

# Memorandum

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

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DATE: November 8, 2017

TO: Robert Sivinski, OMB

THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela, OMB Liaison, NCES

FROM: Tracy Hunt-White, Team Lead, Postsecondary Longitudinal and Sample Surveys, NCES  
Ted Socha, B&B:16/17 Project Officer, NCES

SUBJECT: 2016-17 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:16/17) Main Study Change Request (OMB# 1850-0926 v.6)

The 2016/17 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:16/17) is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education (ED). B&B is designed to follow a cohort of students who completed the requirements for their bachelor's degree during the same academic year. Data from B&B are used to help researchers and policymakers better understand the experiences of bachelor's degree recipients in the years following their degree completion. The request to conduct the B&B:16/17 Main Study was approved in May with the latest change request approved in July 2017 (OMB# 1850-0926 v. 3-5). This request is to allow participants to elaborate on their responses in two survey items, begin to offer the abbreviated interview sooner to some sample members than originally planned, and to use five additional communication materials for non-respondents.

This request does not introduce changes to the estimated respondent burden or the costs to the federal government. A separate generic clearance request is being simultaneously submitted (1850-0803 v.217) regarding the addition of text boxes to two survey items in the B&B:16/17 full-scale interview that allows participants to elaborate on their responses to these items. Attachment 1 of this memo shows all of the revisions made to the approved B&B:16/17 Main Study clearance documents (OMB# 1850-0926 v. 3-5). Updated Supporting Statement Part B and Appendices E and F are also included with this submission.

### Contacting Protocol Changes

Per the approved B&B:16/17 Supporting Statement Part B, the B&B:16/17-eligible sample has been placed into four groups based on their NPSAS:16 interview response status:

- Group 1: Non-located NPSAS:16 interview nonrespondents
- Group 2: Located NPSAS:16 interview nonrespondents and abbreviated respondents
- Group 3: Late NPSAS:16 interview respondents
- Group 4: Early NPSAS:16 interview respondents (responded in the first three weeks of the NPSAS:16 interview data collection effort)

Below we are proposing protocol changes that impact these groups.

**Abbreviated Offer – Base Year Respondents.** The current data collection plan includes offering the 10-minute abbreviated interview to base year respondents (Data Collection Groups 3 & 4), with an incentive of \$30, during the final month of data collection. We have learned that offering an abbreviated interview can boost response rates, and so we would like to expand the time period when the abbreviated offer is available for the B&B:16/17 base-year non-respondents by extending the offer to pending cases in Groups 3 & 4 starting on February 19, 2018, rather than the originally planned March 4, 2018. Note that we are not proposing any changes in the protocol for Groups 1 & 2 (sample members with pending statuses in Groups 1

& 2 will be offered the abbreviated interview on January 8, 2018 as originally planned). All B&B:16/17 data collection is scheduled to close on Friday, March 23, 2018.

**Abbreviated Offer – Potential Refusals.** We would also like to offer the 10-minute abbreviated interview to any sample member, in any group, who expresses concerns about the length of the interview via phone or email. We will review lists of active cases each week, add an additional status code for cases who expressed concerns about interview length, and send them an email invitation for the abbreviated interview offer. From that point forward, all communication with these cases will include reference to the 10-minute abbreviated interview. For Data Collection Groups 1 & 2, this activity will occur between approval of this change request and January 8, 2018, when all Group 1 & 2 sample members with a pending status will be offered the abbreviated interview. For Data Collection Groups 3 & 4, this activity will occur between approval of this request and February 19, 2018, when we will offer the abbreviated interview to all Group 3 & 4 sample members with a pending status.

