Frequently Asked Questions about the Student Course Survey

The Colorado State University student course survey should be administered in all courses. According to Section I.8 of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual:

The Student Course Survey is designed to provide feedback to course instructors and is to be used for course improvement. In addition, it is designed to provide information for students to make informed choices about courses. Each term, course instructors shall conduct a student survey of all the courses they teach through a system administered by the University utilizing the standardized University-wide instrument. After the responses are tabulated, the original forms shall be forwarded only to the course instructor, and a quantitative summary of each course surveyed shall be forwarded directly to the course instructor, and released to the Associated Students of Colorado State University....

The most recent version of this FAQ can be found at http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu/faq.cfm.

1. **Why was the survey changed?**

   The new survey replaces a survey developed and approved by Faculty Council in the late 1990s. The new survey—developed with input from students, faculty, and staff—has a stronger focus on learning issues and allows students to provide ratings of the instructor, the course, and teaching strategies. The survey was approved by the Faculty Council in spring 2010.

   The move to the new system has additional benefits. It is less expensive, since the new survey does not rely on the relatively costly Scantron system used in the past. The new form also provides room for more custom questions than the previous survey.

2. **Where can I view survey results?**

   Visit http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu.

3. **Can I still view older survey information?**

   Yes. Survey results prior to the spring 2011 semester are available at http://ascsucs.colostate.edu. Please note that a campus network connection is required to view these results.

4. **Who has access to the numerical survey data?**

   Anyone with an eID can view numerical summaries of the survey responses.

5. **Will everyone be able to view student comments on the forms?**

   No. Only instructors can view scanned survey forms. Instructors can, however, grant access to others so that they can view the forms. Instructors can also revoke any access they've granted.
6. **Can instructors receive the original forms?**

   Yes. Instructors can have forms sent to them via campus mail or they can pick them up at the University Testing Center. Instructors who wish to pick up or receive their original forms can do so by visiting the Course Survey Web site, viewing the results for a class, and clicking the “Request Original Forms” button at the bottom of the page. Original forms will be retained for one year; any forms not requested or picked up within that time period will be shredded.

7. **Are students required to sign the forms?**

   No. Signatures are requested, but not required. Please note that Section E.12.1 of the *Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual* states, in part, that “anonymous letters or comments shall not be used to evaluate teaching, except with the consent of the instructor or as authorized in a department’s code.” If students choose not to sign a form, their comments may be used for evaluation purposes only if the instructor allows that use.

8. **Where can a department obtain blank forms?**

   Department staff may pick up blank forms at the Help Desk in Morgan Library. These forms can then be distributed to instructors.

9. **How can a department find out whether blank forms are available?**

   Contact the Help Desk in Morgan Library at (970) 491-1841.

10. **Can departments print their own forms?**

    No. The course surveys are printed centrally at CSU on specific-weight paper to ensure that both sides of the form will scan properly (bubbles on the front and back as well as written comments on the back).

11. **How can completed forms be returned for processing?**

    **Campus Mail:** Completed surveys may be sent to:
    
    Student Course Survey  
    University Testing Center  
    8002 Campus Delivery  

    **Hand Delivery:** Completed surveys may be returned to the Morgan Help Desk or the Concierge Desk at TILT (located on the east side of the building, facing the Oval, on the first floor).

12. **What is the deadline for submitting forms?**

    Forms may be submitted for scanning up to one week after grades are due for a term. For summer courses, forms may be submitted up to one week after grades are due for the final summer term.

13. **Who should I contact if I have questions?**
Please contact the University Testing Center at cosurvey@ColoState.edu or 970 491-6498.

14. Why do instructors need to provide a course reference number on each form?

Providing a course reference number on each form allows a “stray” form to be entered into the system. This approach eliminates the requirement that all forms to attached to a cover sheet. If the course reference number is provided on the form, then the form can be directly associated with the course section.

15. Where can instructors find the course reference number for a class?

You can obtain a course reference number by visiting the course information page (http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu/info/) on the Course Survey Web site. You can search for course information by course number, title, and instructor. In addition the course reference number, you can also view enrollments, room locations, meeting times, instructors, and co-instructors.

