satisfaction survey, you may want to use the 'hyperlink-embedded method' to achieve this. For guidance on how to link the surveys, please read 'Guidance on hyperlink-embedded method for linking the Learner Satisfaction survey with your college or provider survey', which is available on our website.

To comply with the Data Protection Act, it is important that you follow this guidance. The advantage of the 'hyperlink-embedded method' is that it works from any starting point where you may want to embed the hyperlink – such as a Word document, an email or your intranet home page. This method is therefore versatile and gives the user a consistent approach when completing the surveys.

Course-level feedback
In a change to this year's survey, learners will **not** be asked to complete additional course-level questions.

This is because we have devised a more robust methodology for obtaining subject level information using data recorded on the ILR and LARA database. This means that we will be able to identify a subject area for the large majority of respondents. Therefore, we would urge all colleges and training organisations to maximise the number of learners completing the survey as this will greatly increase your ability to analyse the survey findings at subject level.

Decide when to administer the survey during the survey window: 18 November 2013 until 13 May 2014
Colleges and training organisations can decide how they manage the administration of the survey throughout this period. It will be possible for learners to log on at any time of the day, and from any location and any computer, provided that they have their provider's UKPRN and personal Learner Reference Number to hand. All learners on programmes during this period are entitled to take part including learners, whose learning programmes end in or before December 2013. Colleges and training organisations can let us know what their planned survey start and end dates are on the Provider Extranet.

Decide if you need to apply for permission to use some paper surveys
In exceptional circumstances, colleges and training organisations can apply to use paper surveys if it is impossible for some learners to complete the survey online during the survey period. If this is the case for some of your learners and you wish to apply for paper surveys, please follow the link on the Provider Extranet. Colleges and training organisations have the option of receiving course-level feedback from online survey responses but we cannot offer this facility for paper surveys. Paper survey responses are subject to a small downward statistical adjustment during the calculation of the score to reflect the different pattern of responses for learners completing paper and online surveys. All paper surveys **must** be completed by a learner or by someone with a learner support role if the learner has learning difficulties or disabilities. It is not acceptable for staff to interview learners or summarise views obtained in other ways. All responses will be collected by courier from colleges and training organisations on **12 March 2014** and only those responses that are collected at that time can be included in the response calculation.

Sell the benefits of the survey
Some colleges and training organisations approach surveys of this kind as a purely administrative exercise. However, there is evidence that learners will respond better to the survey if they understand its importance and see it as part of their entitlement as a learner. It would be useful if colleges and training organisations considered the best way to publicise the survey at an early stage, so that learners see it as an opportunity to share their views, rather than an obligation.

Convey the ease with which the survey can be completed

The survey is very short, taking only a few minutes for most learners to complete. **Plan to include all Skills Funding Agency or EFA-funded learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those undertaking programmes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).**

Colleges and training organisations who wish to use **paper-based surveys have until 22 November 2013** to apply. We expect colleges and training organisations that do not make an application by this date to use the online survey. The paper-based survey window ends earlier than the online survey and the final day is **10 March 2014**. Further information is available on our FE Choices information pages part of our website.

Before the survey please make sure your learners have access to:
• your provider reference number (UKPRN)
• either their Unique Learner Number (ULN) if this is available or their personal Learner Reference Number as entered on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

We will use your learners' responses to calculate your Learner Satisfaction score which we will be publish on the FE Choices comparison website.

If you have any questions, please:
• **see the FAQs on the Provider Extranet.**
• **go to the Learner Satisfaction survey pages of our website.**
• **contact the Data Service Helpdesk**.

2. Help for learners
We have designed the questions to be, wherever possible, applicable to all learners in the learning context they have selected, that is, on a course, a learning programme or a training programme. We have also aimed to make the wording as clear as possible.

We realise that some learners will need help with the process of completing the survey. We ask you to use your professional judgement to ensure that any help you provide has the most neutral effect possible on the answers the learners give. If someone is giving a learner significant help, for example, acting as a translator or entering the answers on the survey on behalf of a learner who is unable to record their answers directly, we ask you to let us know this in the survey.

If a learner feels that a particular question does not apply to them at all, they can select 'This does not apply to me' and then complete the rest of the survey. We expect occurrences of this to be very rare. Some learners may ask what a question means. The questionnaires are being completed by hundreds of thousands of learners all over the country in a wide variety of learning contexts and we need to avoid any distortion that might result from different staff giving different explanations. If learners do not understand a word or phrase in a question, please restrict any help to dictionary definitions of terms. For example, if a learner asks what the word 'advice' means, it would be fine to say 'advice means information and explanations given to help you decide about something' but not to give examples of specific advice sessions

that the learners might have received from your organisation since this could influence their response.

