



Department
for Education

FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey Guidance

**For all colleges and other training
organisations**

March 2020

Contents

Introduction	3
Survey questions	5
Participating in the survey	6
Quality assurance	13
Survey results and publication	14

Introduction

The learner satisfaction survey will run from **9 March until 26 June 2020**. We are grateful for your patience and understanding during the delay to the fieldwork.

The learner satisfaction survey will be administered by two independent research agencies - Ipsos MORI and RCU Limited, both of whom delivered the survey in previous years.

As you may have noticed, the FE Choices Employer Satisfaction Survey will not be running this year. Scores on satisfaction of employers will be collected through a new feedback feature for the apprenticeship service. Please find more information on:

<https://sfadigital.blog.gov.uk/2018/09/26/new-feedback-feature-for-the-apprenticeship-service/>

Changes to the learner satisfaction survey

We have changed the **publication rules** from this year, so that satisfaction data for all providers will be published (unless it's disclosive). Also published will be a measure of the confidence level of the score. For further details see section 5.

Key resources and websites

Learners, including learners funded under the apprenticeship levy, will be able to access the online survey for 2019/20 here: www.ipsos-mori.com/learnersatisfaction.

The survey can be completed from any internet-linked computer, tablet, smart phone or other internet-linked devices. Information and guidance will be published on gov.uk. For more information, please see [the relevant pages](#) on our website. Related articles and/or updates throughout the survey fieldwork period can be found via the [Inform page or within](#) the ESFA's newsletter.

Colleges and other training organisations participating in the survey will need to visit the [Provider Extranet](#) regularly. Here there will be regular updates on all aspects of the survey, including near-live feedback to individual colleges and other training organisations on response rates. To access the Extranet you will need your UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) and your unique password. We have sent this information to your Head of Organisation.

In-scope providers

To check whether your organisation is in scope for the learner satisfaction survey, please check the [information pages](#) on .GOV.UK

In-scope learners

Learners attending in-scope colleges and other training organisations including subcontractors are eligible for the survey if they or their course meet any one of the following criteria:

- Are doing a Community Learning course
- Receive 16 to 19 funding
- Receive Adult Education Budget funding
- Are part of an apprenticeship
- Receive any other ESFA funding
- Receive 24+ Advanced Learning Loans

The only exceptions are the following who are excluded:

- Learners under 16
- Learners on Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) provision
- Learners attending sixth form colleges
- ESF funded provision

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](#)

Survey questions

The Learner Satisfaction Survey 2019 to 2020 will ask learners to rate their provider on the following aspects:

- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the teaching on your course or activity?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way staff treat you?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the support you get on this course or activity?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that staff respond to the views of learners?
- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your college or organisation that provides your learning?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the course or activity is meeting your expectations
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the course or activity is preparing you for what you want to do next?
- How likely is it that you would recommend the college or organisation that provides your learning to friends or family?
- Which of the following do you think will apply when you have finished your course or activity?
- What do you think will be the main outcome of taking the course, training programme or activity?

Learners doing an apprenticeship will be asked these additional questions:

- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the level of knowledge and expertise of training staff?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the training provided by your employer?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your employer supports you in your training?

Participating in the survey

This section sets out what a college or other training organisation need to do to participate in the survey.

The Learner Satisfaction Survey will be predominantly online (paper questionnaires are allowed in exceptional circumstances only – see page 13). Listed below are the ten key things you need to consider when administering the online survey. Each point is then explained in detail throughout the rest of the guidance document.

1. Test the online survey from **2 March to 6 March 2020** at www.ipsos-mori.com/learnersatisfaction, to ensure that your firewall will not block access to the survey (page 7).
2. Ensure learners know your UKPRN and their personal learner reference number as they will need this to take part (page 7).
3. Check the [Provider Extranet](#) regularly to ensure that participation rates for your organisation are sufficient to gain a representative score (page 8).
4. Consider ways to give as many in-scope learners (ESFA funded) as possible the opportunity to participate in the survey and ensure you meet your minimum number of survey responses (page 8).
5. Consider if you want to integrate your own survey with the Learner Satisfaction Survey (page 10).
6. Decide when to administer the survey during the survey window of **9 March to 26 June 2020** (page 10).
7. Promote the benefits of the survey (page 10).
8. Decide if you need to apply for permission to use some paper surveys (page 10).
9. Provide help for learners to complete the survey (page 11).
10. Provide support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those undertaking programmes in ESOL (page 12).

Test the online survey from 2 March to 6 March 2020 to ensure that your firewall will not block access to the survey

You can test the functionality of the Learner Satisfaction Survey at www.ipsos-mori.com/learnersatisfaction by using the **Test UKPRN: 99999999**. The Test UKPRN can still be used by providers during the live survey window to test the survey. Please only use the Test UKPRN for this purpose and **do not pass the test UKPRN onto learners**. Any responses completed under the test UKPRN will be removed from the data during the validation process, once the survey has closed.

It is important that you test the survey and check that your firewall will not block access to the survey. If it does, please liaise with your network manager to ensure that this problem is resolved.

Once you access the survey site, please test that the functionality of the survey is compatible with your systems by browsing back and forth within the survey, selecting answers and submitting test responses.

