

**Appendix B  
Contacting Materials**

**NPSAS:2016 Focus Groups Recruitment Call & Screening Questions**

**ONLINE VIDEO FOCUS GROUP SCREENER  
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION STAFF**

RESPONDENT FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE SCREENED/SCHEDULED: \_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE CONFIRMED: \_\_\_\_\_ CONFIRMED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

**Design:**

- Four (4) online video focus groups with staff at educational institutions who complete student data collection forms for NPSAS and other NCES studies.
  - **Group 1:** Public less-than-2-year; Public 2-year institutions
  - **Group 2:** Public 4-year non-doctorate-granting; Public 4-year doctorate-granting
  - **Group 3:** Private nonprofit less-than-4-year; Private nonprofit 4-year non-doctorate-granting; Private nonprofit 4-year doctorate-granting
  - **Group 4:** Private for-profit less-than-2-year; Private for-profit 2-year; Private for-profit 4-year
- Recruit 10 per group for a show of 6 to 10

(ASK TO SPEAK TO PERSON ON THE LIST)

Hello, this is [name] calling from Shugoll Research, an independent research company, on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) part of the US Department of Education.

We are requesting the help of individuals at postsecondary institutions that had been selected to participate in NPSAS:12. You have been recommended to us to participate in a focus group to discuss ways to improve the procedures and forms that NCES uses to collect student records for NPSAS and other NCES sample studies.

I'd like to ask you a few questions first:

1. Are you familiar with the NPSAS:12 collection?

CIRCLE  
ONE

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| Yes | 1 | → (CONTINUE)   |
| No  | 2 | → (Briefly describe the student records collection in NPSAS:12, then CONTINUE) |

2. The focus group will be conducted using online video technology and you can participate from your computer. It is a panel discussion with up to 10 individuals who are responsible for collecting data from their institution's records and completing NPSAS reporting requirements. Which of the following best describes who, within your institution, is responsible for providing the student records data for NPSAS? By this we mean the person who actually accesses the appropriate data and enters or uploads them into the data collection instruments. (READ LIST)

CIRCLE  
ONE

You are the primary person responsible for completing the instruments	1
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You share the tasks involved in completing the instruments with someone else	2
--	---

OR	Someone else is involved in completing the instruments	3	→(ASK TO SPEAK TO THIS PERSON)
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(DO NOT READ)	Don't know	4	→(THANK AND TERMINATE)
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3. Do you have high speed Internet on the computer at the location where you would be participating in the focus group?

CIRCLE  
ONE

- |     |   |                         |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| Yes | 1 | → (CONTINUE)            |
| No  | 2 | → (THANK AND TERMINATE) |

4. Now, thinking about your experience with the NPSAS:12 student records collection, can you tell me about your experience with this process? (PROBE AND CLARIFY, WRITE VERBATIM)

**NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT RESPONDENTS IN THIS STUDY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE AND CLEARLY EXPRESS INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE. IF RESPONDENT CANNOT OR WILL NOT EASILY GIVE A ONE TO TWO SENTENCE UNPROMPTED ANSWER IN WELL UNDERSTOOD ENGLISH, PLEASE TERMINATE.**

5. On a scale of “1” to “10,” where a score of “10” means that the statement describes you extremely well and “1” means that the statement does not describe you at all, how well does the following statement describe you?

