

## Memorandum

March 26, 2015

TO: Shelly Martinez, Office of Management and Budget  
FROM: Elise Christopher, National Center for Education Statistics  
THROUGH: Kashka Kubzdela, National Center for Education Statistics  
RE: High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) Second Follow-up Field Test 2015 Questionnaire Wording Change Request (OMB# 1850-0852 v.16)

The High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) Second Follow-up Field Test and Main Study Panel Maintenance 2015 were approved in March 2015 (OMB# 1850-0852 v.15), and the 2nd Follow-up Field Test of HSL:09 Cognitive Interviews were approved in November 2014 (OMB# 1850-0803 v.118). The cognitive interview work concluded in February 2015, and the HSL:09 team would like to implement changes based on the cognitive interview results in the HSL:09 questionnaire. Additionally, as the instrument was being programmed for online use and the programmed instrument reviewed, the team has identified areas needing modifications to improve clarity and customize wording to better fit the online scenario. With this memorandum, NCES is requesting approval to make these modifications to the HSL:09 2nd Follow-up Field Test survey instrument. All of the proposed changes are designed to improve clarity and flow of the survey items, and do not introduce changes to content, respondent burden, or the cost to the federal government.

Attachment A presents a table listing all desired changes organized by the type of change, as outlined below:

1. **Required for proper operation of the survey.** These changes include reordering items, correcting verb tenses, repeating a series of questions for each institution attended, adding a missing response option for a particular scenario (e.g., adding an option to indicate that parents are deceased for a question about parents). These needs were identified during the instrument specification and programming process.
2. **Required to improve clarity and to minimize nonresponse.** The majority of the revisions are minor wording changes that do not alter the substance of the question but will make the intended meaning clearer. Another change is to remind respondents of data confidentiality at the beginning of questions about income. These suggested changes have been identified through cognitive testing and review of the programmed instrument.
3. **Required to improve user's experience.** These recommended changes will improve the flow of the questions. These were identified during the programming process and review.
4. **Required for consistency within the survey instrument and across related studies.** These suggested revisions would bring survey questions into alignment with their BPS:12/14 and NPSAS:16 counterparts or align similar response options across questions within the instrument. These recommended changes were identified during the review of the programmed instrument.
5. **Miscellaneous minor corrections.** In the interest of transparency, these suggested revisions clarify the original intent of the questions. For example, when asking about months worked on the current job, there were too many months to present on a single screen, so the representation in OMB package was a simplification.

In addition to the aforementioned table, we have provided a report summarizing the results of the first round of cognitive testing that was completed in February 2015 (see Attachment B) and a revised (from that approved in March 2015) Appendix E with a facsimile of the final survey wording for HSL:09 2<sup>nd</sup> Follow-up Field Test. The planned second round of cognitive interviews will be submitted to OMB for approval in April 2015 and will inform the survey items for the main study.

NCES appreciates OMB's review of this change request. If there is any further information that may be provided to facilitate review, please let us know. Data collection is scheduled to begin on April 13, 2015, and all online instruments will need to be finalized at least a week beforehand. We would greatly appreciate a decision on the requested changes before April 3, 2015.