

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS  
POSTSECONDARY LONGITUDINAL SAMPLE STUDIES

*Volume I*  
*Supporting Statement*

***Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 2012/17***  
***(BPS:12/17) Restricted-Use File User Survey***

OMB# 1880-0542

April 2019

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# 1 SUBMITTAL-RELATED INFORMATION

This material is being submitted under the generic U.S. Department of Education clearance agreement (OMB# 1880-0542), which provides for the Department to conduct surveys and other studies regarding customer satisfaction.

This request is to conduct a customer satisfaction survey to obtain feedback from researchers on how they use data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). This submission describes all aspects of this customer satisfaction survey, including recruitment and screening of participants, protection of participants, and content of the survey instrument. The results will be part of the information used to determine: (a) which data should be included in future BPS and related surveys and (b) how to improve BPS restricted-use file (RUF) and data tools processes, data products, and usability.

# 2 BACKGROUND AND STUDY RATIONALE

The Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS)—like the related studies, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B)—is a nationally representative collection of data on postsecondary students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) makes BPS data available to researchers, policymakers, and the public in the form of hundreds of variables on topics including enrollment, persistence, attainment, employment, student aid, finances, and demographics.

Every round of BPS includes one base-year collection and two follow-up collections conducted over the course of six years. A new series of BPS collections begins every eight years. BPS:12/17, the most recent round of BPS, used the 2011-12 academic year as its base year and included two follow-up collections, one in 2014 and one in 2017. A BPS:12/17 restricted-use file (RUF) will be made available to researchers with an IES (Institute of Education Sciences) restricted-use license later this year, in 2019.

Preparation of the items to be administered to BPS survey respondents involves extensive developmental work and discussion, as NCES must weigh the desire to collect more data from sample members against the need to keep survey response burden to a minimum. When deciding which data to collect (and, by extension, which variables to include) in a BPS collection, a number of factors is taken into account, including the ease with which the data can be collected, the importance of the data to the study's research topics, and the popularity of the data among members of the research community.

NCES has a number of methods for assessing the extent to which researchers make use of variables in the BPS dataset, including the solicitation of feedback from experts selected for regular technical review panels, contracted analyses of published research using BPS data, and the compilation of user statistics on DataLab (an online platform for the analysis of NCES study data, including BPS). Each of these methods is helpful, but is also limited in utility, as each suffers from different forms of selection bias. A truly representative collection of data user feedback would require more resources than NCES can spare. Rather, NCES must rely on different, complementary sources of feedback to provide an informative picture of which data NCES users find most useful.

NCES proposes supplementing the existing forms of user feedback with an online survey of BPS:12/17 RUF data users. This user survey will collect useful information about which data researchers are using, how they are using the data, and their satisfaction with the restricted-use data.

# 3 RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

The respondents will be recruited from the population of RUF license holders who participate in a mandatory online training. At the end of the training, they will be prompted to indicate if they perform research using the BPS:12/17 RUF. Those who respond in the affirmative will be redirected to the RUF user survey, which will likewise be administered online.

Though the online training is mandatory, respondents will be informed at the beginning of the survey that the survey itself is voluntary.

The results of this survey will be used internally by NCES to evaluate the quality and utility of BPS RUF data and to consider possible improvements for future BPS data collections.

## 4 CONSULTATIONS OUTSIDE THE AGENCY

The RUF user survey will be programmed and administered, and its data collected and analyzed, by NCES.

## 5 JUSTIFICATION FOR SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

Throughout the user survey development processes, effort has been made to avoid asking for information that would be sensitive or offensive.

## 6 PAYING RESPONDENTS

There will not be any incentives for responding to this survey.

## 7 ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

The user survey will not retain any personally identifiable information. Prior to the start of the survey, respondents will be notified that their participation is voluntary. As part of the survey, respondents will be notified that all of the information they provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).

## 8 ESTIMATE OF HOURLY BURDEN

We anticipate that approximately 1,000 total licenses will have access to BPS:12/17 restricted-use data. Because each license allows up to 6 data users, the maximum number of BPS:12/17 data users, and thus survey respondents is estimated to be 6,000. The survey is estimated to take each respondent about fifteen minutes to complete. Table 1 details the hourly burden estimates.

Table 1. Estimate of Hourly Burden

Respondent	Task	Number of respondents	Number of responses	Hours per respondent	Total hours
Survey participant	Completion of survey	6,000	6,000	0.25	1,500

## 9 COST TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated cost of this project, including programming the user survey and analyses of results, is \$897.

## 10 PROJECT SCHEDULE

Because we are surveying users of BPS:12/17 data, the survey will begin right after the BPS:12/17 RUF is made available to researchers, which is planned to take place in August 2019. Because NCES will be recruiting users who complete the mandatory online training (which must be completed annually) data collection will proceed for approximately one year, so that if the survey will begin in August 2019, it will end on September 1, 2020. If the survey

begins later than August 2019, it will end one year from the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following the start of the BPS:12/17 RUF survey. We expect data analysis to then take no longer than six months. Table 2 provides an overall schedule.

**Table 2: Estimated Schedule**

Event	Date
Begin data collection	August 2019
End data collection	September 1, 2020
Data analysis	September – March 2020