**Additional Contacts.** In attempt to further encourage participation and boost response rates, we have added the approved Appendix E further email and postcard reminders for all sample members who have not yet completed their survey, specifically:

- Because we will continue data collection through winter holidays, we added an email and card that mention a positive holiday/new year sentiment (*Holiday Postcard 6 and Holiday Email*);
- When NPSAS:16 results are released (B&B:16/17 sample members were first part of NPSAS:16), we'd like to include selected findings from and a link to the First Look report to illustrate the importance of the sample members' contributions to research (*First Look Email*); and
- We will continue to send targeted emails to pending partial cases, reviewed pending ineligible cases, and initial refusals to encourage them to complete the survey (*Reminder Postcard 7 & 8*).

**Tailoring Contact Materials.** Tailoring communications to encourage survey participation has long been done by interviewers (Groves and McGonagle 2001). Persuasion theory argues that interviewers who can successfully draw connections between survey participation and an individual's attitude and beliefs are more successful in gaining compliance due to an individual's need for consistency (Groves et al. 1992). Furthermore, social exchange theory posits that individuals will comply with a request from strangers if they trust that the expected rewards will exceed the anticipated costs of complying (Dillman et al. 2014). It argues for tailoring and developing survey procedures that encourage positive social exchange and participation by highlighting the benefits and relevance associated with participation.

Building on these ideas, we have customized contact materials sent to study members to make the survey more attractive to different sample cases based on information available on the frame. Tailoring the advance letter provides a direct effort at persuasion to increase response rates and representativeness by directly targeting the decision-making strategy of respondents and increasing perceived relevance, topic saliency, and commitment (Groves et al. 1992). The limited empirical evidence supports these arguments. Compared to standard letters, for example, targeted letters improve response rates significantly among groups with lower-response propensity in an innovation panel (Lynn 2016).

Sample members provided their major field of study in their NPSAS:16 interview. Field of study information for Groups 1 & 2 should be obtainable from administrative data. During the remainder of the data collection period for B&B:16/17, to encourage participation and engage sample members by personalizing communications, we will refer to a sample member's major field of study in the email text for five selected emails and the two added postcards. This targeted solicitation effort would personalize our participation requests, thereby conveying the value of their input to potential respondents.

We are currently conducting an experiment in the B&B:08/18 field test data collection (OMB# 1850-0729 v.12) and daily results suggest that sample members are more likely to participate when they receive contacting material that references their major field of study. With the remaining time left in the B&B:16/17 full-scale study, we are requesting these changes to maximize our chances of reaching the response rate goal of 78% participation among the eligible sample.

## SOGI Item Probing

Simultaneously with this change request, NCES is submitting a generic clearance request (OMB# 1850-0803 v.217) to begin item probing on two survey questions (BB17FGENDER & BB17FLGBTQ) related to gender identity and sexual orientation. The Federal Interagency Working Group on Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys (SOGI) requested that additional definitional information be captured for respondents who do not self-identify with the gender and sexual orientation normative polarization. In other words, respondents who do not self-identify as “heterosexual”, “gay”, “cisgender”, or “transgender” will be asked for additional information. For the remainder of the B&B:16/17 full-scale data collection, we will collect open text string self-identifying information for those who do not describe themselves as fitting into the above categories. Because this is the full-scale data collection, no new response categories will be created at this point. We only plan to collect additional information if certain response options are selected (see under Appendix F in Attachment 1 of this document).

On the restrictive use data files that will be produced based on the data collected in B&B:16/17, each respondent will be coded as one of the already OMB-approved item response options; no recoding will occur nor will the additional text string data be disseminated beyond the SOGI working group.

The B&B:16/17 data collection began in July 2017 and is scheduled to end in March 2018. Given that we anticipate a 78% response rate and 46% of eligible sample members have responded to date, we anticipate 9,108 additional interviews between now and the end of data collection. The table below provides the current distribution of responses to the BB17FGENDER and BB17FLGBTQ items to which text boxes will be added, and the estimated number of responses before the end of data collection.

