Student Opinion of Teaching

Policies and Procedures/
Instructions and Instrumentation

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

Student Opinion of Teaching

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Effective Fall 1998

All policies and procedures for Southeastern's Student Opinion of Teaching program have been reviewed and approved by the Academic Affairs Council.

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

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Overview

The Southeastern Louisiana University Student Opinion of Teaching survey is administered during the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters for all faculty members for every lecture and laboratory course they taught. A schedule for the program for each semester will be recommended by the Director of Institutional Research & Assessment and approved by the Provost.

By collecting data through optical scanning and by computing statistics from these data, various summary reports will be generated and distributed to Deans, Department Heads, and Faculty for the following purposes:

A. To provide Faculty with information to be used for the improvement of courses and instruction;

B. To assist Faculty, Department Heads, and Deans in the annual evaluation of teaching performance and for tenure, promotion, and merit raise decisions;

C. To provide Institutional Research and Assessment with data for institutional effectiveness efforts, with the permission of the Provost. (No data will be reported on individual faculty members.)

In order to achieve these purposes, the administration of the SOT surveys must be standardized and confidential. Policies and procedures therefore are set to adhere to these principles. The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment is directly responsible for the overall implementation of the SOT program. All policies and procedures for the program are contained herein.

Student Opinion of Teaching

Policies

A. The SOT survey instrument contains standard items to be used for teaching performance evaluation and will allow for narrative comments from students. Confidentiality of student input will be maintained as no identifiable information about individual students is a part of the survey instrument.

B. The SOT program is to be administered during the thirteenth and fourteenth weeks each fall and spring semester. During summer semesters and for interim courses, the final week of class is to be used to administer the SOT. The survey instruments will be delivered to the office of the Department Head prior to these dates along with a master list of the packets delivered.

C. The Instructor will receive a copy of the clearly specified instructions for SOT administration (see Appendix A) along with prepared envelopes containing instruments for each course. Students will complete the SOTs during the first 15 minutes of class. The Instructor will distribute the instruments, read the directions to the students and then leave the room. When the SOTs are completed, a student designated by the Instructor will place all instruments in the prepared envelopes and notify the Instructor that the SOTs are completed. The designated student will also be responsible for delivering the envelopes to the Departmental Office. <u>Delivery does not need to occur during the class time, but rather can be done after the class period is over.</u>

D. Department Heads are responsible for making sure that all faculty members have returned the envelopes to the Department Head's office and that all envelopes are returned to the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment by the end of the SOT evaluation period. Periodically during the administration period, Institutional Research and Assessment will collect completed instruments.

E. The procedure for a faculty member to address special problems that might affect SOT results is outlined in Appendix F.

F. All SOT aggregate and individual reports will be distributed by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment no later than the 14th class day of the following semester.

Deans will receive the following reports:

- Summaries by College (Report 1A)
- Summaries by Department for all Colleges (Report 1C)
- Summaries by Instructor for each Department in the College (Report 2)
- Summaries by Class for Each Instructor in the College (Report 3)

Department Heads will receive the following reports:

- Summaries by Instructor for the Department (Report 2)
- Summaries by Class for Each Instructor in the Department (Report 3)

Department Heads will receive the following reports to be distributed to individual faculty members:

- Summaries by Class (Report 3)
- Individual Item Analysis for each class (Supplemental Report)

Deans and Department Heads will maintain these Faculty SOT reports in confidential files within their offices.

G. The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment will retain the original survey forms for each administration of the SOT for one calendar year. Faculty will be notified when they may obtain these forms for classes they have taught. Forms not claimed by the specified deadline will be destroyed (see Appendix H). At the end of the academic year, after performance evaluations have been completed, the narrative copies being stored by the Department Heads should be shredded.

H. Beginning Fall 1998, copies of all narrative data will be sent to the Department Heads. The originals will be distributed to the individual Faculty members. These data should be used according to established guidelines (see Appendices D & E).

