



Skills Funding
Agency

FE Choices learner satisfaction survey guidance

October 2016

Of interest to all colleges and other training organisations.

1. FE Choices learner satisfaction survey guidance

Introduction

The FE Choices learner satisfaction survey will run from 31 October 2016 to 7 April 2017. We will publish information and guidance on the [FE Choices information pages](#) on our website and related articles in our [Update](#) newsletter, throughout the survey period.

Colleges and other training organisations participating in the survey will need to visit the [Provider Extranet](#) regularly. Here we will provide regular updates on all aspects of your organisation's survey, including near-live feedback on your response rates. To access this site, you will need your UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) and your unique site password. We have sent this information to your colleague who is your organisation's key contact with the SFA's Business Operations team.

In response to feedback from providers and the move towards a single Adult Education Budget, this year there will be one survey for learners (in previous years, there was a separate survey for community learning provision.)

Learners funded through the Adult Education Budget, including learners on community learning and those in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan are eligible to take part.

If you have any questions, please:

- refer to the FAQs on the [Provider Extranet](#)
- go to the FE Choices information pages on [.GOV.UK](#)
- email the [service desk](#)

As a college or other training organisation, what do you need to do to participate in the survey?

- 1. Check whether you are in scope for the learner satisfaction survey by consulting the [Information pages](#) on GOV.UK.**
- 2. Ensure learners know how to log on with their UKPRN and their personal learner reference number.**

Your learners (and those of your subcontracted colleges and other training organisations) can log in to the survey by entering your provider reference number (UKPRN) and their personal learner reference number / unique learner number, as entered on the individualised learner record (ILR).

Provider reference number (UKPRN)

- Please ensure that your learners have access to this information. It is important learners enter this number because it ensures that their responses are attributed to your organisation correctly.
- Learners cannot access the survey without the UKPRN.
- If you do not know your UKPRN, 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 'number for your college or learning provider'.
- Distribute the number to any subcontractors that deliver in-scope learning on your behalf and ask them in turn to communicate this to any of your learners who are with them. If this learning is part of your in-scope provision, we will include it when we calculate the number of eligible learners for your organisation.

Learner reference number / unique learner number

- Accurate unique learner numbers or learner reference numbers will increase the value of response breakdowns provided at the end of the survey.
- We use the unique learner number or learner reference number to confirm that the learner is in scope for the survey.
- It also protects you by ensuring that learners cannot enter duplicate submissions.
- If learners do not have their unique learner number easily available to them (for example, on their ID cards), please consider the best way to get this information to them in readiness for the survey.
- Some learners may not be familiar with the terminology or know that their unique learner number or personal learner reference number is the 'learner ID'. The unique learner number and personal reference number are both allocated to learners at enrolment, or shortly afterwards.
- Learners will still be able to complete the survey if they have lost or forgotten their learner reference number. However, if this happens for a high proportion of survey respondents, it will delay our ability to turn the survey results around quickly.
- Learners will complete the survey by following a link to the dedicated survey web page. You can distribute the link to them in emails, messages on your intranet, and letters or posters, depending on the approach that will get the best response.

3. To participate fully in the survey and ensure you gain a valid score, you need to visit the [Provider Extranet](#) regularly.

We send your colleague who is the key contact with the SFA Business Operations team a web link, password and log-on. These allow your organisation to check response rates to the online survey at any time during the survey period. We will

update these figures daily, and inform you of your achieved responses and the extent to which your response pattern appears to represent your organisation.

The Provider Extranet also gives you the opportunity give us contact details for staff that are involved in the survey. This will allow you to stay up-to-date with survey reporting.

Indicative reports and regular reporting

- We will share two indicative reports with you detailing your organisation's learner responses to the survey.
- These are based on all learners who take part in the survey and include separate feedback for learners taking apprenticeships and those in community learning.
- You will be able to see, for example, how different groups of learners are responding to each of the 12 core questions and 2 outcomes questions, by age, gender and level of study.
- We ask learners to tell us the highest level of qualification they are taking. We use this information to give you near-live information on the profile of learners who have answered the survey. After the survey ends we check this information against the ILR.
- The reports contain visually engaging charts and tables, which will allow you to easily identify key findings to help with planning your self-assessment.