	Extremel y Well								Not_ at all	
I feel comfortable expressing my opinion in a group	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	6	5	4	3	2	1



**INTERVIEWER NOTE: 7 OR HIGHER MUST BE CIRCLED, OTHERWISE THANK AND TERMINATE.**

6. Please verify that your institution is still classified as [institution type].

	<u>CIRCLE</u> <u>ONE</u>	
Public less-than-2-year	1	→(RECRUIT FOR GROUP 1)
Public 2-year	2	
Public 4-year nondoctorate-granting	3 4	→(RECRUIT FOR GROUP 2)
Public 4-year doctorate-granting		
Private nonprofit lt 4-year	5	→(RECRUIT FOR GROUP 3)
Private nonprofit 4-year nondoctorate	6	
Private nonprofit 4-year doctorate-granting	7	
Private for profit less-than-2-year	8	→(RECRUIT FOR GROUP

Private for profit 2-year  
Private for profit 4-year

9
10

4)

7. What is your current title?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What department do you work in? (DO NOT READ)

CIRCLE  
ONE

Financial aid/Financial planning  
Institutional research  
Admissions  
Other (Specify)

1  
2  
3  
4

\_\_\_\_\_

## INVITATION

9. We would like to invite you to participate in an online video focus group to discuss ways to improve the student records collection instruments and processes for NPSAS and other NCES studies. Your session is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_, May [xx] at \_\_\_\_\_ (EASTERN TIME). You will **receive a \$25 Amazon.com gift certificate, by email, as a token of thanks** for your participation in this study. Would you be willing to participate?

CIRCLE

ONE

- |     |   |                        |
|-----|---|------------------------|
| Yes | 1 | →(CONTINUE)            |
| No  | 2 | →(THANK AND TERMINATE) |

10. Does the computer at the location where you will be participating in the focus group have a webcam?

CIRCLE ONE

- |     |   |                 |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| Yes | 1 | → (SKIP TO Q12) |
| No  | 2 | → (CONTINUE)    |

11. If you don't have a webcam on this computer, we will send you one. Please provide your mailing address below. The address must not be a Post Office box, and the office/suite number or apartment number must be included, if appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_ (MAILING ADDRESS)

12. Please provide your e-mail address and telephone number at the location where you will be participating in the focus group.

\_\_\_\_\_ (RECORD E-MAIL ADDRESS)

\_\_\_\_\_ (RECORD TELEPHONE NUMBER)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. WE WILL SEND YOU LOGIN INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SESSION.**

## NPSAS:2016 Focus Groups Confirmation Email

Thank you for your commitment to participate in an online video focus group for the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

- We look forward to your participation in the group on
- The focus group will begin at
- The focus group will last approximately 1½ to 2 hours
- The e-mail address and telephone number at the location where you will be participating in the group are and . **If this information is incorrect, please contact us as soon as possible at** .
- The mailing address where we will send the webcam (if needed) is
- The topic of the focus group is to get your feedback on ways to improve the procedures and forms that will be used to collect student records for the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and other similar studies.
- As a token of our appreciation, you will receive by email a \$25 gift certificate from Amazon.com soon after the completion of the interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Please reply that you have received this e-mail. Our confirmation department will contact you 24-48 hours prior to your group to provide the link and login information for group participation and re-confirm your attendance. **If we are unable to re-confirm your attendance 24 hours prior to the time of your group, we reserve the right to cancel your participation and replace you.**

Thank you again,  
Shugoll Research

## NPSAS:2016 Focus Groups Link and Login Email

Thank you for your commitment to participate in an online video focus group for the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

This email is being sent to you to re-confirm your participation in an online video focus group for the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

- We look forward to your participation in the group on
- The focus group will begin at
- The focus group will last approximately 1-1/2 to 2 hours
- The link for group participation is
- The log in is
- The e-mail address and telephone number at the location where you will be participating in the group are and . **If this information is incorrect, please contact us as soon as possible at** .

Thank you again for your participation,

Shugoll Research

## NPSAS:2016 Focus Groups Rescreening Questions

(right before the focus group begins)

**If respondent does not qualify, please notify the project manager.**

1. Which of the following best describes who within your institution is responsible for completing the student records collection instruments required by NPSAS and other NCES studies? By this we mean the person who actually accesses the appropriate data and completes the instruments.

