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

1. Check whether you are in scope (please refer to the Framework for Excellence Provider Guide - September 2008 to confirm if your institution is in scope).

All colleges or providers in scope for the Framework during 2008/09 will be included in this indicator. The applicability criteria are listed below for ease of reference:

Applicability Criteria

All providers that are in scope for Version 1 of the Framework for Excellence are in scope for the Learner Views performance indicator.

The only exception to the applicability criteria is those providers that achieved a robust score in the voluntary survey of their learners between early February and 16 June 2008. Providers that did so have been informed of the outcomes by an email sent directly to the person who originally sent the email to ffelearnerviews@lsc.gov.uk

Where a voluntary survey resulted in a statistically robust result, colleges and providers are not required to undertake the survey in January/early February 2009 but they can opt to do so (details of how to do this will be included in the letter to the providers to whom it applies), in which case their voluntary survey result will be discounted.

The survey is applicable to all learners on LSC-funded priority programmes, except those on learndirect programmes and offender learners on custodial sentences: these learners are not in scope for the Version 1 survey. Providers are particularly urged to ensure that responses from a representative sample of learners on LSC-funded priority provision during the survey are gathered. LSC-funded priority learning is defined as:

- all learners aged 16-18 at the start of the academic year
- all learners on Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships
- all learners on Train to Gain programmes
- all learners on target-bearing Skills for Life programmes
- all adults on programmes contributing to a full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification (as flagged on the ILR) and
- learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (at the discretion of providers).
2. Check if your institution undertook the voluntary Learner Views Survey and returned robust results.

If you have returned robust results, the person who originally sent the data to ffelearnerviews@lsc.gov.uk will have received an email giving them this feedback.

If you have not returned robust results, or returned your data late, you will have received a different email informing you of this. If you submitted data for the voluntary survey you will have been sent a Provider Information Sheet. You may have also received a Guide to the Information Sheet.

If your institution is in scope and did not participate in the voluntary survey, you will be asked to undertake a mandatory survey in the period January-early February 2009.

If you have any queries on the voluntary survey please email ffelearnerviews@lsc.gov.uk

3. Ensure that learners have access to their learner reference number and their provider number when they undertake the survey.

Learners log-in to the survey by registering their provider number (UKPRN) and their personal learner reference number. The personal learner reference number is the number used to identify each learner on the ILR. In some colleges and providers this is used for other purposes, for example to log on to the provider’s intranet, and learners are used to using it.

In other colleges and providers the number is only used for the ILR and the provider will have to consider the most effective way to ensure that all learners completing the survey are given notice of their number. 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.

4. 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 they approach that will get the best response.

5. Consider the best way to give as many learners as possible the opportunity to take part in the survey.

In December 2008, the LSC will give each provider a statement of the likely minimum number of completed questionnaires that will need to be returned to give a reliable measure of learner views. This is based on projections from their 2007/08 learner records. (The LSC cannot share this beforehand because it is based on the ILR data return in late November.)

In advance of this information being available, colleges and providers can also anticipate the minimum number of completed survey returns required by entering the figure for their projected number of priority learners in January/February 2009 into the sample calculator. Learner Views Survey: Guide for Colleges and providers (2 January-13 February 2009)
However, it is vital to emphasise that the sorts of figures they obtain from this spreadsheet tool will be **absolute** minimums, and will only be sufficient if the sample is selected in a random or highly representative way. The LSC therefore recommends that providers ask all of their LSC-funded priority learners to participate in the survey.

6. Avoid generating a skewed sample.

The minimum number of completed questionnaires that will need to be returned to give a reliable measure of learner views is based on an estimate of their likely in-scope learner numbers. It is also based on statistical modelling that assumes that the achieved sample has been selected randomly and is therefore fully representative. Where a returned sample is skewed significantly, the LSC will apply corrective measures to reduce the effective sample size. This means that a 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 be advised to arrange for as many LSC-funded priority learners as outlined in the applicability criteria.

7. Sell the benefits of the survey.

Some 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. Posters and materials to promote the survey among learners will be made available to providers. 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. The LSC will issue providers packs of promotional materials to help with this later this term.

9. Consider giving learners access to complete the survey from any internet-linked PC at any time of the day during the survey period.

Providers should be encouraged not to think that learners will only participate in the survey if they are organised to do so in formal settings.

10. Plan ahead for the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Some providers in the pilot 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 plans to publish some examples of successful approaches in the run up to the survey. 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 survey website 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.
QUESTIONS AND ISSUES - INCLUSION OF LEARNERS

Learners enrolled at the provider’s institution after 14 November 2008 should not be included.

The survey will be inappropriate for learners who have begun their learning programme within six weeks of the survey taking place. To make this standard practice for all providers, the LSC requests that they do not include any learners that were not enrolled at the provider’s institution on 14 November 2008.

Learners that were at the provider’s institution on a course, but transferred courses recently, will be eligible to participate in the survey, provided that they have been a learner there since 14 November 2008.

Learners not funded by the LSC.

The survey only applies to LSC-funded priority learners: learners whose funding comes from other sources, for example DWP, will not be counted within the Framework for Excellence. If any questionnaire responses are returned from learners who are not funded by the LSC, these will be extracted by the LSC before the analysis is carried out.

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES - TECHNICAL/WEB ISSUES

The survey will be available on line during November 2008 for providers to test the web-functionality with their systems. Access to this test will close on 12 December 2008.

Providers should test whether the firewall settings at all relevant sites will permit access to the survey website. Colleges, providers and partnership managers will be advised of the exact date that this is available.

The survey will be live from 2 January until 13 February 2009.

Providers decide how they manage the administration of the survey throughout this period.

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES - MANAGING RESPONSES

Survey response rates.

Survey response rates will be available 24 hours a day during the survey period. The information available will include breakdowns by age, gender and highest level of study. 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.

It will be possible for learners to log on at any time of the day provided that they have their provider ID and personal learner reference number to hand. However, the LSC is aware
that most providers will ask their learners to complete the survey in organised group sessions, in learning resource centres, or training rooms with website access.

The survey is very short, taking less than five minutes for most learners to complete. Learners can also complete the survey from any PC or lap-top at any time of day.

**Developments in the question wording from the pilot**

The wording of the questions is likely to be the same for all learners and all types of learning, but parts of the introduction will be customised to the provider type (based on the provider UKPRN).

There are also a small number of cross-referencing questions to support the provision of live response rate updates. A single standard response scale will be used, which will have five options.

The wording of the survey has been made clearer and more accessible since the pilot. The final wording will be released as soon as the testing phase is complete. An initial design for the survey has been tested with a range of providers during September 2008. This has included technical testing of the links that learners will use to access the survey, and cognitive testing of the wording of the questions and instructions contained in the survey. It is likely that a further round of testing will take place in October 2008 before a final version of the survey is released.

**Accessibility for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.**

The LSC 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. This year, the LSC requests that providers use their discretion not to involve in the survey those learners who they determine would be inappropriate or distressed. Further work on increasing accessibility is taking place to feed into the Version 2 survey, which we expect will include all learners. Guidance on administering the survey for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is also available in the Framework for Excellence Provider Guide (September 2008).

**NEXT KEY EVENTS**

**Mid-November 2008** – further guidance, including information on testing the weblinks and details of the communication materials.

**Late November 2008** – letter sent to principals of Version 1 providers, giving log-on details to the Framework’s Survey webpages (a reminder for those who have had the Employer Views letter).

**Early December 2008** – live on the Framework’s Survey webpages

1) the minimum number of completed questionnaires that need to be returned.
2) the survey questions.