MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SIRS Online
Student Instructional Rating System

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Frequently asked questions

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INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Why are grades being sequestered?
As a reminder to be sure to fill out the SIRS Online evaluation form, the final grade for all courses participating in SIRS Online will not be accessible to students on STUFINO during the week following the submission of grades unless the SIRS Online form has been filled out. There is an option on the SIRS Online form to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course – we hope, however that students are willing to provide frank and constructive feedback so that information can be used to provide even better instruction in the future.

Why can't I see my grades in the courses that use SIRS Online?
Feedback is collected during the latter part of the course. Students who completed a SIRS Online survey prior to posting of grades will be able to view their grades as soon as they are posted.

Students who have not completed a SIRS Online survey will find a link to SIRS Online in STUINFO in the space a course grade would normally appear. That link will reroute the student to SIRS Online to complete and submit a SIRS Online survey. Once the SIRS Online survey is submitted the course grade will be available in STUINFO.

Why can I only fill out SIRS Online forms for some of my classes?

Departments can elect to user either online or paper SIRS forms for the entire department. The system will only allow you to complete SIRS Online forms for classes in which you are enrolled and for which departments have opted to use SIRS Online. The SIRS Online system will attach a message to each course on your main menu, explaining the course's status (participating, not participating).

Why do I only have 20 minutes to complete a SIRS form?
For security reasons, the SIRS Online feedback pages time out after 20 minutes of inactivity. Since the system does not store identifying information for the student completing the form, all input is lost after 20 minutes of inactivity. However, you may reset the timer and keep the session alive at any time by clicking the "I need more time" button.

What happens if I don't complete the form within 20 minutes?
For security reasons, the SIRS feedback pages time out after 20 minutes of inactivity. Since the system does not store identifying information for the student completing the form, all input is lost after 20 minutes of inactivity. You must then return to the login page and start over. When filling out an online form, however, you may reset the timer and keep the session alive at any time by clicking the "I need more time" button.

Why can't I stop partway and return later to fill out the form?
To preserve your anonymity, the system does not store any identifying information that allows it to save a partially completed form and associate the form with a student who leaves and signs on again later. For that reason, all data entry on a given form must be completed within one session.

Do I have to fill out all SIRS Online forms for all participating classes in one session?
No. You may fill out as many forms as you want in each visit to the SIRS Online system. After filling out one or more forms, you may log off and return later to fill out others. However, to preserve your anonymity the system does not store any identifying information that allows it to save a partially completed form and associate the form with a student who leaves and signs on again later. For that reason, all data entry on a given form must be completed within one session.

I thought I was providing comments for another course and I gave a great instructor terrible ratings. Can that form be deleted? Can I do it over?
To preserve your anonymity the system does not store any identifying information that allows it to associate a rating form with a particular student. The form that you submitted cannot be identified as yours and therefore cannot be retrieved or deleted.

Can my instructor see my ratings?
All SIRS Online responses are reported as an aggregated summary. After the sequestration period has ended, instructors and authorized department administrators are able to see aggregated summary SIRS Online results for that section. Multiple-choice questions are reported as an aggregate and all comments are listed by question and cannot be linked with responses from a particular student's online form.

When and where can I see the survey results for SIRS forms?
SIRS Online survey results are not available to students.

SOCT data is available to the MSU community during the following semester, in summary form only, at https://soct.msu.edu.

Whom can I contact for more information?
Sandra Walther in the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (e-mail: sirs@msu.edu)

INFORMATION FOR DEPARTMENTS

What is SIRS?
The Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) provides an opportunity for students to evaluate the instruction they receive in relation to (1) the provisions of the Code of Teaching Responsibility, and (2) the various instructional models in operation in the University. The purpose of this system is to provide student input toward assessing and improving course design and teaching performance. The University and individual departments are responsible for designing and administering their respective survey forms to obtain such evaluations. The results of these surveys are made available to the instructor and to persons involved in personnel decisions, but are not made public. Teaching units may elect to administer the SIRS survey forms in a paper format, use SIRS online for all classes, or use the paper format for face-to-face classes and SIRS online for online/virtual classes.

What is SIRS Online?
In 2004, the University developed a process for collecting SIRS survey responses through a secured online system. The system allows students to complete surveys for courses in which they are enrolled and for which SIRS Online collection has been activated by the teaching unit.

How does SIRS Online work?
The SIRS Online system notes whether a student has or has not completed a survey in order to ensure that a student submits only one survey per course. The student's responses to SIRS questions are not linked to any individual identifier and are kept entirely confidential. Class grades for students who have not completed a SIRS online survey will be sequestered for one week after grade submission or until they complete a SIRS online survey or decline to complete the SIRS online survey, whichever comes first. (In the SIRS online form, a student may select an option to decline to participate.)

How do faculty and students know when SIRS Online is available?

Affected students and faculty will be notified (and reminded) by email when SIRS Online surveys are available for their classes. The notification period, and the period during which the forms are "open" for completion varies depending on whether the class is a sub-term or full-term class.

What are the advantages of using SIRS Online?
The SIRS Online system will eliminate the time and expense necessary to prepare and administer paper forms. SIRS Online will offer students the convenience of providing feedback at a time and place of their choosing. (Note, however, that student access to SIRS Online is limited to an established period at the end of a course.) SIRS Online will ensure that student surveys are confidential. Faculty will not have access to hand-written comments that may suggest the writer's identity. SIRS Online results cannot be lost or misreported. Further, online collection will give more timely access to results. Faculty and teaching units using SIRS online will have access to SIRS feedback one week and one day after grades were submitted in a course.

How can a teaching unit opt in to or opt out of SIRS Online?
A teaching unit can opt in to (or opt out of) SIRS Online (online classes only or all classes) by sending an email request to Sandra Walther in the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (e-mail: sirs@msu.edu) However, this system works best if the request is sent before the beginning of the term in which the department wants to op in (or opt out). Joining or leaving in the middle of a term is possible, but this will exclude any class section that has already passed its rating period.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is SIRS?
SIRS is the Student Instructional Rating System. This survey collects feedback from all students in all courses and course levels to provide faculty and teaching units with feedback on their instructional practices and to provide teaching units with information considered when deciding on faculty retention, promotion, tenure, and salary.

What is SOCT?
SOCT is the Student Opinion of Courses and Teaching. This survey collects feedback from undergraduate students enrolled in classes taught by MSU faculty during fall and spring semesters. SOCT surveys are not collected for summer courses or any courses taught by graduate assistants. The SOCT questions were developed to gather information that may be helpful to students when selecting courses and faculty members in those courses. The aggregate results of this survey are updated at least once yearly and are available to the MSU community online (soct.msu.edu).

How are faculty and students notified?
Students and faculty in participating courses will be notified by email when online SIRS or SOCT forms are available. The notification period, and the period during which the forms are "open" to be filled out varies depending on whether the class is a sub-term or full-term class.

Whom can I contact for more information?
Sandra Walther in the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (email: sirs@msu.edu)