

# Memorandum

United States Department of Education  
Institute of Education Sciences  
National Center for Education Statistics

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TO: Robert Sivinski, OMB

THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela, OMB Liaison, NCES

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SUBJECT: 2012/17 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study: (BPS:12/17) Study Materials Change Request (OMB# 1850-0631 v.11)

The 2012/17 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:12/17) is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education (ED). BPS is designed to follow a cohort of students who enroll in postsecondary education for the first time during the same academic year, irrespective of the date of high school completion. The study collects data on students' persistence in and completion of postsecondary education programs; their transition to employment; demographic characteristics; and changes over time in their goals, marital status, income, and debt, among other indicators. Data from BPS are used to help researchers and policymakers better understand how financial aid influences persistence and completion, what percentages of students complete various degree programs, what are the early employment and wage outcomes for certificate and degree attainers, and why students leave school. The request to conduct the BPS:12/17 full-scale data collection, including a student interview, file matching to various administrative data sources, and collection of corresponding postsecondary education transcripts and student records was approved by OMB in December 2016 (1850-0631 v.10). This request is to make wording changes: 1) to security questions at the start of the interview in order to better confirm the identity of the sample member, and 2) to the contact materials to make them compatible with the revised security questions by removing the name of the base-year school attended by the sample member.

The recently approved request (1850-0631 v.10) contained a new interview security strategy that used personal information, including social security numbers (SSNs), phone numbers, and addresses, to verify that a respondent is the intended sample member. This strategy, being deployed for the first time in an NCES student interview, is to display, at the beginning of the survey, a series of similar response options from which the intended respondent is to select the response that is unique to them. Upon continued review and discussion with ED staff, data security, and survey experts, concerns were raised that display of personal and location information could be viewed negatively by a respondent, and particularly by prior-round interview nonrespondents. The recently approved security items had not yet been field tested, and their potential effect on response rates and nonresponse bias is unknown. This request is to replace sensitive information in the security questions with the name of the first postsecondary institution attended by the sample member, which fits more closely with the context of the survey while still serving to verify the respondent's identity.

This revision does not introduce changes to survey content, respondent burden, or the cost to the federal government.

### **Changes to the Student Interview Instrument (Appendix G)**

The revised interview instrument facsimile is provided in Appendix G. The changes are intended to confirm respondent identity by using the name of the institution attended by the respondent in the base year. The changes are as follows:

- B17RESPCONF: institution name is removed.
- B17RESPONCONF2: revised to ask the student to identify the school they attended in the 2011-12 academic year from a picklist. Previous question wording that asked the respondent to identify the last four digits of their social security number has been removed.
- B17RESPONCONF3: revised to ask respondents who do not correctly identify their base-year school to provide contact information so they can be followed-up with.
- B17RESPONCONF4 and SECFAIL: removed since these are not needed with new security question sequence.

Table 1 in Appendix G, which includes a summary of the changes to the instrument when compared with the BPS:12/17 pilot test, has been updated to reflect these revisions.

### **Changes to the Full Scale Contact Materials (Appendix E)**

The revised full scale contact materials are provided in Appendix E. The following changes ensure that institution attended in 2011-12 is not cited in the correspondence.

- Data collection announcement letter (page E-14):
  - OLD: You represent many students like you from <<NPSASSchool>> who were not selected for BPS...
  - NEW: You represent many students like you who were not selected for BPS....
- Data Collection Announcement E-mail (page E-30):
  - OLD: The BPS survey will ask about your experiences since enrolling at <<NPSASSchool>>.
  - NEW: The BPS survey will ask about your experiences since enrolling in higher education.
- Reminder E-mail 7 – Example (page E-42)
  - OLD: You are being asked to participate in BPS because you were enrolled at <<NPSASSchool>>....
  - NEW: You are being asked to participate in BPS because you were enrolled in higher education...