	<u>CIRCLE</u> <u>ONE</u>	
You are the primary person responsible for completing the instruments	1	→(MUST SELECT CODE 1 OR 2 TO QUALIFY)
You share the tasks involved in completing the instruments with someone else	2	
Someone else is involved in completing the instruments	3	
Don't know	4	

2. Do you have high speed Internet on the computer at the location where you will be participating in the focus group?

	<u>CIRCLE</u> <u>ONE</u>	
Yes	1	→(MUST SELECT CODE 1 TO QUALIFY)
No	2	

3. Please verify that your institution is still classified as [institution type].

	<u>CIRCLE</u> <u>ONE</u>	
Public less-than-2-year	1	→ (MUST SELECT CODES 1 or 2 FOR GROUP 1)
Public 2-year	2	
Public 4-year nondoctorate-granting	3	→ (MUST SELECT CODES 3 or 4 FOR GROUP 2)
Public 4-year doctorate-granting	4	
Private nonprofit 4-year	5	→ (MUST SELECT CODES 5, 6 OR 7 FOR GROUP 3)
Private nonprofit 4-year nondoctorate	6	



Private nonprofit 4-year  
doctorate-granting

7

Private for profit less-than-2-year

8

Private for profit 2-year

9

Private for profit 4-year

10

→ (MUST SELECT CODE 8,  
9, OR 10 FOR GROUP  
4)

## Appendix D

### **NPSAS/NCES STUDENT RECORDS FOCUS GROUPS MODERATOR'S GUIDE (DRAFT 3/11/14)**

PROJECT: RTI1401  
DATES: May 2014  
LOCATION: Online Video  
TOPIC: Postsecondary Institution Student Records Collection

#### Introduction (1 minute)

Who am I

What I do

Topic - Talk about student records collection terminology, forms, and procedures for the NPSAS and other National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) studies

#### Ground Rules (4 minutes)

Articulate loudly enough to be heard

Talk one at a time

Observers (via video streaming)

Audio/video recording

Avoid peer pressure

Be candid

No right or wrong answers

Need to hear from everyone

Gift for your time and opinions

#### Respondent Introduction (10 minutes)

Tell me:

First name

Name of educational institution

Title and job responsibilities

How long working at current job/in this field

Discuss the Process for Completing the Student Records Collections for NPSAS (15 minutes)

- Explain the process you and your school goes through to complete the forms required for NPSAS
  - Discuss who is involved (department/title) and reasons these particular individuals are involved in providing the information, coordinating the process, completing the forms
  - Determine if it is the same person or different people at each stage and why
  - Identify how often your organization is asked to provide information about students and about your institution.
- Determine the factors that most influence how long it takes to provide the information
  - Understand how easy or difficult it is to complete the forms/provide the information and what makes it easy or difficult?
  - Discuss how the process or the forms could be improved or changed to make it easier and less time consuming
- Understand the challenges institutions face in providing multiple level data (i.e., creating files, running queries) for when:
  - Both student-level and institution-level items are required
  - Reports are needed for multiple institutions/locations
- Discuss what NCES can do to help streamline the process of providing multiple level data

Obtain Reactions to Definitions Used on the Forms/Data Collection Instruments (50 minutes)

*The following table presents a list of working definitions of specific terms, various items/categories used in the data collection instruments, and related discussion points. The table will be uploaded for respondents to view and comment on. The objective is to improve clarity of the definitions and develop a standard set of terms, definitions and items/categories.*

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
Term/calendar systems	Semester Quarter	Challenges in aligning with study/financial aid year; challenges specific to continuous-enrollment and clock-hour

