

ATS launches free improved versions of student questionnaires

By JO ANN DEASY

ATS launched newly revised versions of its student questionnaires in August 2020, responding to changes in student demographics, educational delivery systems, and the nature of religious work in the United States and Canada. Starting this fall, the ATS Entering and Graduating Student Questionnaires will be offered free to all member schools, with plans to grow our significant database on ATS entering and graduating students.



The revised Entering Student Questionnaires went live August 3, 2020, and more than 50 ATS schools have already signed up to use the questionnaire with their students this fall. The ATS student questionnaires can help schools track long-term trends among their students as well as the impact of significant events such as COVID-19. Schools now have the option to add custom questions to the survey that will allow them to gather feedback from students specific to their institutions. ATS has also developed a useful guide to using the questionnaires in the self-study process. Schools can order the questionnaire on the [ATS website](#).

The revised questionnaires reflect the increase in distributed models of education at ATS schools, particularly with the impact of COVID-19. The questionnaires ask a series of questions about educational delivery systems and in-person involvement on a campus.

Significant changes were made to questions about the vocational goals of students. Questions are designed to

capture better data on bivocational students, students serving outside of traditional ministry settings, and students who are volunteering in ministry.

The revised questionnaires also expand our ability to gather race/ethnicity data on students—data that has been important in focusing our work in the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers Initiative (ECFFM) on the impact of the racial wealth gap on educational debt, particularly in the United States. Students will be able to select multiple racial/ethnic categories that reflect language used by ATS administrator groups as well as language generally used in student research in the United States and Canada. Students will also be able to write in additional racial/ethnic categories they would use to describe themselves.

Changes to the questionnaires were highlighted in a recent webinar on data from the 2019–2020 Graduating Student Questionnaires. A recording of the webinar, samples of the new questionnaires themselves, and other resources are available on the website. In addition, ATS has launched a new online community on Engage ATS for those who use the questionnaires. The community

is designed to share best practices for administering the questionnaires and collecting student data, to discuss interpretation of various data and student trends in theological education, and to provide regular updates from ATS on student research. For more information on the community, contact [Meghan Niskach](#), administrative assistant for student information.

The revision of the questionnaires signals an increased emphasis within the Association on student research. The first step in a major overhaul of the ATS database, the revision builds upon research undertaken as part

of the [Educational Models and Practices Project](#) and ECFFM. Plans are underway to expand our use of the questionnaires in various initiatives and research projects within the Association. Included are plans for a follow-up to the [2016 Workforce Mapping Study of ATS alums](#).

If you have not already ordered your questionnaire for fall 2020, we would encourage you to do so right away. Be on the lookout for more resources supporting the ATS questionnaires to be released in the coming months.



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