



Pick the Right Tool

Instructor/Course Evaluations: A system selection guide from eXplorance

No general purpose feedback management (survey) system can be everything to everybody.

Many tools on the market claim to address many different information-gathering demands at once.

But they can require more time and effort, be less flexible, generate less satisfying results, and ultimately have a higher total cost of ownership (TCO).

This system selection guide describes the key advantages of using a more specialized system to implement instructor or course evaluations.

A system with intelligence for greater efficiency

Instructor/course evaluations give students, and often others, a chance to “turn the tables” and grade their instructors’ performance and course set-up.

More specifically, these evaluations are an invaluable tool for institutions to assess how instructors are measuring up to student and expectations, and to target areas for professional development.

The process can be extensive. An education institute can be required to gather feedback

for hundreds of instructors and courses from thousands of students.

A fully managed process at a university offering 1,000 courses would require well over 30,000 surveys — one for each student in each class. The only way a general-purpose tool can conduct such a process is with an unmanaged public survey format where there is no guarantee the appropriate students will complete the surveys.

Furthermore, the information gathered must be merged to support reports on specific teachers, programs, departments, or any other useful criteria.

eXplorance offers a software module specifically built for this type of instructor/course evaluations: **Blue/Evaluation**.

The general-purpose tools offered by other vendors perform basic survey functions but are less flexible and unable to manage the process properly. They also tend to lack an understanding of the hierarchical relationships that exist between subjects and respondents and don’t have the intelligence to generate reports to help effectively analyze the results.

To help you pick the right tool for instructor/course evaluations, the following table sums up some useful questions to ask potential vendors and shows how Blue/Evaluation stacks up to a general-purpose survey tool.

Questions to Ask Your Vendor

Questions	General-Purpose Survey Tool	Blue/Evaluation
Can instructors add course specific questions into the evaluation process?	NO	YES
Can chairpersons see results for classes taught by the instructors who report to them?	NO Results are distributed to management on a per-course basis, or centralized if a public survey is used.	YES Results are fully centralized so that results can be aggregated either by teacher or by instructor.
Is the system smart enough to present the appropriate evaluation form to the appropriate student?	NO The system makes a form publicly available and the student decides which instructor/course combination to review.	YES The system fully understands data relationships and allocates the appropriate instructor/course evaluation form to the appropriate student.
Does the system understand the hierarchy in the organization, including direct and indirect relationships?	NO	YES The system can allocate different rules for different people.
Does the system have an integrated workflow to help manage the process?	NO	YES
Can the system track who did their evaluations, and who didn't?	NO Unless the surveys are implemented as multiple surveys with a decentralized management.	YES Management is centralized per project, which is defined by a complete set of evaluations.
Can the system guarantee that only the appropriate students review the appropriate courses? And only once?	NO Students may respond more than once to the same form or evaluate the wrong set of instructors/courses.	YES The process is fully managed and controlled.
Can you apply different deadlines to different reviews?	NO	YES
Can you do a historical analysis to see how an instructor has developed over time?	NO May be achieved through export to XLS and manual manipulation of results.	YES