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
	Trimester 4-1-4 Differs by program Continuous No standard terms Other	schools
Degree Program	Undergraduate, non-degree program Undergraduate certificate or diploma Associate's degree program Bachelor's degree program Graduate, not in a degree program Post-baccalaureate certificate program Master's degree program Post-master's certificate Doctoral degree - research/scholarship Doctoral degree - professional practice Doctoral degree - other	<p>Type of degree program enrolled during study year, as determined by the institution.</p> <p>Degrees:</p> <p>An associate's degree normally requires at least 2, but less than 4 years, of full-time equivalent college work.</p> <p>A bachelor's degree is usually awarded by a 4-year college or university and usually requires at least 4 years of full-time, college-level work.</p> <p>A master's degree usually requires at least 2 years of full-time graduate-level work and may require a thesis or a practicum.</p> <p>A doctoral degree-research/scholarship is a Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M., and others, as designated by the awarding institution.</p> <p>A doctoral degree-professional practice is a doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees include: chiropractic (D.C., or D.C.M.); dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); law (L.L.B. or J.D.); medicine (M.D.); optometry (O.D.), osteopathic medicine (D.O.); pharmacy (Pharm.D.); podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.); or veterinary medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.</p> <p>A doctoral degree-other is a doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree-research/scholarship or a doctor's degree-professional practice.</p> <p>Certificates and Diplomas:</p> <p>Undergraduate certificates or diplomas usually take less than two years to complete and are usually designed to equip</p>

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
		<p>people with the skills needed for direct entry to employment or to earn a license such as a cosmetology license. Other examples include certificates in administrative support, computer programming, and medical records.</p> <p>A post-baccalaureate certificate provides students who already hold a bachelor's degree with new or additional training in an area of specialization. Certificates typically require fewer course hours than do master's or doctoral degrees, and do not require a thesis or dissertation. Examples of this include certificates in accounting, computer science, and human resource management.</p> <p>A post-master's certificate usually requires completion of 24 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctoral level.</p> <p>Not enrolled for a degree or certificate:</p> <p>Undergraduate level classes means taking courses at the undergraduate level but not formally enrolling in a degree or certificate program of any sort.</p> <p>Graduate level classes are for students who already hold an undergraduate degree or certificate and who are enrolled in graduate-level courses beyond a bachelor's degree, but who are not formally enrolled in a graduate degree program.</p>
Current Major		<p>Major during study year</p> <p>Determine difficulty level in designating a primary major in instances of dual majors; discuss alternative of collecting multiple majors</p>
Class Level	<p>1st Year/Freshman  2nd Year/Sophomore  3rd Year/Junior  4th Year/Senior  5th Year or Higher Undergraduate  Undergraduate (unclassified)  Student with advanced degree taking undergraduate courses  1st Year Graduate  2nd Year Graduate  3rd Year Graduate  Beyond 3rd Year Graduate</p>	<p>Class level during study year. Class levels currently defined by institutions.</p> <p>Class level is based on the number of credits completed and not on the amount of time spent in the program.</p>
Enrollment Status	<p>01 - Full-time  02 - Less than full-time but at least half-time  03 - Less than half-time</p>	<p>Indicates whether the student was classified as full-time, less than full-time but at least half-time, or less than half-time for each period of enrollment during the study year. Definitions of enrollment statuses are currently being defined by institutions.</p> <p>The definition of "full time" varies across institutions and may vary from definition used for financial aid purposes (generally 12+ credit hours).</p>