**Table: Current number and percent of responses to survey items to which text box will be added**

| Item                       | Current number of responses | Current number of completed interviews | Percent     | Anticipated number of remaining interviews | Anticipated number of additional responses |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------|--|--|
| <b>BB17FGENDER</b>         |                             |  |             |  |  |
| Genderqueer/nonconforming  | 80                          | 12,872 <sup>1</sup>                    | 0.62        | 9,108                                      | 57   |
| Different gender identity  | 15                          | 12,872                                 | 0.12        | 9,108                                      | 11   |
| Questioning or unsure      | 37                          | 12,872                                 | 0.29        | 9,108                                      | 26   |
| <b>BB17FLGBTQ</b>          |                             |  |             |  |  |
| Another sexual orientation | 138                         | 12,872                                 | 1.10        | 9,108                                      | 100  |
| Questioning or unsure      | 149                         | 12,872                                 | 1.16        | 9,108                                      | 106  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>419</b>                  | <b>12,872</b>                          | <b>3.26</b> |  | <b>300</b>                                 |

<sup>1</sup> Administered count as of last time frequencies were pulled. Date was prior to date response rates were calculated.

## Attachment 1

### Revisions to the Approved B&B:16/17clearance Package Documents

#### Part B:

In the Survey Instrument Design subsection of Section B.3, the following paragraph was added on **page 6** regarding the SOGI item probing:

At the request of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys (SOGI), a change was made to the survey instrument beginning in November 2017. Text boxes requesting elaboration of responses were added to specific response options for items BB17FGENDER and BB17FLGBTQ (see appendix F). In addition, the following help text was added to explain the purpose of the text box:

“If you are presented with a *Please describe* textbox, please define how you would self-describe your gender if the selected response option is not an exact match with how you identify your [gender (in BB17FGENDER) / sexual orientation (in BB17FLGBTQ)]. Text responses will not be

released. The data are being collected to better inform relevant response options in future surveys.”

No new items or categories were added to the survey. The request for elaboration is intended to assist the SOGI working group with additional information on how gender identity and sexual orientation questions should be asked. Responses from these additional text boxes will not be disseminated beyond the SOGI working group.

In the Refusal Aversion and Conversion subsection of section B.3 in Part B, the following paragraph was added on **page 6**:

In November 2017, as a form of refusal conversion, we will begin offering the abbreviated interview to any sample members (across all data collection groups) who refuse participation because of the interview’s length.

In the B&B:16/17 Main Study Data Collection Design subsection of section B.4 in Part B, the text highlighted in yellow was added in Table 8 on **page 10** to reflect the requested changes:

**Table 8. B&B:16/17 main study data collection protocols by data collection phase**

| Protocol  | Data Collection Group Assignments   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
|   | Non-located NPSAS:16 interview nonrespondents (Group 1)                             | Located NPSAS:16 interview nonrespondents and abbreviated respondents (Group 2)              | Late NPSAS:16 interview respondents (Group 3) | Early NPSAS:16 interview respondents (Group 4)                    |
| Eligibility screener & address update – First 6 weeks, prior to main data collection <sup>1</sup> | Aggressive<br>\$10 postpaid incentive   | Aggressive<br>\$10 postpaid incentive  | Default<br>---                                | Relaxed<br>---  |
| Early Completion Phase – First 4 weeks of main data collection <sup>1</sup>                       | Data collection announcement letter and email                                       | Data collection announcement letter and email offering additional \$5 “Early Bird” incentive |   | DC announcement letter and email thanking for prior participation |
|   | CATI starts 2 weeks after mail outs – continues through all phases                  |  | Mode tailoring in NPSAS:16 completion mode    | Mode tailoring in NPSAS:16 completion mode                        |
| Production Phase I – Next <3 months   | Postcard reminders  |  | “Light” CATI Outbound begins                  | “Light” CATI Outbound begins 2 weeks after start of phase         |
| Production Phase II – Next 3 months   | Abbreviated interview offered<br>Postcard reminders                                 |  | Postcard reminders                            |   |
|   | Continued CATI interviewing/ locating efforts                                       |  |   |   |
|   | Abbreviated interview offer for potential refusals                                  |  |   |   |
| Nonresponse Conversion Phase – Final month  | Continued CATI interviewing/ locating efforts                                       |  |   |   |
|   | Postcard reminders  |  |   |   |
|   | Abbreviated interview offered – offered to Group 3 & 4 pending cases on February 19 |  |   |   |
| <b>Total postpaid incentive</b>   | \$55 (+\$10 screener)   | \$50 + \$5 (+\$10 screener)  | \$30 + \$5                                    | \$30  |

**Note:** In addition to contacts shown in table, all groups will receive regular email and, with permission, text message reminders.

