

FAQ for Department/Dean's Offices

For Student Opinion Survey (SOS)

What is SOS?

The Student Opinion Survey (SOS) is the tool by which students evaluate an on-campus instructor. The SOS is one instrument instructors can utilize to demonstrate teaching effectiveness; it is also the only instrument that is financially and administratively supported by Academic Planning & Analysis (APA). The results of SOS may be used by university administration when evaluating an instructor for reappointment, promotion, or tenure consideration and post-tenure review.

Is SOS mandatory?

APA does not mandate SOS administration. However, departmental bylaws may require faculty members to be evaluated.

How do I obtain SOS supplies?

Within the first four weeks of the fall and spring semesters, department SOS coordinators will be contacted via email for a supply order. Forms for ordering supplies can also be found on the [APA website](#).

I incorrectly estimated my supply order. How can I get additional supplies?

Submit a supply order form (found on the [APA website](#)) via email or fax. We will contact you when the supplies are ready to be picked up.

Now that I have the supplies, what should I do?

The Manual for Department SOS Coordinators, which is located on the [APA website](#), explains the procedures. Please review this carefully and make it available to anyone who assists in the process.

How can I ensure the proper instructor is credited with the SOS results?

Process the needed paperwork with the registrar's office for any change in instructor *before* SOS processing occurs. Once the processing of the survey cycle is completed, all changes to the permanent records in the respective department and Dean's offices, as well as the affected faculty member's personnel file, must be done manually by the department.

When do I distribute the prepared SOS packets to faculty?

Once packets are assembled, please distribute them to faculty participating in the survey process. The time for administration of the SOS should be within the last two weeks of class prior to the final exam. It is recommended that the SOS not be administered before this timeframe or during final exam week.

What am I supposed to do when I receive the completed SOS packets?

When the completed SOS forms are returned to the department, the SOS coordinator prepares the SOS envelopes by following the procedures below.

1. Retain small envelopes containing the individual opinion sheets (½ sheets). Place these in a secure location until after the instructor deadline for submitting (or changing) semester grades; you will then distribute the individual opinion sheets directly to the instructors.
2. Separate unused survey scantrons from completed forms (8 ½ x 11 scantrons). Store unused sheets for future use. Remove any extra papers such as student or faculty instructions.
3. Place all completed scantron sheets in the same direction.
4. Check the accuracy of information on the survey sheets for each packet (by comparing it to the label on the envelope) to ensure the correct instructor's CMU Global ID and course reference number are listed **and the appropriate corresponding fields ("bubbles") are completed**. Failure to provide the correct CMU Global ID and CRN may result in delays for the instructor's access to summary results.
5. Carefully verify that the first and last scantrons in the stack are legible, accurate (including the corresponding fields) and completed in pencil. Any forms that are inaccurate (related to the Global ID and CRN), or are completed in ink, should be placed in the middle of the stack. Generally, the SOS coordinator should not make changes to the scantron forms; however, ***if all scantrons are inaccurate (on Global ID and CRN), the SOS coordinator must correct the first and last scantron only***. APA will accept incorrectly completed forms that are placed in the middle of the stack, as long as the first and last scantrons are entirely correct.
6. Place one "header sheet" on top of the stack. The header sheet acts as a divider between each course. The header sheet has only the first six X's filled in under the CMU Faculty Global ID section. No other information should appear on this form. Please do **not** write on the header sheet, so that these may be re-used.
7. Insert completed sheets (with header sheet on top) into envelope with appropriate label (furnished earlier in semester).
8. If you are submitting multiple sections that you want processed as one, please be sure to submit with:
 - Single header sheet
 - Single envelope with all CRN labels
 - Select one CRN number for all students to use on scantron forms. Write "ALL" on the label to indicate you want everything in the packet processed for this CRN. Ensure the top and bottom forms are coded with the selected CRN.
9. Send completed envelope(s) to APA in WA 312U. Please forward completed surveys for processing as soon as possible, and no later than the deadline. Please do not hold on to packets until the end of the semester or until they are all prepared.

How can I find SOS summary results from previous semesters?

Results are [online](#) and more information is detailed in the Manual for Department SOS Coordinators.

I found an SOS packet from a previous semester. Can it still be processed?

No. Once SOS scores are published (when administration receives a new password to access the results), the results are finalized. A department may hand-calculate the unprocessed forms and purge the original scantrons. To obtain instructions on hand-calculating SOS forms, please contact APA.

Our department has a faculty member that would like to compare his SOS results with other faculty in our department. Can I share this information?

Yes. SOS results are public information. Faculty have access to online scores for comparative analysis.

What is the purpose of questions 9 and 10 on the SOS form?

Optional questions 9 and 10 on the SOS forms are intended for department and/or faculty member to use, if they choose to customize the survey. Keep in mind the following:

- The department and/or faculty member will compose the question(s) used for 9-10, as well as the responses available for 1-5 on the scantron.
- The faculty should either post the questions on the board or give each student a printed copy of the question(s) and responses available.
- The actual questions will not appear on the SOS reports for 9-10. The questions will be listed as "Additional Question #9" and "Additional Question #10," followed by the number of responses, frequency, means, etc.
- Since APA does not keep record of individualized questions for 9-10, the questions and response scale should be kept by the individual faculty and a copy should be submitted to the department for their file.

What is "expedited service" and how can that be requested?

While SOS processing may take 4-6 weeks after the end of the semester, there may be a need (i.e., tenure, promotion and reappointment decisions) for preliminary results as soon as possible.

Administrators, faculty or SOS coordinators may request expedited service by contacting APA with the following information:

- Reason for expedited service (tenure, promotion, reappointment decisions)
- Name of instructor
- Course reference number (CRN) for each course

The SOS coordinator should prioritize the preparing and delivery of any SOS packet that requires expedited service.