

FINAL DISCUSSION GUIDE MULTIMEDIA FOCUS GROUP

08/06~07/2014

REVISED FINAL VERSION 06/26/14

I. INTRODUCTION AND GROUND RULES

- My name is Dave Glantz and I work for Market Connections, a market research firm in the Washington, DC area.
- I will be your moderator for tonight's focus group discussion. We'll be here for about 90 minutes to talk about your impressions of student financial aid information provided by the U.S. Department of Education.
- As I mentioned, what we are doing today is called a "focus group."
- As a **participant**, I'd like you to...
 - Participate — I need to hear from everyone.
 - Speak up (but only one talks at a time).
 - Please avoid side conversations.
 - Address your comments to the group.
 - Remember that you're here for who you are, so say what you believe and not what you think others might say.
 - If you don't agree with what somebody says, tell us what you think — there are no 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 agree or disagree with 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.
 - We are audio and videotaping, which is standard practice to help with the accuracy of my report. I also have some colleagues behind the glass, who are involved in this project, and who are interested in hearing your views firsthand.
 - 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. WARM-UP, WAYS TO RECEIVE FEDERAL STUDENT AID INFORMATION

Start by: 0:05
Finish by: 0:15

elapsed time: 0:10

I would first like to have everyone introduce themselves. Please tell me...

- Your first name (or what you like to be called)
 - **BORROWERS IN REPAYMENT:** profession(s) that interest you
 - **CURRENTCOLLEGE/ADULT STUDENTS:** your course of study
 - **HS SENIORS:** The course of study that interests you
 - **PARENTS OF SENIORS:** course of study your child is interested in

- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Who has ever searched for information about how to pay for college – this could include federal student aid, or student loans in general – whether for yourself or for others?

- What are some of the ways or formats in which a person could receive information on paying for college, federal student aid, or student loans?
 - What format do you prefer? (**PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED:** booklet/brochure/text, videos, infographics (who is familiar with the term “infographic”?), in-person explanations, other (SPECIFY))

 - Let’s focus specifically on videos. In your opinion, what separates a good video from a poor one? (**PROBE IF NEEDED:** length, visual quality, ease of understanding, tone, how to act on the information, other (SPECIFY))

 - In your opinion, what separates a good infographic from a poor one? (**PROBE IF NEEDED:** length, ease of understanding, appropriate amount of information (not too much or too little), tone, how to act on the information, other (SPECIFY))

0:15

III. EVALUATING FSA VIDEOS AND INFOGRAPHICS

Start by: 0:15
Finish by: 1:30

elapsed time: 1:15

For the rest of our time together I'm going to have you review a number of infographics and videos produced by the Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid. I'm also going to ask you similar questions about each of these.

[HAND OUT GRADING SHEET FOR FIRST ITEM] I am handing out a grading sheet for each item you'll be looking at. I'd like you to silently fill this out when you have finished looking at the infographic, or when the video finishes. At the top of the grading sheet I'd like you to jot down a few words regarding your first impression of the infographic or video that you will have viewed.

I'll also want you to grade the item on a variety of aspects on the handout. Consider its overall appeal. For example, if under "appeal" you do not like the item at all, give it a failing grade of "F". If you like it very much, then give it an "A". Of course, you can also choose any grade in between. I'd also like you to grade it on its credibility (do you believe it can deliver on its promises?), how informative the content is to you personally (did you learn something?), its relevance to you considering your situation (will this information help you personally?), and finally your likelihood to recommend the infographic or video to a friend or someone else. When you've finished filling out the handout, we'll restart the discussion to get at the reasons behind your ratings.

[MODERATOR: ROTATE ORDER OF "Overview of the Financial aid Process" INFOGRAPHIC AND VIDEO]

SHOW INFOGRAPHIC "Overview of the Financial aid Process". THEY FILL OUT GRADING SHEET <http://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/financial-aid-process.png>

Let's go around the room and for starters, please read your grade for appeal.

- IF GRADE A or B: What do you see as the strengths of the infographic?
- IF GRADE C, D, F: What needs to change or improve to increase the appeal of this item?

(**PROBE:** length, content, tone, ability to comprehend)

- **ASK ONLY IF INFOGRAPHIC IS SHOWN AFTER THE VIDEO:** How does the infographic method of communicating this information compare to the video format?

o **SHOW OF HANDS:** Which format do you like better for this topic?

- Is there anything about this infographic that impedes or discourages you from viewing it all? What exactly? (**PROBE:** over simplified, too complex, other

format or mode of communication (SPECIFY) would be better for subject matter covered)

- In what way has the infographic changed the way you think about the financial aid process in general – does the process now seem easier, or more difficult, than you had thought?
- To what extent does the infographic give you clear instructions about next steps for taking action or accessing additional information?
- How likely are you to take action after having viewed this?

0:30

I am now going to share a [infographic/video] with you on the same topic. **PLAY VIDEO “Overview of the Financial aid Process”. THEY FILL OUT GRADING SHEET** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBJ55UWMEFE&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL5164CE4355C66FCB>

Let’s go around the room and for starters, please read your grade for appeal.