I. Because of their unique nature and discipline-related course requirements, Student Teaching, Practicum Courses, Thesis Courses, Independent Studies, and Internships will not be evaluated through the SOT process. These courses will be identified through communication between Institutional Research and Assessment and the Department Heads. Courses which are exempted must have alternative forms of assessment which have been approved by the respective Department Head and Dean (see Appendix B).

J. Non-traditional course structures (e.g., half-term and team-taught classes) require special conditions in the administration of the SOT. These conditions are also outlined in Appendix B.

K. The Director of Institutional Research & Assessment is directly responsible for verifying the storing of SOT data on electronic tape as well as the confidential and fireproof archival storage (see Appendix G). This electronic data tape will be accessed only with approval of the Provost.

Appendix A
Instructions for the Administration of
Student Opinion of Teaching

The administration of the Student Opinion of Teaching plays an important part in the collection of data relevant to the instructional improvement and evaluation of Southeastern faculty. As these data are used in the professional development, annual evaluation, and the tenure and promotion review of faculty, care should be taken to ensure that all stated procedures are followed as closely as possible. Students are asked to report any deviation from established procedures to the department head of the department in which the class is offered. This will help provide for a thorough, valid, and reliable process where the security and confidentiality of data are protected.

You should adhere to the following procedures:

1. The first 15 minutes of the class period will be set aside for the conducting of the SOT. When the SOTs are completed, a student, whom you have previously designated will place all instruments in the prepared envelopes and notify you that the SOTs are completed. The designated student will also be responsible for delivering the envelopes to the Departmental Office. Delivery does not need to occur during the class time, but rather can be done immediately after the class period is over. Ask the student to protect the security of these instruments. <u>Write your name, the course computer number, the team-taught number (if applicable), the semester, and the year on the chalkboard/overhead, etc</u>. (This information will be listed on the label on the cover of the envelope). Make sure all students can clearly see the information and know where it should be entered on their forms. Distribute the materials, read the instructions to the students, and then leave the room.

2. Read the following instructions to the students:

    a. *Please take the completion of this instrument seriously. The data collected from this process will be returned to the faculty member <u>after the completion of the semester</u> for the purposes of reflection and personal development.*
    b. *On the Narrative Response Form, copy the computer number, the name of the instructor, the course and section number, and the semester and year from the board/overhead and place this information in the boxes where indicated on the forms. On this form, you are*

asked to make comments concerning various aspects of your experience in this course. Please take some time to answer these items as they provide me with qualitative information regarding the course and my instruction.

c. Place the computer number on the scan form in the box indicated for it. (If applicable, fill in the team-taught number in the box to the right of the computer number). Also, fill in the student information box on the reverse side of the form. Read each item carefully and fill in the circles under the appropriate column indicating your response to each item. Please note that a "1" means "Strongly Disagree" or "Weak" and a "6" means "Strongly Agree" or "Strong."

d. When you have finished, please sit quietly until everyone has finished filling out the instrument. **_I have asked (student's name) to collect the instruments, make sure narratives are separated from scannable forms, face all forms in the same direction, put them into their separate, original envelopes, seal the envelopes, and deliver them to the department head._** You will have 15 minutes to complete the instrument. Any questions? You may begin."

Appendix B
Special Conditions for Non-traditional Courses

A. <u>Student Teaching, Practicum Courses, Thesis Courses, Independent Studies, and Internships</u>

1. As noted in the SOT Policies, no SOT procedures will be conducted for Student Teaching, Practicum Courses, Thesis Courses, Independent Studies, and Internships. The SOT instrument is not designed to accommodate the distinctive differences in content, presentation, and activities contained in these nontraditional types of courses.

2. A master list of classes will be sent to each Department Head each semester for review of classes that fit the qualifications for exemption.

3. Departments where these courses are offered will be responsible for developing procedures appropriate for evaluating the faculty members delivering these courses.

4. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the respective Department Head and Dean.

B. <u>Half-term and Team-taught Courses</u>

1. It is the responsibility of Department Heads to update team-taught courses to include all faculty members teaching those courses.