Instructors can also view the course reference number through AriesWeb (https://ariesweb.colostate.edu). After logging in with your eID, click on Class Lists (located in the Instructor Tools section). This will open a new window that contains a list of courses. The second column in the new window will show the CRN (Course Reference Number). Please note that the same course reference number might appear for courses in different semesters. This does not pose a problem for our process, since we pull information only from the course taught in the current semester.

16. What happens if a student makes a mistake filling in a course reference number?

We use two techniques to address this problem. First, we ask that instructors or department staff complete and return a cover sheet for each set of survey forms. We check the course reference number on the cover sheet and then view each set of forms to ensure that correct number has been entered on the forms. Second, we use data entry techniques that attempt to identify mistakes and correct them automatically. For example, if four surveys have the correct course reference number, a fifth survey has a mistake in one of the digits, and the next three surveys have the correct number, the fifth survey will be changed so that it has the correct number. Although this technique is not foolproof, it will help us reduce the number of problems we encounter.

17. What happens if a student forgets to fill in a course reference number?

We will use a similar technique (described in the response to the previous question) when a reference number has not been entered. Again, this technique is not foolproof, but it should work in a majority of cases.

18. What happens if an entire class does not provide a course reference number?

We will attempt to determine the correct number by viewing the cover sheet. If a cover sheet has not been provided, or a survey form is turned in on its own, we will look at the handwritten
information on the survey form (e.g., course name, section, and instructor name). In most cases, this will allow us to identify the course number. In the event that we cannot determine the course reference number, the surveys will be discarded.

19. What happens if students are given the wrong course reference number?

We will attempt to determine the correct number using the handwritten information on the survey forms. If we cannot determine the course number, the surveys will be discarded.

20. What’s the best way to ensure that students put in the correct course reference number?

Instructors can display the number on an overhead projector, on a data projector, or by writing it clearly on a whiteboard or blackboard. Alternatively, the number could be entered on forms prior to handing them out.

21. Why not automatically print the course reference number on forms for each course section?

As we planned the new course survey process, we considered this option carefully. We concluded, however, that it would increase the difficulty of printing and distributing forms. It would also result in a large number of forms that would not be filled out (as a result, for example, of student absences), which would mean that we would be increasing the amount of paper entering the recycling stream.

22. What should students use to complete the survey?

Students should use pens with black ink. Black ink provides the best results, particularly for written comments. We have found that comments written with pencils or lightly-colored ink do not scan well. In some cases, comments written in pencil or lightly-colored ink are illegible.

23. Can students use number 2 pencils?

No. Although pencils (of nearly any kind) are fine for filling in the bubbles on the form, we have found that scans of comments written in pencil are often illegible.

24. Can students use colored ink or light pencil?

Black ink is preferred. Our tests indicate that blue and other dark colors will work reasonably well. Light pencil and pens that use light colored inks do not provide legible results.

25. Can instructors use the survey for mid-semester feedback?

Instructors may use the survey forms and then review them in paper form. The survey forms cannot be entered into the database.
26. If a course is cross-listed, how should we conduct the survey?

In cross-listed courses taught by a single instructor, you may treat the course as a single section and use only one of the course reference numbers. In courses that are cross-listed and two or more instructors are involved, you should determine which students are enrolled in each “section” of the course and have them fill out the survey for the instructor for the course in which they are enrolled. You may also use the SCAIT system to list one of the instructors as a co-instructor for the course in which the other instructor is the primary instructor.

27. Is the survey available for online courses?

A version of this survey is available for fully online courses. The online version of the survey does not include some questions that are relevant only to face-to-face courses. It also includes additional questions relevant only to online courses. You can view information about the online survey on the following Web pages:

- General information about using the online survey in RamCT Blackboard classes is available at http://help.ramct.colostate.edu/coursesurvey.aspx.
- Detailed instructions for integrating the online survey into RamCT Blackboard classes is available at http://help.ramct.colostate.edu/pdf/coursesurvey/CourseSurveyAndRamCTBlackboard.pdf.

You can also view information about the online survey on Course Survey@CSU by visiting our online course information page.

28. Is the online survey anonymous? Can students provide their names as they can on the printed survey?

As is the case with the printed survey, survey responses are anonymous. Although we ensure that a student cannot complete more than one survey response for a course instructor, we do not link student identities to the survey results. Should they choose to do so, however, students can provide their names through a fill-in text form, in a manner similar to that offered to students through the printed survey.

