

# Course Evaluation Implementation Progress Report

**Blurb for Provost's Update:** In December 2023, an interdisciplinary and multi-function workgroup selected UWM's new course evaluation tool: [Explorance Blue](#). Blue was selected from two Universities of Wisconsin approved recommended options. Now, an implementation team is working on rolling out the tool for fall 2024. The team is working on implementing the tool, but also

- identifying the training and documentation campus will need (including methods for increasing response rates). Blue can make the eval process less manual and more useful for staff, students, and instructors, but only if we couple the rollout with support.
- developing consistent, data-driven evaluation approaches, combining higher quality data with the ability of departments to add their own custom measures.
- revisiting [campus policy](#) to ensure appropriate and fair use of course evaluation data in personnel evaluations, given its known biases and the potential for Blue to provide aggregate data.

[Please see our Progress Report for more detail.](#)

## Background

The expansion of online instruction has underscored the need for UWM to adopt modern techniques for conducting course evaluations, and the pandemic gave the problem new legs. UWM currently has multiple, idiosyncratic course evaluation methods in place, accompanied by terrible response rates. We also lack a consistent, thoughtful approach to evals that can help anticipate and address the many problems posed by evaluations.<sup>1</sup> UWM leadership determined that we should adopt a new tool and approach, and in December our workgroup selected [Explorance Blue](#) ([read the details of the process](#)).

## Implementing a new tool and approach

Now we need a refreshed process as well, and thus formed an [implementation team](#) that represents the many stakeholders around the campus, including faculty, academic staff, and governance leads. Our team received this charge from the Provost:

- Work in collaboration with OAIR, faculty governance, and program leadership (deans, associate deans, department chairs) in developing campus-wide approach. Long-term goals should include high levels of adoption of the tool.
- Develop implementation and data governance approach that provides clarity on who will provide technical and user support, as well as guidance on appropriate use of the data (e.g., how it should be used in personnel and program evaluations).
- Determine what it is we're seeking to measure using student evaluations.
- Provide standard questions, aligned with "what we seek to measure," that enables cross-unit comparison of student perceptions of teaching effectiveness. Base standard questions on the approaches taken by peer institutions.
- Develop best practices for training and documentation to ensure high response rates and high-quality data.

To accomplish the work, we have evolved into four teams that seek to provide answers to key questions about how best to use course evaluations:

- Group 1: How will we implement the tool and govern the implementation? Subquestions: Who manages the tool? Who can customize? Who can access the data?

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<sup>1</sup> [Teaching Evaluations Are Broken. Can They Be Fixed? \(chronicle.com\)](#). February 6, 2024.

[Teaching: Before teaching can be evaluated, good teaching must be defined \(chronicle.com\)](#). February 15, 2024.

- Group 2: What are we measuring and how will we measure it? Subquestions: How are we defining good teaching at the institutional level, and what core questions can measure whether instructors meet that definition?
- Group 3: How will we ensure data quality? Subquestions: What training and documentation do we need to provide staff and students on the new system? How can we ensure better response rates?
- Group 4: How should governance be engaged? What changes to policy do we need to ensure appropriate use of course evaluation data, given what we know about its inherent biases?

All four groups are on track and will we soon have a complete draft of a proposal.

## Next steps

- Share proposal draft with instructors and governance groups for feedback.
- Implement the tool and provide training.
- Work with governance on any needed changes to existing course evaluation policy.
- Rollout new course evaluations for fall 2024 courses!