2. For half-term courses, the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment will make deliver the SOT instruments to Department Heads at least one week prior to the final exam (or before the last two class meetings prior to the final exam during summer sessions).

3. For team-taught courses, the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment will make sure that an envelope containing instruments for each instructor which has been identified as being involved in the teaching of the course is included in the packets delivered to Department Heads.

C. <u>Special Teaching Conditions</u>

    1. Courses such as those delivered via the Internet or compressed video may require special arrangements for administration and/or special forms.

    2. When a special teaching situation arises, the Department Head and the instructors should contact Institutional Research and Assessment with questions about special teaching conditions.

Appendix C

Guidelines and Suggestions for Analyzing Narrative Comments from the Student Opinion of Teaching (SOT)

Purpose of Analyzing the Narrative Comments

Evaluation by students, peers, and administrators is a critical element in effective educational programs. Self-assessment, often cited as the weak link in achieving a quality evaluation, is also important in producing a holistic evaluation. The results of the quantitative analysis of student comments furnishes insight. Making sense of the often conflicting written responses, however, can be both frustrating and confusing. Should such comments be destroyed, ignored, or should we order and use the wealth of this additional information?

Validity Issues Related to Student Feedback

Validity of student opinions, that is, the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation offered by students, is often a major concern. In self-evaluation, it is not always necessary to attain some ultimate truth in order for the evaluation to be useful and believable. External generalizability of narrative comments is often not a crucial issue. In contrast, the faculty member's personal interpretation within the context of this particular class at this particular time is what makes the evaluation meaningful.

How Qualitative Analysis Complements Quantitative Analysis

What is the purpose of evaluating narrative comments? Results from scannable forms can be used alone to assess teaching environment, instructor-student interaction, and other important elements of instruction. For example, scannable data may be used to determine the number of students who believe that the instructor's speech is not clear and understandable, while qualitative data collection could elaborate on *why* students do not consider the instructor's speech clear and understandable. The comments might explain that the noise from the air conditioning unit makes it difficult to hear the lectures. In the same way, a quick review of comments might also explain any outliers that could have influenced the scannable summaries.

The methods are not simply different ways of doing the same thing. Instead, they   have

different strengths and logics, together providing a holistic approach. The strengths of narrative data derive primarily from the focus on specific situations or people, and the emphasis on words rather than numbers. This type of research often supplies the answers to the "Why?" questions left by quantitative designs.

Uses for Improvements in Teaching and Learning

If the instructor plans to benefit from the narrative comments, structure must be imposed so the comments will make sense and offer insight. A variety of approaches may be adopted in order to analyze qualitative data. This variety stems from the range of talents, the diversity of settings, and the goals of the faculty members. What links all the approaches is a central concern with transforming and interpreting seemingly unconnected data in a scholarly way.

One way to analyze the data is to use the narrative response form that Southeastern students use. The comments are already categorized as those pertaining to (1) the instructor, (2) the activities and tests, (3) the books and materials, and (4) the classroom. These comments are already two dimensional--strengths and suggestions for improvement.

The instructor summarizes students' written statements by grouping similar comments and then counting the number of times such comments are made. Then, the comments are listed in each category on the narrative form in order of decreasing frequency, making sure to specify the number of times each statement was made. For example, one summary might begin as follows:

> Instructor Strengths
> (25) does concise or good job presenting material / explains clearly
> (15) sense of humor
> (12) friendly / polite / accessible
> (10) knows the material
>
> Areas for Improvement
> (16) not enough review in class / quiz not same as class material/ not enough time
> (9) unclear explanations / needs to explain in more than one way
> (6) unorganized / needs to stay on topic
> (5) monotone voice / needs to speak louder

Once the information is in an organized format, the faculty member can more easily make inferences. For example, according to the above information, students perceive this professor as an effective one. Most of the students seem to understand the material presented; however, if additional examples were used, more students might succeed. Perhaps transparencies or handouts with the lecture outlined would help both professor and students stay on task. Finally, many students indicate that they need additional review, more time for taking tests, and test questions taken directly from lecture or from the text A few changes in the instructor's delivery might make a big difference in how students perceive and rate this instructor. This analysis, including both scannable and narrative data, could offer additional ideas for professional development and could easily be translated into teaching goals.