Ensuring 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 into 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 may still access the survey without the UKPRN but this relies on them being able to select the correct provider from a list.
- 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 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 their '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 process the survey results quickly.

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

We send your Head of Organisation a web link, password and username (which is your UKPRN). These details allow you to check response rates to the online survey at any time during the survey period. These figures are updated daily and inform you of your achieved responses and the extent to which your respondents appear to represent your organisation.

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

Consider the best way to give as many in-scope learners (ESFA-funded) as possible the opportunity to take part in the survey

Plan to include all ESFA-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 robust 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.

How to work out the minimum number of responses your organisation needs to achieve a representative score

To determine the minimum sample size needed to achieve a representative score, estimate the number of in-scope learners you will have between **9 March to 26 June 2020** and use the online calculator, which is available on the [Provider Extranet](#).

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 representative score is based on the sample size required to give 95% confidence that the score is accurate to $\pm 3\%$ ¹. The calculator will help you to estimate this, but we encourage you to aim for a sample well above this minimum figure in case of invalid or duplicate responses.

How to use the calculator:

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 threshold of 70% of in-scope learners and such training providers are not expected to exceed this target. Therefore, the minimum sample size generated by the calculator is based on either the 70% rule or 3% confidence interval, whichever is the smaller².

Census approach

We recommend that you aim for a census approach and invite all your in-scope learners to complete 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 representative 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 through the calculator as a guide. **We strongly encourage you to exceed this figure to ensure you achieve a sufficient number of completed surveys.**

¹ This is based on the standard formula for sample size using a worst case p value (satisfaction level) of 50%.

² The 70% rule will normally apply to providers that have less than 290 eligible learners

Your ability to analyse findings by subject level is greatly increased by the number of learners who respond. Therefore, we encourage you to maximise the number of learners completing the survey.

Consider how you want to integrate your own survey with the Learner Satisfaction Survey

If you want learners to complete one of your own surveys directly after the Learner Satisfaction Survey, you can link your survey to it. 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 .GOV.UK.

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.

Decide when to administer the survey during the survey window of 9 March to 26 June 2020

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 internet-linked device, as long as they have their provider's UKPRN and personal learner reference number. All learners in learning during the survey period are entitled to take part. We recommend that you invite your learners to take part as soon as possible after the survey launches, to maximise your number of respondents. This is particularly important this year as the survey window is shorter than in previous years.

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.

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](#).

Please note the following:

- If you wish to use paper-based surveys, you must apply by **06 April**. 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 **22 May 2020**.
- 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 **3 June 2020**. We will only include responses collected at that time in the response calculation.
- You have the option of receiving course-level feedback from online survey responses but we cannot offer this facility for paper surveys

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). We have made the questions as clear as possible. 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.

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 the fact by indicating it in their 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 anything other than their genuine perception of their experiences in their answers is not acceptable. We take any allegations of inappropriate actions to influence the outcomes of the survey very seriously. 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.

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 on 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 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](#) mail box by **27 April 2020**. Let us know how many learners you are not including. This will ensure that we can take this into account when assessing the minimum sample size needed to achieve a representative score.

Quality assurance

Ipsos MORI will contact a random sample of learners who have completed the survey for quality assurance. They will administer a short questionnaire to:

- Confirm that the learner had completed the survey;
- check that the learner was able to express their views (for those who completed the survey in the presence of the provider staff); and
- gather suggestions on how the survey may be improved.

Any learners reporting that they did not complete the survey or felt unable to express their honest opinion in the survey will be flagged to the Department for Education for further investigation.

Survey results and publication

Publication of scores

We have changed the **publication rules** from this year, so that satisfaction data for **all** providers will be published (unless it's disclosive). The confidence level of the score will also be published alongside the data to aid users in interpreting the data³.

The overall provider score will be calculated from the learner response to the "recommendation question". Learners will be asked if they would recommend their college or other training organisation to friends or family. The question has six response options: extremely likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, extremely unlikely and does not apply. The responses to this question will be analysed to produce the overall score which will be a combined percentage of those answering extremely likely and likely. Responses of "does not apply" (or non-responses in the case of paper questionnaires) will be excluded before the score is calculated. Weightings will be applied to correct for any skew within survey samples.

Interactive provider reports

We will share two indicative reports with you detailing your organisation's learner responses to the survey. These are based on all learners who participate in the survey and include separate results 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 core questions, by age, gender and level of study.

The reports contain visually engaging charts and tables, which identify key findings to help with planning your self-assessment.

We will issue the reports in **April 2020** to provide findings for the period up to that date and at the end of **July 2020** to provide your final findings for the year. Reports can be downloaded from the Provider Extranet when ready.

³ Statistically robust scores will be identified as a sample that gives a 95% confidence that the measured results are within 5% of the true value, provided that they are not badly skewed (based on gender, age and level of study). The p value (satisfaction level) used in the confidence interval calculation will be the providers' measured score, provided that there is a minimum sample size of at least 30 responses (this is a change from previous years' where the p value used was the mean value for all providers; the new calculation is more robust but does requires an additional minimum threshold value). In addition, in order not to disadvantage small providers, a statistically robust score would result where 70% of eligible learners were included in the sample.

If you have any queries please contact the [service desk](#). Thank you for supporting the survey and we hope you find the results useful.



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