We will issue the reports in February to report the period up to February half-term and at the end of May to report right up to the end of the survey.

4. Consider the best way to give as many in-scope learners (SFA- and EFA-funded) as possible the opportunity to take part in the survey.

Plan to include all SFA- or EFA-funded learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities **and those undertaking community learning programmes**, including those taking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

You will only get a score in the survey if the number of learners who respond is a sufficiently large and representative sample of all in-scope learners in your organisation during the entire survey period.

To determine your minimum sample size, estimate the number of in-scope learners you will have between 31 October 2016 and 7 April 2017 and use the online calculator, which is available on the [Provider Extranet](#).

Minimum sample size calculator

There will be a single sample size calculator, so all eligible learners, including your community learners, should be included in your 'learner population' to be entered into the calculator.

The minimum number 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 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 other training organisations, we set a ceiling of 70% of in-scope learners and no training provider will need 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.

Census approach

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 taking a census you will make sure that:

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

We will correct minor imbalances but reject samples if they are badly skewed (that is, if some learners' groupings are over- or under-represented). Only use the figure obtained as a guide. We strongly encourage you to exceed this figure to ensure you achieve the minimum number of completed surveys.

We have devised a robust methodology for obtaining subject-level information using data recorded on the ILR and [learning aims search](#). This means that we will be able to identify a subject area for most respondents. Therefore, we urge you to maximise the number of learners completing the survey. This will greatly increase your ability to analyse the survey findings at subject level.

5. Decide if it would be beneficial for some of your learners to complete the survey on smart phones, tablets or other devices that have access to the internet.

- You can access the survey and complete it from any internet-enabled communication device.
- The survey will be available 24 hours a day from 31 October 2016 to 7 April 2017.
- Learners can complete it from any internet-linked computer, tablet or other smart phone.
- For more details, refer to the [learner satisfaction survey](#) webpages of our website on GOV.UK.

6. 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'. For

more details, read the '*Guidance on hyperlink-embedded method for linking the learner satisfaction survey with your college or provider survey*', which is available on the [learner satisfaction](#) webpages of our website on GOV.UK.

To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, 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 homepage.

7. Decide when to administer the survey during the survey window of 31 October 2016 to 7 April 2017.

You can decide how you administer 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, as long as they have their provider's UKPRN and personal learner reference number. All learners in learning during this period are entitled to take part, including those whose learning programmes end in or before December 2016.

8. Decide if you need to apply for permission to use some paper surveys.

In exceptional circumstances, you can apply to use paper surveys. For example, some learners may find it impossible 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, follow the link on the [Provider Extranet](#).

You have the option of receiving course-level feedback from online survey responses but we cannot offer this facility for paper surveys.

Please note the following.

- If you wish to use paper-based surveys, you must apply by 1 December 2016. We expect colleges and other 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 **13 March 2017**.
- All paper surveys **must** be completed by a learner or by someone with a learner support role if the learner has learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- It is not acceptable for staff to interview learners or summarise views obtained in other ways
- Couriers will collect all responses from colleges and other training organisations on **15 March 2017**
- We will only include responses collected at that time in the response calculation

9. Sell the benefits of the survey

Evidence suggests that learners will respond better to the survey if they understand its importance and see it as part of their entitlement as a learner.

Consider 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.

We also recommend that you let learners know how easy it is to complete the survey. The survey is very short, taking only a few minutes for most learners to complete.

10. Providing help for learners to complete the survey

- Wherever possible, we have designed the questions to apply to all learners in the learning context they have selected (that is, on a course, a learning programme or a training programme).