<sup>1</sup> Main data collection begins after the 6-week screener period for base year nonrespondents and immediately upon OMB clearance for base year respondents. Main data collection will end at the same time for both groups, therefore the duration of production phase I will be adjusted for base year nonrespondents to ensure Production Phase II and the Nonresponse Conversion Phase have sufficient time.

In the Abbreviated Interviews subsection of section B.3 in Part B (**page 11**), the sentence following “An abbreviated interview option will be offered to all sample members in the B&B:16/17 main study data collection.”:

For Groups 1 and 2, it will be offered during Production Phase II, the latter half of the production phase of data collection, and as the last step in nonresponse conversion for Groups 3 and 4.

was revised to:

For pending cases in Groups 1 and 2, it will be offered on January 8, 2018, during Production Phase II (the latter half of the production phase of data collection). For pending cases in Groups 3 & 4, the abbreviated interview offer will be made on February 19, 2018. Further, for sample members who express concerns about the length of the interview, the abbreviated interview offer will be made ahead of schedule, beginning in November 2017, based on their refusal to complete the full survey.

**Appendix E:**

- We added the following to the Table of Contents on **page E-2** and to Appendix E content:

- o Holiday Postcard 6 included between Reminder Postcard 3 and Reminder Postcard 4 (**page 26**).
- o Reminder Postcard 7 included between Holiday Postcard 6 and Reminder Postcard 8 (**page 27**).
- o Reminder Postcard 8 included between Reminder Postcard 7 and Initial Contact/Screening Invitation Email (**page 28**).
- o Holiday email included between Email Reminder 8 and Email Reminder 9 (**page 40**).
- o First Look Email included between Email Reminder 10 and Email Reminder 11 (**page 43**).
- We updated the Contacts Calendar on **pages E-3 to E-4** to include the additional postcards and emails and provide updated dates for the different communication materials.
- The text highlighted in yellow below, specifying majors, was added to Reminder Emails 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13:

**Reminder Email 8**

SUBJECT: B&B Needs <<major>> Majors Like You, <<fname>>!

<<fname>>, B&B only takes <<time>> minutes and is easy to complete on your mobile device. We need to hear from college graduates «with degrees in [major]» like you.

**Reminder Email 9**

SUBJECT: Participate in B&B, an Important Education Study, for Students with a Major in <<major>>!

When you complete your B&B survey, which takes about <<time>> minutes, you'll contribute to important education research. IF INCENTIVE ELIGIBLE: [And, you'll receive \$<<incamt>>, payable by <<PayPal or>> check!] Just [click here](#) to get started right away.

YOUR SECURE LOGIN CREDENTIALS:

[<<Website URL>>](#)

Study ID: <<caseID>>

Password: <<pswd>>

We rely on students with a major in <<major>> to participate and make the study a success.

**Reminder Email 10**

SUBJECT: Share Your Experiences as a Bachelor's Degree Recipient Majoring in <<major>> with B&B for \$<<incamt>>

<<fname>>, The B&B survey takes about <<time>> minutes IF INCENTIVE ELIGIBLE[, and when you complete it, you'll receive \$<<incamt>>, payable by <<PayPal or>> check]!

This is your chance to contribute to important education research about recent college graduates. We need to hear from those students who majored in <<major>> like you!

**Reminder Email 12**

SUBJECT: B&B Surveys are Still Underway for Students with a Major in <<major>>!