Appropriate briefing of learners

We ask colleges and training organisations to encourage learners to complete the survey. However, encouraging learners to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perception of their experiences is not acceptable. The National Union of Students (NUS) is working with us to encourage learners who feel that they have been unfairly monitored or influenced during their completion of the survey to make this known to the Agency. Any allegations of inappropriate actions to influence the outcomes of the survey will be taken seriously by us.

Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those undertaking programmes in ESOL in the Learner Satisfaction Survey

Learners can access a version of the survey in British Sign Language (BSL) by clicking on the icon on the left-hand side of the page. This version also includes a voice-over, which may also help ESOL learners or other groups of learners who would benefit from hearing the questions spoken out loud.

We commissioned research visits to a number of colleges and training organisations with substantial concentrations of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This led to a number of recommendations that we have incorporated into the design of the survey and the survey website. We ask colleges and training organisations to use their discretion when deciding whether to survey learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to not include learners who would be distressed, or for whom the survey would be inappropriate.

If you expect your exclusion of these learners to have a significant impact on the number of learners undertaking the survey and your ability to achieve sufficient sample size, then please contact us by emailing the service desk mailbox by **3 February 2014**. You will need to let us know how many learners will be omitted.

This will ensure that we can take this into account when judging your minimum sample size. We realise that some learners will need help with the process of completing the survey online. We ask you to use your professional judgement to ensure that any help you or your colleagues give allows learners views to be recorded as accurately as possible without influencing those views. The online survey asks that anyone helping a learner to record their views indicates this and describes the type of help they provide.

Some colleges and training organisations have in the past had great success in including learners with severe or complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, because they planned ahead for the survey and built discussion of the survey issues into curriculum discussions. For example, some colleges and training organisations find it most effective to discuss the views of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on a daily or weekly basis, and to log these using a diary approach. Other colleges and training organisations use learner support staff to assist learners in the completion of surveys. Approaches like this are fully acceptable if they allow learners to give their views without influencing those views. The Learner Satisfaction survey allows people who are helping learners to complete the survey on their behalf, to record that fact by indicating this in their online responses.

We have tested the questions with learners undertaking ESOL programmes and believe that the vast majority of learners with a learning level of Entry 3 or above will be able to complete the online survey unaided. Participation in the survey is optional for learners, but colleges and training organisations should make every attempt to ensure that learners have the opportunity to take part. Colleges and training organisations will, however, need to make provision for learners to be able to opt out at any stage during the survey process and to ensure that these learners are not then contacted again about the survey.

3. Minimum Sample Size Calculator

The Learner Satisfaction survey will be accessible online 24 hours a day, seven days a week between 18 November 2013 and 13 April 2014. We strongly recommend that all your learners are given the opportunity to take part.
As in previous years, you will only be able to obtain a score in the survey if the number of learners responding represents a sufficiently large sample of all the inscope learners in your organisation during the survey period.

The minimum number that will be needed to guarantee a valid score is based on the sample size required to give 95% confidence that the score is accurate to +/- 3%. The calculator will help you to estimate this, but we strongly urge you to aim for a sample well above this minimum figure in case of invalid or duplicate responses. Enter the total number of in-scope learners you expect to have in the green box and the minimum required sample will appear in the yellow box.
To ensure that the minimum sample size is realistic for smaller colleges and training organisations, we set a ceiling of 70% of in-scope learners and no provider will be required to exceed this percentage. Therefore the minimum sample size generated by the calculator is based on either the 70% rule or 3% confidence interval, whichever is the smaller.

It is important that the sample is broadly representative of your learner population in terms of age, gender and level of study. Corrective weightings are applied to ensure any bias in the sample is accounted for but this is not possible where sample skew is too large. Therefore, badly skewed samples may not receive a valid score. Remember that some responses may be ruled invalid if they are duplicates or if the learners are not on provision funded by us. These factors can lead to your final sample being smaller than the original number of responses submitted by your learners. Always aim for a response well above the required minimum.

4. Guidance on selecting qualifications for colleges and training organisations

Towards the end of the Learner Satisfaction survey, (**see Annex 1**) we ask learners to tell us the highest level of qualification they are taking. We use this information to feed back near-live information to colleges and training organisations on the profile of learners, which have answered the survey to date. This information is checked against the ILR after the survey has ended. This paper provides guidance to support the information of qualification types in the Learner Satisfaction survey to aid colleges and training organisations and learners to choose the option that best reflects the learning they are undertaking.