

**TOPIC GUIDE**  
**PUBLICATION ORDERING PROCESS FOCUS GROUPS**  
**12/01/10**  
**FINAL VERSION 11/04/10**

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## I. WARM-UP

What I would like to do today is talk to you – financial aid administrators who access and order publications from the office of Federal Student Aid – and discuss issues on this topic from your perspective.

My name is Dave Glantz and I work for Market Connections, an independent market research firm in Washington, DC, and I am conducting this focus group on behalf of FSA. They are interested in providing the best products and service possible to you, and that's why we're meeting with you this afternoon for your feedback.

As I mentioned, what we are doing today is called a “focus group.”

As a **participant**, I'd like you to...

- Be honest
- Try to participate — we need to hear from everyone
- Speak up (but only one talks at a time)
- Address your comments to the group
- If you don't agree with what somebody says, tell us what you think — there are no right or wrong answers.
- What you don't know is just as important as what you do know.

As the **moderator**, I can be impartial because I have no vested interest in whether you like or dislike the things we'll be talking about. I try to ensure...

- We get through this discussion guide: there are lots of questions and ideas I'd like to talk to you about, so I have to keep things on track. *(Might have to cut off your answers to stay on time. Please don't take it personally.)*
- We are audio taping and videotaping which is standard practice to help with the accuracy of my report. I also have some colleagues in another room who are involved in this project, and who are interested in hearing your views firsthand through the video feed.
- Most importantly, everything we discuss is considered private and for internal research purposes only. Our report will not identify individuals by name.
- Do you have any questions?

**0:05**

## II. PUBLICATION AWARENESS AND ORDERING BEHAVIOR

Start by: 0:05

elapsed time: 0:15

Finish by: 0:20

I would first like to go around the table and have everyone briefly introduce themselves. Please tell me...

1. Your first name (or what you like to be called)
2. Your school

- **[FLIP CHART]** Let's start by talking about FSA publications. What specific FSA publications are available for ordering? Let's make a list of all the publications.
- **[INDICATE ON FLIPCHART]** Of these, which do you tend to order most often or in the largest number?
  - o How do you determine the quantity of your order? (**PROBE:** What factors do you consider?)
  - o How are you using these publications? (**PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED:** Do you distribute or share the publications in one-on-one sessions or group sessions; display in office; include in packet mailed/given to students; outreach at local high school or community events, other \_\_\_\_\_)
  - o Which audience(s) do you provide the publications to? (**PROBE:** parents, current/incoming students; prospective students, other \_\_\_\_\_)
  - o Does the type of publication you order depend on the time of year?

**0:20**

### III. EVALUATION: SATISFACTION WITH ORDERING PROCESS

**Start by: 0:20**

**elapsed time: 0:25**

**Finish by: 0:45**

Now I want to get your opinion on how satisfied you are personally with the process you go through to order and receive the publications you need.

**[HAND OUT ORDERING PROCESS RATING QUESTIONNAIRE ]** As you can see on this handout, I'd like you to please rate the publication ordering process on the various measures you see on the page. Consider your overall satisfaction, the user-friendliness of the process, the delivery time and the other aspects listed – you'll also see a few spaces to add some considerations I might not have included, but that you feel are particularly important to you. Please be sure to rate any new considerations you add to the list.

**0:22**

For example, under “overall satisfaction” if you are not at all satisfied with the ordering process, put a “1” in the box. If you are completely satisfied, then put a “10” in the box or any number in between. Remember that I am looking for you to rate these areas based on your personal opinion, and not what you think others might say.

Finally, you'll see at the top of the page the term “general impression”. Here I'd like you to jot a few of *your own* words to describe your impression of the ordering process.

#### **THEY RATE**

#### **MODERATOR TO CHECK WITH FSA STAFF**

- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Let's go around the room and for starters, please tell me the number you chose for overall satisfaction.
  - o What makes you say that?
  - o **IF 1-7:** What needs to happen to raise your rating?
  - o **IF 8-10:** What do you like/what is it about the process that's working well?
  - o Were there any additional order-related considerations you added?
  - o Were there any individual aspects you rated very low? Which one(s)?

**0:45**

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## IV. ISSUES RELATED TO ORDERING

**Start by: 0:45**

**elapsed time: 0:30**

**Finish by: 1:15**

- To help me understand your ratings even more clearly, I'd like you to walk me through the ordering process. What do you do first when you determine the need for a publication? (**PROBE:** visit [www.fsapubs.gov](http://www.fsapubs.gov) website? Describe that experience.)
  - What do you do next? I want to know the outline of the steps you go through from identifying the need to receiving the publication.
- Are there any major sticking points you run into during the process? What exactly? How do you address those obstacles?
- Look back at your rating sheet, to item #5 – order limits. **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Who has ever placed an order (or tried to place an order) but were told in response that FSA would not be able to deliver as many copies of the publication as you requested?

**0:55**

  - How did you adjust your approach toward ordering publications or providing information to customers? (**PROBE:** Have you ever ordered alternative/similar publications to make up the shortfall?) Would it be beneficial for FSA to offer alternative publications that are available in larger quantities that serve a purpose similar to your needs? (**PROBE:** Does FSA already offer similar publications to address this type of need?)
- How should FSA communicate important information to you, such as new or updated publications or information on order limits? (**PROBE:** email, post on website, other means – please specify)
- Now I'd like to focus on how publications and forms are listed on the fsapubs.gov website. Currently the list is alphabetical. Do you have any thoughts regarding an alphabetized list, or would you prefer some other way to sort through the publications and forms? (**PROBE:** pubs in descending order of popularity).
- I have just one more question and it relates to whether you refer students to online resources. Federal Student Aid has several websites that provide information on planning and paying for a postsecondary education. Do you refer students and parents to any Federal Student Aid websites or online resources? If so, which ones? (**PROBE:** What would lead you to make such a referral – or decide against it?

**1:13**

**MODERATOR TO CHECK WITH FSA STAFF**

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thanks for your insights and participation.

- ***LEAVE ALL FORMS ON THE TABLE.***

**1:15**

**ORDERING PROCESS RATING QUESTIONNAIRE**

**General impression:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Overall satisfaction with the FSA publication ordering process</b> (1= Not at all satisfied; 10 = Completely satisfied)	
<b>2</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Variety</b> of available ordering options (e.g., online, by telephone, etc.) (1= Not enough options; 10 = Many options)	
<b>3</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Clarity</b> of publication ordering instructions (1= Too difficult to understand; 10 = Very easy to understand)	
<b>4</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Steps required</b> to place an order (1= Unreasonable number of steps; 10 = Very reasonable number of steps)	
<b>5</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Limits</b> on the number of publication copies allowable to order (1= Can never order amount I need; 10 = Always able to meet my needs)	
<b>6</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Delivery</b> time to receive order (1 = takes too long/always late; 10 = very fast/on time)	
<b>7</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
<b>Customer support</b> during ordering process (1= not at all helpful; 10 = very helpful)	

***OPTIONAL: OTHER ORDER-RELATED CONSIDERATIONS IMPORTANT TO YOU***

<b>8</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
(1= _____; 10 = _____)	
<b>9</b>	<b>Rating from 1-10</b>
(1= _____; 10 = _____)	

**Paperwork Burden Statement**

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