Another example of an analysis of narrative comments is given on pages 12-13.

Focusing the Comments

If the instructor is interested in specific dynamics of a particular class, additional information could be supplied to the students at the time of the evaluation. For example, if a new text has been adopted or a new teaching method has been incorporated, the instructor might ask students to include feedback on this specific aspect of the course in addition to their other comments. This focus helps students structure written responses and gives the instructor additional desired feedback which might have been obscured by a more random presentation.

Student Opinion of Teaching – Narrative Response Form

Computer Number:	Name of Instructor:	Course:	Section Number:	Semester/Year:
0649	S. Smith	Nuclear Physics 101	04	Fall 1997

	STRENGTHS	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
The Instructor	Presentation is organized Friendly, caring, concerned Knowledge of subject is good	Needs to speak louder, monotone Needs less talking
The Activities and Tests	Challenging material Lab demonstrations are helpful, good Peer learning was helpful, good	Tests-too difficult, unfair Need more feedback
The Books and Materials	Overheads were helpful OK	Book was not good, outdated, not clear
The Classroom (i.e., temperature, acoustics, etc.)	OK	Couldn't hear Room was too cold

20 students/53 comments

**Analysis of Comments:**
53 comments from 20 students

Summary:
In general many of the comments were positive and seemed to correspond with the scores on the scannable forms.

The highest item averages I received were for planning and management. These averages were higher than the dept. or college averages. The lowest averages were for items 17, 19, 20 and 21.

Based on the narrative comments, students seem to be having difficulty with the exams. This does not seem to be related to their perceptions of me in general, as comments indicated positive perceptions of my relationships with students.

**Suggestions for Further Course Development:**

1. _Review exams in terms of content and difficulty to make sure they are appropriate._
2. _Investigate sending exam study guides (with answers) to students via e-mail. This would help also with the need to get more feedback. Also investigate getting students to use these study guides collaboratively via e-mail since students seem to like peer interaction._
3. _Review course and look for more ways to use visuals -- overheads and demonstrations. Students seem to like them and find them helpful. Also would reduce need for "teacher talk."_
4. _Investigate getting a new book._

Appendix D
Guidelines for Administrative Use of Narrative SOT Data in Faculty Evaluations

Narrative data:

1. Provide a "larger picture" of faculty performance.

2. Provide a qualitative layer for Department Heads/Deans to help interpret the quantitative data.

3. Provide spontaneous responses from students who choose to volunteer information and ask for non-structured responses (unlike the quantitative portion).

4. Provide an opportunity for students to speak frankly about the instructor and the course.

5. Provide a potential source of information for the faculty member and the Department Head for the development of performance plans.

6. Provide sections for input that may be out of the control of the faculty member (i.e., books, materials, classroom). Although useful information for the faculty member, these areas were included for the benefit of administrators who might have more control over these conditions than the individual instructor.

7. Provide a holistic representation of instruction. While narratives *possibly* may be a source for alerting supervisors to serious problems, Departments Heads/Deans should **avoid** placing undue emphasis on the negative comments of one or two students.

8. Provide the faculty member with information for the purpose of modifying or enhancing the course and/or the instructor's instruction.

Appendix E
Suggestions for Department Heads in the Use of the Narrative Response Forms

I. **Statement of Philosophy**
   The annual review of faculty performance, including the results of the SOT Narrative Response Forms, should be seen as a supportive and positive experience for both the faculty member and the Department Head, with its principal goal to enhance the learning experience of all students.

II. **Role of the Narrative Response Forms**
   It is a belief of the SOT Review Committee that information from the narrative response forms must be kept in perspective when it is used in annual faculty evaluations. The information obtained from the narrative responses should not be weighted more heavily than any other information available to the Department Head. Moreover, the narrative responses should be seen as only one part of an overall picture of teaching performance over time. Following is a list of materials that might also be used in the annual evaluations of faculty teaching:

   - Information useful in evaluating faculty teaching
   - SOT Questionnaire Summaries
   - Self-assessment of Teaching
   - Peer Evaluations
   - Department Head Observations and Evaluation
   - Course Syllabi
   - Tests
   - Grade Distribution
   - Work Load
   - Etc.

