

FE Public Information – Learner Satisfaction survey

Guidance for helping learners

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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.

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Appropriate briefing of learners

Colleges and providers are asked 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 the Skills Funding Agency 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 the Skills Funding Agency.

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

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 servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk by **1 March 2012**. 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 Learning and Skills Council published examples of successful approaches to the Learner Views survey: [Strategies to increase the accessibility of gathering learner views](#). 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 Satisfaction 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.

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