

Framework for Excellence

Learner Views survey - guidance notes – Version 2.0

Date of issue May 2011

Publication intent NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

AS A COLLEGE OR PROVIDER WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Check whether you are in scope

Please refer to the [Provider Guide 2010/11](#), available from the FfE web site, to confirm if your organisation is in scope for the Framework for Excellence 2010/11.

The FfE Learner Views survey applies to the following learners on programmes with in-scope providers and their sub-contractors between 15 November 2010 and 27 May 2011:

- All post 19 learners taking at least one learning aim funded by either the Skills Funding Agency's Learner Responsive funding stream, or the Employer Responsive funding stream
- All 16-18 learners funded by the Skills Funding Agency or the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) in: General FE and Tertiary Colleges, Specialist Colleges (including Art & Design, Land-based and Special Designated Institutions), other independent organisations including private training providers and other public funded organisations, for example, local authorities.

The following exemptions apply:

- Providers with less than 10 learners between 15 November 2010 and 27 May 2011
- Learners in sixth form colleges and school sixth forms.

Check which of your learners are in scope

The survey only applies to Skills Funding Agency funded learners and 16-18 learners funded by the YPLA. Learners whose funding comes entirely from other sources, for example Department of Works and Pensions, will not be counted within the Framework for Excellence. If any questionnaire responses are returned from learners who are not funded by the Skills Funding Agency or the YPLA, these will be extracted before the analysis is carried out.

Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 377 5000 www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk
An agency of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

Access the Provider Extranet

Providers will need to visit the [Provider Extranet](#) on a regular basis. The Provider Extranet can be accessed from the Learner Views page on the Framework for Excellence web site and will give regular updates on all aspects of the surveys, including feedback to individual providers on their response rates and a list of FAQs. To access this site, you will need your UKPRN and your unique password, which has been sent to your Principal or Chief Executive.

Ensure that learners have access to their learner reference number and your unique provider number in preparation for the survey and when they undertake the survey

Learners log-in to the survey by entering your provider number (UKPRN) and their personal learner reference number, as it appears in field L03 of the ILR.

In some providers, 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 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 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 learner reference numbers will also increase the value of response breakdowns we will be able to give you at the end of the survey. The number is used to confirm that the learner is in scope for the survey and also serves as a protection for providers by ensuring that learners cannot enter duplicate submissions.

Please note that the personal reference number is allocated to learners at the time of enrolment. It is **not** the Unique Learner Reference Number (ULN) which is being introduced across the country. We cannot use the ULN for the survey yet because not all learners have a ULN and there can also be delay between learners beginning their learning and receiving a number.

Please ensure that your UKPRN reference number is widely publicised during the survey period. 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 sub-contractors who deliver in-scope learning on your behalf. If this learning is part of your in-scope provision it will be included when we calculate your learners.

Consider how you want to integrate the Framework for Excellence Learner Views survey with your own survey processes

If you want learners to complete one of your own surveys after the Learner Views survey, you may want to use the “hyperlink-embedded method” (see Annex A) to achieve this.

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 also gives a consistent user experience.

Decide how to distribute the weblink to learners

Learners will complete the survey by following a link to the dedicated survey webpage. Colleges and providers 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 when to administer the survey during the survey window - 15 November 2010 until 27 May 2011

Providers 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 provided that they have their provider's UKPRN and personal learner reference number to hand.

Organise a paper survey if you have applied for permission to do so

In exceptional circumstances providers could apply to use paper surveys if it is impossible for some learners to complete the survey online during the extended survey window period. Providers who wished to use paper based surveys had until 15 November 2010 to apply and will have been notified of the outcome of their application. Providers who did not make an application by the 15 November 2010 will be expected to complete the survey online.

This year providers will have the option of receiving course level feedback on 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.

The paper based survey window ends earlier than the online survey and the final day is **26 April 2011**. All responses will be collected by courier from providers on 27 April 2011 and only those responses that are collected at that time can be included in the response calculation.

Decide if it would be beneficial for some of your learners to complete the survey on hand-held communication devices such as BlackBerrys

The survey can be accessed and completed from any internet enabled communication device such as BlackBerrys. The survey will be available 24 hours a day during the survey period and can be completed from any internet-linked computer, palm top, BlackBerry or other smart phone.

Consider the best way to give as many in-scope Skills Funding Agency and YPLA 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 represents a sufficiently large sample of all the in scope learners in your organisation during the entire survey period. If you want to check what your minimum sample size is likely to be please estimate the number of in-scope learners you will have between 15 November 2010 and 27 May 2011 and use the online calculator which is available on the [Provider Extranet](#). As well as getting enough responses to ensure a valid score, you should also ensure that the balance of responses is broadly representative of your balance of learners in terms of age, gender and level of study. We will correct statistically for minor imbalances but samples may be rejected if they are badly skewed. The figure obtained should be used as a guide only and we strongly encourage colleges and providers to exceed this figure to ensure the minimum number of completed surveys is achieved. It is also essential that a random sample of learners is asked to complete the survey.