<<fname>>, when you participate in B&B, which takes about <<time>> minutes, IF INCENTIVE ELIGIBLE [you'll receive \$<<incamt>> as a thank you, payable by <<PayPal or>> check, *and*] you'll contribute to important research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

We need students with a major in <<major>> to participate, and hope you will choose to do so.

### **Reminder Email 13**

**SUBJECT:** We Need Your Help with B&B <<, Especially Students With a <<major>> Major! >>

GROUPS 1-2: <<fname>>, just **click here**, or go to <<Website URL>> and log in:

GROUPS 3-4: <<fname>>, the B&B interview now takes just 10 minutes! To start your survey, **click here**, or go to <<Website URL>> and log in:

Study ID: <<caseID>>

Password: <<pswd>>

GROUPS 1-2, INCENTIVE ELIGIBLE: The B&B survey takes about <<time>> minutes to finish, and you'll receive \$<<incamt>> via PayPal or check! You are one of a few selected people and the study won't be a success without you, <<fname>>! We especially need students with a <<major>> major like you!

GROUPS 3-4, INCENTIVE ELIGIBLE: When you finish, you'll receive \$<<incamt>> via PayPal or check! You are one of a few selected people and the study won't be a success without you, <<fname>>!

We especially need students with a <<major>> major like you!

GROUPS 1-2, NO INCENTIVE: The B&B survey takes about <<time>> minutes to finish. You are one of a few selected people and the study won't be a success without you, <<fname>>! We especially need students with a <<major>> major like you!

GROUPS 3-4, NO INCENTIVE: You are one of a few selected people and the study won't be a success without you, <<fname>>! We especially need students with a <<major>> major like you!

### **Appendix F:**

In Table 1. B&B:16/17 Main Study Student Survey, next to items BB17FGENDER and BB17FLGBTQ (page F-29), in the Rationale column added the text: "Per request by the federal inter-agency Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) working group, added "Please describe" textboxes to some of the response options in the BB17FGENDER and BB17FLGBTQ items."

In item BB17FGENDER (page F-97) and item BB17FLGBTQ (page F-97 to F-98) added the text highlighted in yellow below:

#### **BB17FGENDER**

What is your gender?

Your gender is how you feel inside and can be the same or different from your biological or birth sex.

1=Male

2=Female

3=Transgender, male-to-female

4=Transgender, female-to-male

5=Genderqueer or gender nonconforming

[If selected] Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

6=A different gender identity

[If selected] Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

7=Questioning or unsure

[If selected] Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Help Text:**

Gender includes gender identity and gender expression. Gender identity means one's inner sense of one's own gender, which may or may not match the sex assigned at birth. Different people choose to express their gender identity differently. For some, gender may be expressed through, for example, dress,

grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions. Gender expression usually ranges between masculine and feminine, and some transgender people express their gender consistent with how they identify internally, rather than in accordance with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transgender: When a person's birth sex and gender do not match, they might think of themselves as transgender.

Gender queer and gender nonconforming: These are terms used to identify people whose gender may not conform to the sex they were assigned at birth. Often these terms may be used by people who identify their gender as something other than "male" or "female." Their gender may fall somewhere between male and female, or may fall outside the traditional male/female gender distinctions.

If you are presented with a *Please describe* textbox, please define how you would self-describe your gender if the selected response option is not an exact match with how you identify your gender. Text responses will not be released. The data are being collected to better inform relevant response options in future surveys.

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### **BB17FLGBTQ**

Do you think of yourself as...

1=Lesbian or gay, that is, homosexual

2=Straight, that is, heterosexual

3=Bisexual

4=Another sexual orientation

[If selected] Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

5=Questioning or unsure

[If selected] Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Help Text:**

Sexual orientation is someone's emotional or physical attraction to the same and/or opposite sex.

If you are presented with a *Please describe* textbox, please define how you would self-describe your sexual orientation if the selected response option is not an exact match with how you identify your sexual orientation. Text responses will not be released. The data are being collected to better inform relevant response options in future surveys.