III. **Narrative Evaluation**
   Prior to the annual evaluation conference between the Department Head and the faculty member, the Department Head should review the SOT Questionnaire Summary, the Narrative Responses, and any "Special Factors in SOT Administration" forms. Parts of the narrative responses may contain information that is not solely focused on teacher performance. For this reason, the narrative response form may be best examined by

quadrants (please see page 17). Quadrant I, composed of the top two boxes, deals with Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement for the Instructor. Likewise, Quadrant II deals with Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement of Activities and Tests for the class. Quadrants III and IV are composed primarily of information that may or may not be beyond the instructors' control: books and materials, classroom environment, etc.

DEPARTMENT HEAD OVERVIEW

The Department Head may want to scan SOT Narrative Response forms for the entire department in order to develop a holistic perspective of comments and statements made by students about instructors, learning environments, and areas that many students suggest need to be improved.

A. Courses with Multiple Sections
If a number of different faculty teach sections of the same course, then the narrative responses from all sections of the course should be compared to identify course commonalities, strengths, problems, and special needs. These data, as well as information identified in section II above, could be used as a source of data for Major Field Assessment and other program evaluation.

B. Quadrants III and IV
Information in Quadrants III and IV will be primarily used for administrative purposes such as program evaluation, major field assessment, and establishing budget priorities. Nevertheless, this information can also be used to qualify the comments which may be influenced by learning conditions (environment), textbook adoption policies, technology resources, lab requirements, crowded conditions, broken furniture, handicap access, accommodations for disabilities, etc.

DEPARTMENT HEAD'S FEEDBACK

After scanning the narrative responses, the Department Head should prepare for the end-of-year conference. Progress toward attainment of goals may require effort on both the Department Head's part in the form of materials, scheduling, and other resources, and on the faculty member's part in the form of identifiable and measurable improvements. Actions agreeable to both parties may be documented. The students' narrative comments should, in some form, be used to evaluate the faculty member's teaching performance.

The conference itself should focus on the faculty member's narrative summary and the goals and conclusions it includes. The Department Head may also wish to offer his/her own observations regarding the narrative comments. Where there is agreement on the conclusions, a note to this effect may be made on the faculty member's narrative summary. Where there is not agreement, further discussion should take place, with the Department Head offering suggestions to the faculty member as deemed appropriate.

Student Opinion of Teaching – Narrative Response Form

Computer Number:	Name of Instructor:	Course:	Section Number:	Semester/Year:

	STRENGTHS	**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**
The Instructor	Ia	Ib
The Activities and Tests	IIa	IIb
The Books and Materials	IIIa	IIIb
The Classroom (i.e., temperature, acoustics, etc.)	IVa	IVb

Student
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<u>Appendix F</u>
Factors Possibly Affecting the Results of the Student Opinion of Teaching

NAME (Please Print) _____   **DATE** _____

CLASS _____   **COMP.#** _____

  (Prefix)   (Course#)   (Section #)

THIS SHEET MAY BE USED BY FACULTY MEMBERS TO NOTE ANY FACTORS THAT MIGHT AFFECT THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENT OPINION OF TEACHING FOR THIS COURSE (e.g., attendance, new preparation or experimentation with new teaching techniques, substantial portion of the class requirements not yet complete [research projects, group projects, etc.], the level of the course, students' previous academic preparation for the course, classroom environment and equipment). **COMPLETION OF THIS FORM IS OPTIONAL.** It is the faculty member's responsibility to photocopy the form, fill it out, place it in a sealed envelope and deliver it to the Department Head's office the day of the SOT administration.
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                                        _____
                                              (Signature)

Appendix G
Electronic Data Management and Storage Policy

The Office of Technology supports the SOT program by working cooperatively with the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment, which is directly responsible for the overall implementation of this program. The Office of Technology provides the mainframe access and programming support necessary to perform the data manipulation and the resulting generation of reports for the SOT survey program. The Assistant Vice President of Technology is the chief administrative officer for this institutional unit. The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning, Research, and Policy Analysis is ultimately responsible for the effective implementation of electronic data management and storage of SOT data files and summary reports.