Sell the benefits of the survey

Some colleges and providers 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 providers considered now the best way to publicise the survey, so that learners view participation as a right, 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 of all Skills Funding Agency or YPLA funded learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those undertaking programmes in ESOL

The Skills Funding Agency commissioned research visits to a number of providers with substantial concentrations of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This led to a number of recommendations that have been incorporated into the design of the survey and the survey website. Providers are requested 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 the Skills Funding Agency by emailing ffelearnerviews@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk by 3 May 2011. 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 providers 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. The LSC published examples of successful approaches in Framework for Excellence: [Strategies to increase the accessibility of gathering learner views](#) which is available from the Framework for Excellence web site. For example, some providers 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 providers 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 Views online survey allows people who are helping learners to complete the survey, or who are given summative reports on views gathered over an extensive period, to record that fact.

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 providers should make every attempt to ensure that learners have the opportunity to take part. Colleges and providers 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 be contacted again about the survey.

Decide if you want your learners to answer Learning Aims level questions

This year providers will have the option of asking their learners to answer a small number of questions towards the end of the survey at a Learning Aims level. These responses will not contribute towards the final score but we will feed the results back to each provider, benchmarked against the responses of all learners who are taking that learning aim across the country.

There is no obligation on you to ask your learners to answer the Learning Aims questions and you do not need to tell us whether you are planning to do this or not. If you do want your learners to answer the Learning Aims questions you simply have to ensure that the learners

are given details of the codes for their Learning Aims in advance and plan ahead how you will organise this.

In particular you will need to ensure that learners have details of the official Learning Aims Code (as entered on the ILR or held in the Learning Aims database) for all aims they are taking. We envisage that you would supply this to the learners with the UKPRN and their learner number e.g.:

Codes to help you fill in the Learner Views survey:

Name: John Smith
Our provider code: 12345678
Your learner code: A123123123

Your course codes:

50086959 (Hairdressing Reception Duties)

50090513 (Women's Hairdressing (QCF))

50036804 (Customer Service (QCF))

Monitoring response rates and checking results

We have sent, by email or post, 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. These figures will be updated on a daily basis and will tell you your achieved responses and the extent to which your response pattern appears to be representative. It is recommended that providers use this information to monitor responses to ensure that they achieve the minimum number of completed questionnaires that will need to be returned to give a reliable measure of Learner Views.

Delivering your results

At the end of the survey we will use your learners' responses to calculate your Learner Views score. We will also give you further information on your learners' responses to each question and the pattern of responses by broad learner group.

Annex A

Guidance on hyperlink-embedded method for linking the Framework for Excellence survey with your college or provider survey

To enable providers to link the Learner Views survey with their own survey, here is a methodology and wording that takes into account the requirements of the Data Protection Act. This wording must be used in conjunction with this method in order to inform learners where their data will be sent at the end of the survey.

The hyperlink-embedded methodology used to allow the linking will work across a college or provider intranet, across email, or any other Microsoft Office document, it is therefore suitable to be used in most college and provider environments where internet access is available. Details on the methodology follow on page 2.

The suggested wording to be placed on the college or provider intranet or in the text of the email must be placed above the links to the surveys. In all cases the Framework for Excellence, Learner Views survey must be the first link. The text follows below.

You can answer the Framework for Excellence survey and <provider name> survey here in one go. Your answers for each survey will go to different places. The two surveys are separate but some questions may be the same.

To begin, please follow the first link. This link takes you to the Framework survey, which is a national survey and learners all over England are taking part. The answers to the Framework survey go to the research companies Ipsos MORI and RCU. They will add up your answers to the Framework questions, along with the answers from other learners. They will hold the data on the Skills Funding Agency's behalf and send the Skills Funding Agency the total number of learners giving each answer. None of your lecturers, trainers or supervisors will be able to see your own answers. When you have finished this first survey (which only takes a few minutes) you will be asked to click "submit." This will bring you back to this page.

<link to the Framework survey>

Once you have finished the Framework survey, please follow the link below to the <provider name> survey. The answers to the separate <the provider name> survey go to <provider name and/or their contractors>. <The provider name> survey is held and processed independently of the Skills Funding Agency and the Framework survey. Please ask members of staff from <provider name> if you are not sure who will see your replies.