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
		Some institutions enroll all students in exactly one course per brief term, which means 100% of students are nominally enrolled full time. In NPSAS:08 and NPSAS:12, some institutions reported implausibly high percentages of students enrolled for 12 out of 12 months.
Number of Units Enrolled		The number of units for credit the student was enrolled for each period of enrollment during the study year. Institutions are asked to report credits in denomination used by institution (clock hours, credit hours, or course credits) without converting, even in cases such as institutions that award one credit per course.
Total Tuition and mandatory fees charged		<p>The amount CHARGED for tuition (prior to any discounts or waivers) and mandatory fees (including out-of-district and out-of-state fees) for the period(s) in which the student was enrolled during the study year.</p> <p>Distinguishing between and reporting actual vs. budgeted amounts; possibility of collecting amounts charged per term rather than the entire study year; whether tuition paid by states (tuition waivers) should be included as charges; residency for tuition purposes (in district, in state, out of state, no differential)</p>
Residency for Tuition Purposes	In-district In-state Out-of-state No differential tuition based on residency	<p>Indicates whether the student was classified as an in-state student or out-of-state student for tuition purposes.</p> <p>In-district: Student resides in the locality in which they attend school. This tuition rate may be a lower rate than in-state tuition if offered by the institution.</p> <p>In-state: Student meets the state's or institution's residency requirements for tuition purposes.</p> <p>Out-of-state: Student does not meet the state's or institution's residency requirements for tuition purposes.</p>
Local residence for budget	On-campus or school-owned housing Off-campus without parents Off-campus with parents	The student's residency arrangement as indicated by the institution for student budget purposes.
Budget Categories:  Tuition/fees Books/supplies Room and board Health insurance Transportation Computer technology All other expenses Total cost of attendance		<p>The estimated cost of [budget category] for an individual student, determined and used by the institution for financial aid budgeting purposes.</p> <p>What is included in the different categories (Tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, etc.); possibility of combining and reducing the number of budget categories; how widely budgets vary across students</p>
Budget period	Full-time, full-year Full-time, one term	The enrollment status and period during the study year for which reported student budget amounts apply.

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
	Part-time, full-year Part-time, one term Other	
Aid Program Types	Grant/scholarship, need-based Grant/scholarship, merit-based Grant/scholarship, both need and merit Grant/scholarship, neither need nor merit (categorical) Athletic Scholarship Tuition Waiver Loan Work-study or assistantship Other	Discuss difficulty level of classifying grants and scholarships into a single category  Discuss distinction between merit and need-based aid.  Discuss examples for a new category, "Grant/scholarship, neither need nor merit (categorical)".  Assess consensus on the following:  Determining whether aid is merit or need-based should be done on the basis of how the award is made.  If a scholarship is given on the basis of merit then, even if it meets need, it should still be categorized as merit aid.  Talent-based awards should be classified as merit. (With the exception of athletic scholarships which should continue to have its own category.)
Private loans		Discuss best placement of item among other financial aid items to ensure it is not overlooked.
Longitudinal Follow-Up Indicators :  First time beginning students (FTB)	Yes No	An FTB is enrolled in college for the first time at this institution during NPSAS academic year, has not completed a postsecondary class at this or any other postsecondary institutions prior to first day of NPSAS academic year; and, with the exception of advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) credits and any other postsecondary credit earned prior to high school completion, did not transfer credits into this institution.
Longitudinal Follow-Up Indicators :  Potential baccalaureate recipients	Does not expect to complete by 6/30/20?? Yes, expects to complete by 6/30/20??	Indicates whether the student expected to have completed the requirements for their current degree program on or before June 30, [study year]. Completion of the requirements means all required classes have been taken and passed and sufficient credit or clock hours have been earned. Some students may not yet have been awarded their degree or certificate by the institution, even though the requirements have been completed.
Graduate enrollment and classifications	Indicator of First term of enrollment in a graduate program at the institution  Indicator for degree level (e.g., Masters, Doctorate - research/scholarship or a Doctorate - professional practice. etc.), and/or  Stand-alone Master's program, Master's to Doctorate program, stand-alone Doctorate.	Determine level of difficulty in determining and providing these indicators for students; Administer to representatives of institutions with graduate programs only
Remediation		Whether remediation is required or recommended/optional; Alternatives to asking about placement exams such as simply

Data element or Topic	Option Set	Definition and/or Discussion Points
		asking the subject and number of remedial courses the student was required to take

Probe understanding of these items/categories

- Determine if respondents feel they could accurately provide the requested data using these items/categories
- Probe for clarity of the definitions provided
- Identify ways to improve clarity of the items/categories and definitions

Understand Reactions to Potential Changes in NCES Data Collection Requests (20 minutes)

- Identify reactions to institutions being contacted only once per year for all NCES data requests.