All activities involving the management and storage of SOT program data are implemented using standard, accepted procedures for handling confidential information. Any policy or procedural changes in the execution of the data management and storage activities must be requested in writing by the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning Research and Policy Analysis to the Assistant Vice President for Technology.

Two departments within the Office of Technology are directly involved in the implementation of the SOT program and the storage of SOT data files and summary reports. The Database/Web Team provides the programs necessary to gather and accurately report the results of SOT surveys each semester. Computer Operations controls the daily operations of the mainframe system. Specific categories of activities for each of these subunits are outlined in the sections that follow.

Responsibilities of the MIS department:
The Coordinator of the Database/Web Team is directly responsible for maintaining the programs necessary to complete the following functions:

1. run procedures necessary to load the data into the main file.

2. produce the various summary reports using the main data file (e.g., individual faculty-, department-, college-, institution-level reports):

Responsibilities of the Operations department:

The Coordinator of Computer Operations is directly responsible for the day-to-day computer applications and activities necessary to complete the SOT program reports and support and archive of SOT data files and summary reports. These responsibilities include:

1. executing regular backups of the system;

2. printing data and summary reports;

3. mounting electronic data storage tapes (4 mm cassette tapes) and securely storing the tape for one calendar year until Institutional Research and Assessment claims the tape;

4. copying the Student Records Systems (SRS) data/master file into SOT account when requested.

Responsibility of the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning, Research and Policy Analysis:

The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Planning, Research and Policy Analysis is directly responsible for maintaining confidential and fireproof archival storage of electronic files containing data files and summary reports by semester. Also, a paper copy of the institutional-level summary reports will be maintained.

Appendix H
Records Destruction Policy

Student Opinion of Teaching (SOT) program data are collected from students in designated classes using custom-designed questionnaire/scan forms. Since the initial implementation of the SOT program, these forms have been maintained in the following program archives to support a variety of University-wide activities that include the following: 1) verification of data processing results; 2) personnel evaluation and decisions (e.g., tenure, promotion, merit pay); and 3) appeals and grievance proceedings.

Once the University has completed its work with the SOT scan forms, original data (as individual student scan forms) may be made available to each faculty member for whom data were collected. Faculty may obtain SOT data forms only for the classes for which he or she is the instructor of record.

Scannable forms will be kept by Institutional Research and Assessment for one year starting with the end of each academic year. After one year, the forms which have not been obtained by faculty members will be shredded. For example, at the beginning of the 2000-2001 academic year, the forms from academic year 1999-2000 will be destroyed.

Faculty will be notified by several different means of communication of the availability of forms. These means may include e-mail notification, a notice in the By-Lion, and notification via the Faculty Senate. Faculty will be notified which forms are available, and the deadline date by which the forms must be claimed. It is the faculty member's responsibility to contact Institutional Research and Assessment if they want the scannable forms.

Appendix I
Distribution of SOT Reports

All reports will be distributed by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will be distributed by the 14th class day of the following semester.

Deans will receive the following reports:

- Summaries by College (Report 1A)
- Summaries by Department for all Colleges (Report 1C)
- Summaries by Instructor for each Department in their college (Report 2)
- Summaries by Class for Each Instructor in their college (Report 3)

Department Heads will receive the following reports:

- Summaries by Instructor for their Department (Report 2)
- Summaries by Class for Each Instructor in their department (Report 3)

Department Heads will receive the following reports to be distributed to individual faculty members:

- Summaries by Class for Each Instructor in their department (Report 3)
- Individual Item Analysis for each class (Supplemental Report)

Deans and Department Heads are expected to maintain Faculty SOT reports in confidential files within their offices.