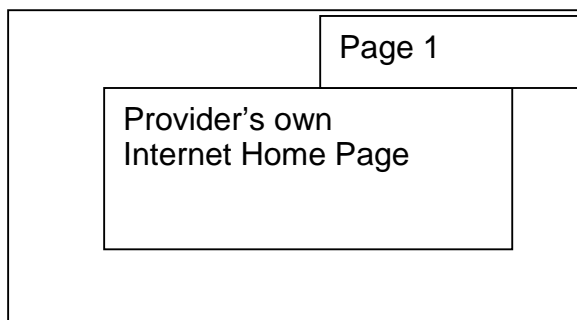
The technical details of how to set up the system should be straight forward for a member of your staff with IT knowledge and follow on the pages below.

Technical information for loose linking

Each diagram shows a series of web pages to take you from the starting page to the completion of both surveys.

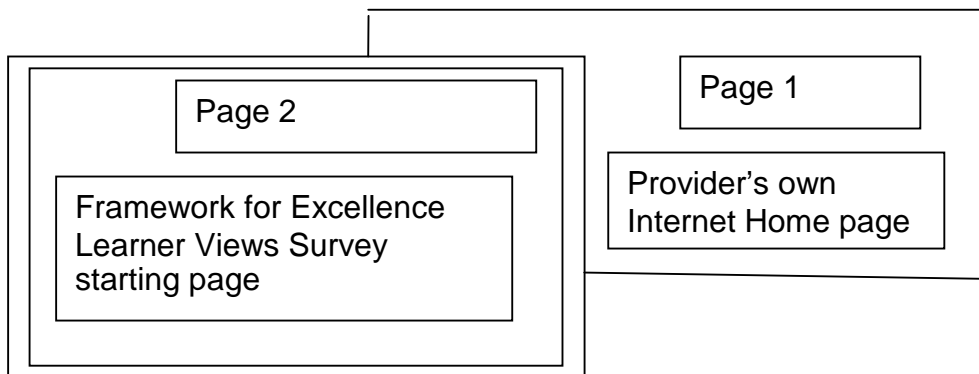
Step 1

Colleges or providers need to set up a link from their internet home page, or their intranet or a Word of Excel document. The links need to be set up from this page. Using the wording suggested the learner is instructed to click on the first link.



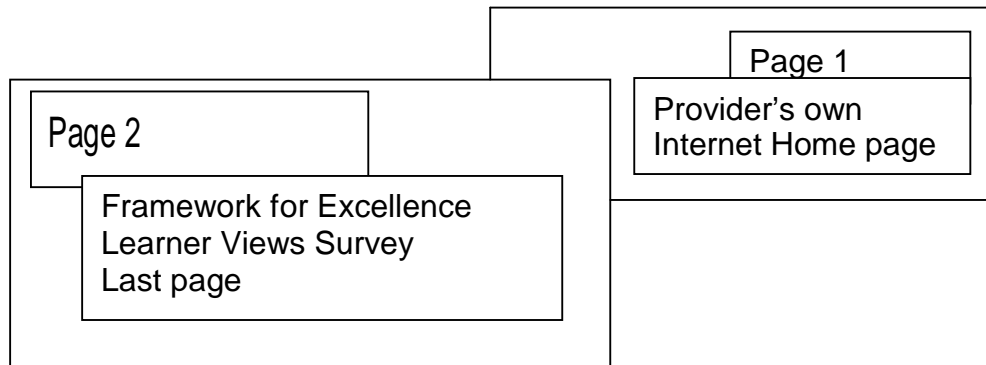
Step 2

The first link would take the learner to the Framework for Excellence, Learner Views survey by firing up a new Internet Explorer Browser page. The original page, your college or provider's own internet home page would stay open in the window behind.



Step 3

Colleges or providers are asked to advise their learners to complete all questions in the Framework for Excellence survey and then click on the submit button on the screen.



This would send the Framework for Excellence Learner Views survey data directly over the internet to the Ipsos MORI server using 128-bit encryption. This is widely used and a highly secure method.

Step 4

Having clicked on the finish button, the Framework for Excellence Learner Views survey (shown as page 2) would close. This would leave page 1, your college or provider Home page, still open. This would allow the learner to click on the second link, which could be your college or provider's own survey, or the survey run for you by your contractor. This link would fire open a further window in Internet Explorer and the learner could complete this survey. The data from this survey would be then sent directly to your provider's contractor or your provider's own systems. The point to note is that this data exchange would occur completely separately to the Framework for Excellence, Learner Survey data exchange and the data will go to a different place, specified by your organisation.

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Date created 21 April 2011
Publication no.
Document ref. C:\Documents and Settings\ehrensh\Desktop\LV Guidance notes.doc
Version v0.2_21April2011