29. Does the online survey allow instructors to use additional questions?

As is the case with the printed survey, instructors may also prepare custom questions for use in the online survey. These questions should be shared with the students when the link to the course survey is distributed. These questions are numbered in the online survey starting with number 29 and ending with number 50 (a maximum of 22 custom questions are allowed). Be sure to number your questions accordingly when you notify students about the survey.
30. **What are the deadlines for completing the online survey?**

Online surveys are available for each academic between the following date periods. All responses must be received between these dates. Be sure to notify students about the deadlines for survey responses:

- **Spring Term:** January 1 – May 31
- **Summer Term:** June 1 – August 31
- **Fall Term:** September 1 – December 31

31. **Can the online version be used for face-to-face classes?**

Because of the differences in questions, face-to-face courses should use the paper form. In addition, please be aware that voluntary online course surveys have substantially (sometimes drastically) lower response rates than paper surveys administered during class session or online surveys that are required. The pattern of response in voluntary online course surveys also appears to differ from that of paper surveys administered during class. For example, it appears that students who have strong feelings about the course and/or the instructor (either positive or negative) are more likely to respond. As a result, their responses tend to be overrepresented in results from voluntary online forms.

32. **Can instructors customize the questions? Can instructors add questions?**

Required questions cannot be customized, but instructors or programs can provide additional questions by handing printed questions out to students or displaying them while students take the survey. Please number questions so that they correspond to the response items in the Instructor Prepared Items section of the survey.

33. **How does the survey handle feedback to multiple instructors?**

When a course is team taught, students should complete the “For Team-Taught Courses” section of the survey form (located immediately below the Course Information section of the form on the front page of the survey. Students should be provided with a list of instructors for the course and their corresponding instructor codes. In all cases, the primary instructor for the course will be designated as A on the course survey form. Co-instructors will be designated with letters beginning with B. On each course survey form, students should fill in the bubble that corresponds to the instructor’s letter code.

To determine co-instructor codes, please visit the course information page [http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu/info/](http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu/info/) on the Course Survey Web site. You can use this page to determine the instructor code for each section of a course that uses multiple instructors. The page also provides instructions for updating and correcting information about co-instructors in the University’s Banner database.
We recommend that the instructor names and the corresponding codes be listed next to the Course Reference Number as students complete the survey.

Please note that, if the course is taught by a single instructor, it is not necessary for students to fill in the “For Team-Taught Courses” section of the survey.

34. Can separate forms be used for GTAs?

Separate forms may be used if a course reference number has been assigned to a GTA-led recitation section, lab, or break-out session.

Separate forms may also be used if the GTA is listed as a co-instructor in the Banner database. This can be done using the tools discussed in the response to the previous question.

Alternatively, the Instructor Prepared Items section of the survey can be used to provide responses for GTAs.

35. What can I do if the information about instructors or co-instructors is incorrect?

Each department should have an individual who has been granted access to the SCAIT system. This system allows departments to manage the list of individuals who are designated as instructors or co-instructors in a course. If you see an inaccuracy, please work with your department's administrative staff to make updates to the listings in SCAIT. Once an update has been made, please update the listings on this site by clicking on the link in the “Updating Instructor Listings” section of the Course Information page.

Note: The listings can be updated no more than once per hour. Please update this listing only if you have made changes to the instructor listings in SCAIT.

36. Some departments routinely review comments on the survey for its instructors and GTAs. How can this be done?

Section E.12.1 of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual states, in part, that “anonymous letters or comments shall not be used to evaluate teaching, except with the consent of the instructor or as authorized in a department’s code.” If your department code allows this practice, then online access to the survey results can be granted to department representatives for review purposes. In all other cases, instructors must be asked to provide access to the forms. Please be aware that instructors are under no obligation to agree to that request.

37. In cases where the department code allows access, who can view the comments?

The department chair or head should send a request to cosurvey@colostate.edu identifying individuals who should be granted access. Generally, one or two individuals in a department are granted such access. The department chair or head should certify that the department code allows access and provide the names and email addresses of the individuals who should be granted access.