- IF GRADE A or B: What do you see as the strengths of the video?
- IF GRADE C, D, F: What needs to change or improve to increase the appeal of this item?

(**PROBE:** length, content, tone, ability to comprehend, live-action vs. animation style)

- **ASK ONLY IF VIDEO IS SHOWN AFTER THE INFOGRAPHIC:** How does the video method of communicating this information compare to the infographic format?

o **SHOW OF HANDS:** Which format do you like better for this topic?

- Is there anything about this video that impedes or discourages you from viewing it all? What exactly? (**PROBE:** over simplified, too complex, other format or mode of communication (SPECIFY) would be better for subject matter covered)
- In what way has the video changed the way you think about the financial aid process in general – does the process now seem easier, or more difficult, than you had thought?)
- To what extent does the video give you clear instructions about next steps for taking action or accessing additional information?
- How likely are you to take action after having viewed this?

0:43

PLAY VIDEO “Repayment: What to expect”. THEY FILL OUT GRADING SHEET <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJHySMdXjxE>

- Let’s go around the room and please read your grade for appeal.
- IF GRADE A or B: What do you see as the strengths of the video?
- IF GRADE C, D, F: What needs to change or improve to increase the appeal of this item?
- **(PROBE: length, content, tone, ability to comprehend, appropriateness of format for the subject matter covered, live-action vs. animation style)**
 - Is there anything about this video that impedes or discourages you from viewing it all? What exactly? **(PROBE: over simplified, too complex, other format or mode of communication (SPECIFY) would be better for subject matter covered)**
 - In what way has the video changed the way you think about what to expect when it comes to loan repayment in general? **(PROBE: Does the process now seem easier, or more difficult, than you had thought?)**
 - To what extent does the video give you clear instructions about next steps for taking action or accessing additional information?
- How likely are you to take action after having viewed this?

0:55

SHOW INFOGRAPHIC “Repayment Plans Overview”. THEY FILL OUT GRADING SHEET [\[infographic link to be provided, but have soft copy\]](#)

- Let’s go around the room and please read your grade for appeal.
- IF GRADE A or B: What do you see as the strengths of the infographic?
- IF GRADE C, D, F: What needs to change or improve to increase the appeal of this item?
- **(PROBE: length, content, tone, ability to comprehend, appropriateness of format for the subject matter covered)**
- Is there anything about this infographic that impedes or discourages you from viewing it all? What exactly? **(PROBE: over simplified, too complex, other**

format or mode of communication (SPECIFY) would be better for subject matter covered)

- In what way has the infographic changed your impression of different types of repayment plans available? (**PROBE:** Do the choices now seem easier, or more difficult, to understand, than you had previously thought?)
- To what extent does the infographic give you clear instructions about next steps for taking action or accessing additional information?
- How likely are you to take action after having viewed this?

1:08

SHOW INFOGRAPHIC “Income-Driven Repayment Plans”. THEY FILL OUT GRADING SHEET [infographic link to be provided, but have soft copy]

- Let’s go around the room and please read your grade for appeal.
- IF GRADE A or B: What do you see as the strengths of the infographic?
- IF GRADE C, D, F: What needs to change or improve to increase the appeal of this item?

(**PROBE:** length, content, tone, ability to comprehend, appropriateness of format for the subject matter covered)

- Is there anything about this infographic that impedes or discourages you from viewing it all? What exactly? (**PROBE:** over simplified, too complex, other format or mode of communication (SPECIFY) would be better for subject matter covered)
- In what way has the infographic helped or hindered your understanding of income-driven repayment plans in general? (**PROBE:** Does the concept now seem easier, or more difficult, to understand than you had thought?)
- To what extent does the infographic give you clear instructions about next steps for taking action or accessing additional information?
- How likely are you to take action after having viewed this?

1:20

- **SHOW POSTERS WITH DIFFERENT INFOGRAPHIC STYLES:** Before we continue, I just want to get a quick opinion from you concerning the three different styles of infographics you’ve viewed so far. Consider the feeling you get

when viewing it, and the combination of the style with the topic and information presented. [SHOW OF HANDS] With that in mind, who likes [ROTATE ORDER] _____? What makes you say that? [FSA to provide posters]

- Overview of Financial Aid Process
- Repayment Plans Overview
- Income-driven repayment plans

1:25

WRAP UP

- Where would you expect or like to see this type of information? (**PROBE:** FSA website, social media site (SPECIFY) other (SPECIFY))
- How, if at all, do your expectations differ for information that comes from the Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid, versus from private lenders, colleges or other sources? (PROBE: In what way?)

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thanks for participating!

1:30

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS [If time permits these questions would be asked prior to the wrap up]

- I'd like for you to think about infographics that you've seen from other organizations and websites that you really liked. Based on that, are there any changes you would make to the infographics we've shared with you today to make them more interesting or engaging to audiences such as yourself? You can share your thoughts on style, color, presentation, content.
- I'd like for you to think about videos that you've seen from other organizations and websites that you really liked. Based on that, are there any changes you would make to the videos we've shared with you today to make them more interesting or engaging to audiences such as yourself? You can share your thoughts on video length, style, format, content.