- 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 these occurrences to be very rare.
- We have also made the questions as clear as possible.
- However, some learners will need help to complete the survey. Use your professional judgement to ensure that any help you provide has the most neutral effect possible on the answers the learners give. If you are helping learners to complete the survey on their behalf, the survey allows you to record that fact by indicating it in their online responses.
- Some learners may ask what a question means. Learners across England complete the questionnaires in a wide variety of learning contexts and we need to avoid any distortion that might result from different explanations. If learners do not understand a word or phrase in a question, please only give them dictionary definitions of terms. For example, if a learner asks what the word 'advice' means, it is acceptable to say, 'advice means information and explanations given to help you decide about something'. However, it is unacceptable to give examples of specific advice sessions that the learners might have received from your organisation, since this could influence their response.
- Encouraging learners to reflect in their answers anything other than their genuine perception of their experiences is not acceptable. We will take seriously any allegations of inappropriate actions to influence the outcomes of the survey.
- We have tested the questions with learners who undertake ESOL programmes and believe that most learners with a learning level of Entry 3 or above will be able to complete the online survey unaided.

11. Provide support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those undertaking programmes in ESOL.

Feedback from previous surveys has revealed a number of approaches that may help to support learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, and that will allow learners to give their views without you influencing those views. For example:

- plan ahead and build discussion of the survey into curriculum discussions
- discuss the views of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities daily or weekly, and log these in a diary
- use learner support staff to help learners complete surveys
- remind learners that they have access to a response scale, which features icons of 'smiley' and 'sad' faces to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction

Participation in the survey is optional for learners, but you should make every attempt to ensure that learners have the opportunity to take part.

Use your discretion when deciding whether to survey learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and whether to include learners who would be distressed, or for whom the survey would be inappropriate.

You will need to make provision for learners to opt out at any stage during the survey process and ensure that you do not contact these learners again about the survey.

If you expect your exclusion of learners to have a significant impact on the number of learners undertaking the survey and your ability to achieve sufficient sample size, please email the [Service Desk](#) mailbox by **5 February 2017**. Let us know how many learners you are not including. This will ensure that we can take this into account when judging your minimum sample size.

The college version of the questions is below for reference.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the teaching on your course or activity?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way staff treat you?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course or activity?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the support you get on this course or activity?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the course or activity is meeting your expectations?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that staff respond to the views of learners?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the college or organisation that provides your learning?

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does not apply

How likely is it that you would recommend the college or organisation that provides your learning to friends or family?

Extremely likely

Likely

Neither likely nor unlikely

Unlikely

Extremely unlikely

Does not apply

Why did you choose to do the course or activity?
(Tick **all** that apply.)

To gain skills and knowledge

To get a qualification

To meet people and make new friends

For personal interest or pleasure

To help me take part in social activities

To help me get into work

It is needed for my work

To improve my health or well-being

To progress onto another course or higher education

To help other people

Other reason

What was the main reason for choosing to do the course or activity?
(Tick **one** only.)

- To gain skills and knowledge
- To get a qualification
- To meet people and make new friends
- For personal interest or pleasure
- To help me take part in social activities
- To help me get into work
- It is needed for my work
- To improve my health or well-being
- To progress onto another course or higher education
- To help other people
- Other reason

Which of the following do you think will apply when you have finished your course or activity?

(Tick **all** that apply.)

- I'll have more skills or knowledge
- I'll have gained a qualification
- I'll have made new friends
- I'll be more confident
- I'll be more likely to take part in social activities
- I'll be more likely to get into work
- I'll be more likely to progress at work
- My health or well-being will have improved
- I'll be more likely to progress onto another course or higher education

I'll be more able to help other people

None of the above

What do you think will be the main outcome of taking the course, training programme or activity?

(Tick **one** only.)

I'll have more skills or knowledge

I'll have gained a qualification

I'll have made new friends

I'll be more confident

I'll be more likely to take part in social activities

I'll be more likely to get into work

I'll be more likely to progress at work

My health or well-being will have improved

I'll be more likely to progress onto another course or higher education

I'll be more able to help other people

None of the above



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