Preparation for the 2009/10 Learner Views survey

Learners in-scope

The following LSC-funded learners are in scope:

- Learners aged 16-18 at 1 August 2009.
- Adults working towards a qualification on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). (This includes learners on adult Apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes leading towards a full Level 2, full Level 3 or a Skills for Life qualification which are listed on the NQF or QCF.)
- All learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, self declared on the ILR. Although providers have the discretion not to include learners with learning difficulties or disabilities for whom the survey methods would be inappropriate or distressing.
- On Skills for Life programmes contributing to Public Service Agreements (PSA) targets.

Colleges and providers are asked to become familiar with the criteria for inclusion of learners in the survey so they can plan ahead. The survey will be managed with broadly the same approach as the 2008/09 survey.

Learners are to be surveyed ideally on completion of their course in the period 1 October 2009/12, February 2010 or towards the end of the survey window where they are due to complete after 12 February 2010. Judgement of returned samples will be based on all LSC-funded in-scope learners which colleges and providers have with them during the survey period. Colleges and providers should therefore ensure that all such learners have an opportunity to fill in the survey at the appropriate point.

- Learners on courses over 12 weeks should not be surveyed until at least 12 weeks after enrolment.
- Learners on courses shorter than 12 weeks should be surveyed in the last two weeks of their course or learning programme. For example learners at colleges or providers delivering:
• An eight week roll-on, roll-off course will have had the first six weeks, to get to know their organisation. Colleges and providers are asked to undertake the survey with these learners during the completion of their course, which will be ideally in the last two weeks of the course programme.
• A two-day, roll-on, roll-off course should undertake the survey with their learners on the second session.

Preparation for the Learner Views Survey

The Learner Views Survey will be online for providers to test from 1-25 September 2009.

In September 2009, a letter will be sent to your Principal/Chief Executive, or named contact if you are a National Employer Service Provider, with log-in details to the survey website. With this letter we will send each college and provider a statement of the likely minimum number of completed questionnaires that will need to be returned to give a reliable measure of your learners’ views. This will be based on your projections from your 2008/9 learner record.

From September 2009 providers can also check the likely number of LSC-funded in-scope learners needed to obtain completed survey responses by using the online tool available on the Learner Views pages of the Framework website (http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/key-performance-areas/responsiveness-learners/learner-views/). The figures used should be used as a guide only and we strongly recommend colleges and providers exceed this figure to ensure the minimum number of completed surveys is achieved.

Providers will also be able to access online information on how to test web-links and see a copy of the survey questions in September 2009.

Organisations are strongly encouraged to check that firewall settings at all relevant sites will permit access to the survey website. It is essential that this task is undertaken as soon as the site is available to ensure that the live survey runs smoothly. You are encouraged to test the survey link from all centres at which learners are based, as firewall settings can differ on different sites.

Please note that the survey can be completed on hand-held communication devices such as BlackBerrys. Colleges or providers which have assessors visiting learners in the work place may wish to use this technology. If this is of interest please see the specific guidance on the Framework for Excellence website.
Promotion of the Learner Views Survey

The survey will be live from Thursday 1 October 2009 until midnight on Friday 12 February 2010. Colleges and providers can publicise the live survey period at their organisations for the whole period or a concentrated period, bearing in mind that learners should complete the survey in the last two weeks of their course or towards the end of the survey period where their expected completion date is after 12 February 2009.

Colleges and providers are asked to sell the benefits of the survey to learners and across organisations where applicable. There is evidence that learners will respond better to the survey if they understand its importance and regard it as part of their entitlement as a learner.

Electronic copies of materials to promote the survey among learners are available from the Learner Views pages of the Framework website http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/key-performance-areas/responsiveness-learners/learner-views/ for colleges and providers to distribute.

The materials include:

- A guide for staff administering the survey with learners.
- A PowerPoint presentation for learners.
- A set of posters.
- Text ready for use as required.
- Case study/best practice examples.

Organisations are asked to ensure that each learner has access to their learner reference number, as shown in field L03 on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the provider’s number (UKPRN). Learners log into the survey by entering both these numbers. The latter is the number used to identify each learner on the ILR and learners may already have access to this number.

Please ensure that your UKPRN is widely publicised during the survey period. In the survey we refer to this number as the “code” for your college or learning provider. It is important that 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 delivering learning on your behalf.

Please decide how you will distribute the web-link to your learners. Learners will complete the survey following this link to the dedicated survey webpage. Colleges and providers in the survey in 2008/09 distributed the link in emails, messages on their intranet and in letters or posters.
Completing the Learner Views Survey

The survey website will be available 24 hours a day during the survey period and learners can complete the survey at any time.

Extra information available to providers during the survey period will include response breakdowns by age, gender and the highest level of study. It is recommended that colleges and providers use this information to identify any potential skew in their response rates. If any skew is identified, colleges and providers will need to take steps to correct this during the survey period, by encouraging any under-represented groups to complete the survey.

To ensure that returned samples are free from skew and can therefore form the basis for fair comparison, the LSC will apply corrective weightings that will tend to reduce the effective sample size. However, some samples may be too skewed to be corrected. This means that a college or provider returning a skewed sample may not receive a valid score even if the total number of responses is above the minimum target. For these reasons, as well as to ensure that learners have the right to express their views, providers should arrange for as many in-scope learners as possible complete the survey. It will be possible for learners to log into the survey at any time of day, provided they have their learner reference number and provider ID to hand. Learners can also complete the survey from any PC or laptop at any time of day.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

For learners with learning difficulties or disabilities an option is available to:

- Submit a response with support from a support worker. Guidance on this can be found on the Learner Views pages of the Framework website.
- Gather the learner’s views over time.

Guidance on this will available on the Learner Views pages of the Framework for Excellence website in September 2009.