

# Faculty Senate Ad-Hoc SOF Committee

Members:

- Associate Prof. Carolyn Judge, NAOE
- Professor Lori Bogle, History
- Associate Professor Elena Cimpoiasu, Physics
- Professor Anne-Marie Drew, English
- Professor Chris Pettit, Aerospace Engineering
- CDR Julie Spencer, PMP Chemistry
- Associate Professor Aurelia Minut, Math
- Professor Craig Whitaker, Chemistry

## **Objectives of the Committee:**

- To investigate and evaluate the current research on the use and limits of SOFs for the evaluation of instructor effectiveness
- To develop a set of best practices and resources adapted specifically to the Naval Academy to guide individual departments in crafting appropriate forms.

## **Some Concerns of the faculty (expressed at the relevant Faculty Senate meetings):**

- SOFs are not effectively measuring teaching quality, despite the importance placed upon the SOFs in decision making
- Any guidance from the Ad-Hoc committee should be non-prescriptive, amounting only to provision of information, options, and perspectives.

# Guidelines #1, #2, and #3

1. Follow the requirements stated in ACDEANINST 1531.12G in both the development and administration of Student Opinion Forms (SOFs).
2. The SOF **should**:
  - a) measure the impact of the instructor's performance on the students, not ask for an evaluation of the instructor's performance
  - b) offer at least one free-response field for the students to respond to supplemental queries by the instructor
  - c) have each question target a single rating item
3. The SOF **should NOT**:
  - a) ask students to judge instructors on aspects of teaching that are beyond most students' ability to assess accurately or objectively
  - b) use a numerical rating scale
  - c) have items predicated on the belief that any particular teaching method is the best under all conditions

## **Guidelines #4 through #8**

- 4. Ask questions about the course, as opposed to the instructor, on a separate form, at a separate time.**
- 5. Consider the potential uses of the following question before posing:  
“Would you recommend the teacher?”**
- 6. Word carefully items relating to “timely feedback” and “availability for EI,” as student expectations can vary widely.**
- 7. Use only appropriate, parallel and balanced scales when following Likert.  
Define every point on the scale.**
- 8. Include 15 or fewer items on the SOFs.**

# Faculty Teaching Evaluation Considerations

1. Apply the same standards that are used in evaluating candidates for promotion and tenure (including information determined from the SOFs) when evaluating teaching as part of the annual performance evaluation.
2. Distill information from the SOFs in ways that emphasize the context, relative reliability, and subjective nature of the data and comments.
3. Do not compare SOFs between instructors teaching different courses.
4. Do not use SOFs as the only means for measuring teaching. Teaching evaluation should be based on multiple sources of data.

# Faculty Teaching Evaluation Considerations

5. Never reduce the results from the questions to an overall average. Avoid reporting numbers.
6. Include self-reflections from the instructor on the student responses and on any aspects of teaching the course that might be relevant to evaluating teaching performance.
7. Keep in mind that USNA sample pools are generally small and, therefore, lack statistical power.
8. The design and use of the SOFs should avoid incentivizing instructors to relax standards or pedagogy for the purpose of increasing student ratings. Likewise, the SOFs should not be used for unduly penalizing instructors for well-intended experiments with new pedagogy that happen not to go well the first time around.

# Current NAOE SOF – sample question

1. **Classroom Environment:** Your instructor promotes interest and enthusiasm for the material, is interested in the student's progress, establishes a dialog with students, helps students outside of the classroom.

Worst	1	2	3	4	5	Best
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## ISSUES:

- Question targets multiple ratings
- Asks for information students are unable to assess accurately or objectively
- Uses a numerical rating
- Only the highest and lowest values on the scale are identified
- The entire structure is a student evaluation



# Current NAOE SOF – sample question

- 1. Classroom Environment:** Your instructor promotes interest and enthusiasm for the material, it interested in the student’s progress, established a dialog with students, helps students outside of the classroom.

Worst	1	2	3	4	5	Best
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# Proposed NAOE SOF – sample question

- 1. The instructor made the subject matter interesting.**  
Strongly Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree                      Strongly Agree
- 2. The instructor was concerned with whether or not the students learned the material.**  
Strongly Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree                      Strongly Agree
- 3. The instructor helped students to feel free to ask questions.**  
Strongly Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree                      Strongly Agree
- 4. The instructor encouraged students to meet for EI.**  
Strongly Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree                      Strongly Agree