*At any given time, NCES can have multiple postsecondary surveys in the field at the same time. NCES wants to ensure that institutions do not get multiple, slightly different requests for data in any given year. Some NCES sample surveys follow students over time whether they stay at an institution or not while others are 1-year cross-sectional surveys. In an effort to make response to data requests more manageable, NCES aims to limit contacting institutions to once per year and compile sampled students from all NCES postsecondary surveys into one request. NCES proposes requesting data for the most recent academic year of financial aid and student records data.*

- Discuss challenges institutions would face in providing data for multiple studies, requested at the same time, but only once per year.
- Determine the best timing for such requests?

*Due to the nature of sample surveys, it may be difficult to make a request for student records data the same time each year, but NCES may be able to target windows of time that are not as busy for an IR, Financial Aid, or Registrar's office. Knowing that the sample surveys staff can coordinate with IPEDS to avoid overlapping deadlines, what other times of the year are ideal for such requests? What times of the year are especially difficult or burdensome for such requests?*

- Determine if a once a year contact is the preferred way to receive requests or if institutions would prefer that data requests for each study be made at separate times. Determine reasons for their preference.
- Probe the extent to which institutions might consider setting up a template for data collection/entry in order to make the process more efficient for future data requests



- Understand what institutions think of this idea (pros and cons)
  - Understand reasons their institution might consider this idea
  - Understand reasons their institution might not consider this idea
  - Probe willingness to invest the time to set the template up initially
  - Determine if advance notice would increase or decrease the likelihood that they would participate and complete all items requested - Explain
  - Determine how much advance notice would be helpful to institutions
- Though the ideal once-per-year contact would only involve a data request for the single, most recent financial aid year, special circumstances could involve a multi-year request (e.g. requests as NCES transitions from current methods to once-per-year design; new information from other study sources indicating past student enrollment at institutions). Probe to determine how institutions might provide data should a multi-year request become necessary. Early proposals have focused on requesting a separate data file for each year.
- Discuss ways to reduce the burden of student-level data entry for budget items

*Budget figures have been collected as individual amounts for each student in the categories of tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, health insurance, transportation, computer technology, all other (misc. or personal) expenses.*

- Obtain reactions to an alternative which would involve schools developing a standard set of budgets for different levels of students (such as full-time living on campus, full-time living off campus, part-time, etc.) and using those for the NCES data collection requests so they don't have to enter amounts each time.

- Determine if institutions would be able to do this using their current data collection systems or if their systems are too customized for this approach
- Identify positives and negatives of this approach and if this approach would save time and effort or not in student-level data entry for budget items

#### Identify Resources to Aid in Providing Data (15 minutes)

- Identify resources that institution staff rely on/or currently use to more easily accommodate such data collection requests.
- Describe any tools or services respondents use to aid in gathering the data from their existing information systems and providing the data in specified formats
  - Identify how specifically these tools/services are used to maintain data
  - Identify positive aspects of these resources
  - Identify challenges to using these resources

#### Identify Ways to Improve Institution Cooperation in Data Collection Efforts (5 minutes)

- Explore ways that NCES can make it easier for institutions to cooperate with and participate in data collection for NCES studies
- Identify suggestions for what NCES and NPSAS can do to thank institutions for their participation in these studies
  - What of value could NCES and NPSAS provide?
- (IF TIME PERMITS) Determine respondent familiarity with CEDS (Common Education Data Standards).
  - After providing respondents with background/an overview of CEDS tools available (RTI TO PROVIDE), discuss the feasibility of using the CEDS connect tool for completing data requests for NCES studies

- Determine the likelihood that schools would use these tools in completing data requests if student records data elements and definitions were made available through CEDS
- Identify reasons schools would or would not use the CEDS tools

Final Comments:

THANK RESPONDENTS FOR PARTICPATION