

Memorandum

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

DATE: December 11, 2019

TO: Robert Sivinski, OMB

THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela, Senior OMB Liaison, NCES

FROM: Tracy Hunt-White, Team Lead, Postsecondary Longitudinal and Sample Surveys, NCES

SUBJECT: 2019–20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20) Questionnaire Item Change Request (OMB# 1850-0666 v.26)

The 2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20) is a nationally representative cross-sectional study of how students and their families finance education beyond high school in a given academic year. NPSAS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and was first implemented by NCES during the 1986–87 academic year and has been fielded every 3 to 4 years since. This request pertains to the 11th cycle in the NPSAS series conducted during the 2019–20 academic year. NPSAS:20 will be both nationally- and state-representative and will serve as the base year data collection for the 2020 cohort of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:20), a study of first-time beginning postsecondary students that will be conducted three years (BPS:20/22) and six years (BPS:20/25) after beginning their postsecondary education. NPSAS:20 will consist of a nationally-representative sample of undergraduate and graduate students, and a nationally-representative sample of first-time beginning students (FTBs). Subsets of questions in the NPSAS:20 student interview will focus on describing aspects of the experience of beginning students in their first year of postsecondary education, including student debt and education experiences. The request is to conduct all activities related to NPSAS:20, including materials and procedures related to: the NPSAS:20 student data collection, consisting of abstraction of student data from institutions and a student survey; panel maintenance activities for a NPSAS:2020 follow-up field test (for BPS:20/22); and carried over respondent burden, procedures, and materials related to the NPSAS:20 institution sampling, enrollment list collection, and matching to administrative data files was approved by OMB in December 2019 (OMB#1859-0666 v.25). The NPSAS:20 enrollment list collection from institutions takes place from October 2019 through July 2020, the student records collection will take place from February through November 2020, and the student survey data collection will take place from January through November 2020. This request is to add an item to the student questionnaire that is based on an existing item.

The Department of Education is interested in better understanding the relationship between family structure and educational outcomes at all levels of education. In order to obtain data allowing for this relationship to be explored at the postsecondary level, NCES is adding a question that can provide some information on the respondent's family structure before the respondent entered college. Currently in the survey, a subset of students (i.e., undergraduate students under age 24 who are single, have no dependents, and are not veterans or on active duty) are asked to provide the current marital status of their parent(s) or guardian(s) (see N20HPARST below). The new question being added is a variation of the existing question to determine parents'/guardians' marital status when the respondent was age 18. The new question (N20HPARST18) will be asked of all respondents 19 to 24 years of age, regardless of student type, their own marital and military status, or number of dependents. This request does not introduce significant changes to the estimated respondent burden or the costs to the federal government. Revisions were made to Appendix I (NPSAS:20 Student Survey Instrument).

The following question was added in Appendix I (page I-66):

NEW - N20HPARST18 [Applies to those under age 25]

When you were 18 years old, what was the marital status of your parents (or guardians)? If your parents (or guardians) were divorced, please answer this question about the marital status of the parent (or guardian) with whom you lived most when you were 18 years old.

(If you did not live with one parent more than the other, answer about the parent who provided more financial support when you were 18 years old.)

- 1 = Married or remarried
- 2 = Never married
- 3 = Divorced or separated
- 4 = Widowed
- 5 = Unmarried and both parents living together
- 6 = None of the above - Both parents (or guardians) are deceased

This added question is based on the existing item (page I-59):

N20HPARST

What is the current marital status of your parents (or guardians)? If your parents (or guardians) are divorced, please answer this question about the marital status of the parent (or guardian) with whom you lived most during the past 12 months.

(If you did not live with one parent more than the other, answer about the parent who provided more financial support during the last 12 months, or during the most recent year that you received support from a parent.)

- 1 = Married or remarried
- 2 = Never married
- 3 = Divorced or separated
- 4 = Widowed
- 5 = Unmarried and both parents living together
- 6 = None of the above - Both parents (or guardians) are deceased