

Carolina Course Evaluation Services
Policies and Procedures
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Overview

Carolina Course Evaluations is a service sponsored by the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost to support schools and departments in conducting student evaluations of courses and instructors efficiently and effectively. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) provides technical support services for the campus. OIRA staff work closely with participating school-level Course Evaluation Coordinators to design and implement local processes that best meet the needs of their instructors and fit with their internal evaluation schedules.

Participation and Adoption

While UNC System Board of Governors policy requires student evaluations to be used as part of faculty performance assessments (UNC Policy Manual, 400.3.1), participation in the Carolina Course Evaluation Services process is optional. The Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost has given Deans the authority to make all decisions concerning the methods and practices used to evaluate courses within their units.

There is no cost to the schools to take advantage of the Carolina Course Evaluations Services. Currently, the following schools and units participate: **College of Arts and Sciences, Eshelman School of Pharmacy, Gillings School of Global Public Health, School of Education, School of Information and Library Science, Hussman School of Media and Journalism, School of Medicine – Department of Allied Health Science, School of Medicine – Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, School of Nursing, School of Law, and the School of Social Work.**

Some professional schools, such as **Medicine, Business, and Government**, have their own established mechanisms for carrying out course evaluations. The Dean's office in each school can be contacted for more information about the practices used to evaluate courses and instructors.

Any school or unit that is not presently using Carolina Course Evaluation Services or the Blue system can be onboarded at no cost. OIRA facilitates all onboarding processes for new staff and units.

Course Evaluation Instrument

A working group of faculty appointed by the Provost developed a standard course evaluation instrument that was later endorsed by the Faculty Council. This standard form can be downloaded at assessment.unc.edu.

The University does not require schools to use this particular form. Course Evaluation Coordinators in each school can be contacted for more information about their school's specific form.

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Some schools allow their instructors to customize their course evaluation forms with instructor generated questions. Course Evaluation Coordinators in schools that allow this procedure contact instructors at the appropriate time to solicit additional questions to ensure they are included in end-of-semester evaluations.

The Center for Faculty Excellence (<https://cfe.unc.edu/>) can provide guidance in the development of course evaluation questions.

Software

Blue by Explorance

Carolina Course Evaluation Services is powered by [Blue by Explorance](#). This online, web-based, platform provides flexibility for schools to create and administer their own course evaluations and develop custom reports. As of August 2022, this software has been renewed for use through 2025.

Students enrolled in courses that are a part of units that utilize Blue receive an email inviting them to participate in an evaluation of their course. Students access their evaluation portal using the University's SSO tied to their UNC Onyen and password. This facilitates easy access to the system. Schools determine the evaluation period and the frequency of email invitations and reminders. Students select the evaluation they want to complete from their personalized dashboard and can complete the evaluation using their laptop, desktop computer, or mobile device. All responses are anonymous.

Instructors also use Blue to access their course evaluation reports and related information. Instructors view their response rates online and receive aggregated reports of student responses consistent with their school or unit's procedures. Schools provide specific information on the dates and means of delivering the evaluation reports to instructors.

Explorance Staff

OIRA works closely with Explorance staff to support campus users with technical issues related to Carolina Course Evaluation Services. As a part of the relationship with Explorance, UNC has been assigned an Account Manager and a Customer Support Manager. Their information can be found below:

Account Manager: [Fernando Sanchez fsanchez@explorance.com](mailto:fsanchez@explorance.com)

In addition to our Account Manager, Explorance provides 24/7 support through the [Explorance Help Center](#). Here, Course Evaluation Coordinators and OIRA staff submit tickets to request direct help from a customer support agent or search the Blue online help database.

Schedule

Course evaluation schedules are determined by each school in accordance with their needs and academic calendars. Because Blue has been adopted by undergraduate schools, graduate schools, and professional schools, the timing of course evaluations vary.

The table below approximates the schedule of course evaluations in the fall and spring semesters based on historical distributions. For more information about a school's course evaluation schedule, please contact that school's Course Evaluation Coordinator using the contact information located in the School Contacts section of this document.

School/College/Unit	Fall Evaluations	Spring Evaluations
Department of Allied Health Sciences	December	May
College of Arts and Sciences	December	April
School of Education	November-December	April
School of Information and Library Sciences	November	April
Hussman School of Media and Journalism	November	April
School of Law	November	April
School of Nursing	December	April
Gillings School of Global Public Health	November-December	April-May
School of Social Work	December	April-May
SOM-Biochemistry & Biophysics SOM-Cell Biology	January	May
Adams School of Dentistry	November-December	April-May
Eshelman School of Pharmacy	Ongoing	Ongoing

Reporting

The reporting of course evaluation data to instructors, school staff, and administrators is coordinated at the school level by Course Evaluation Coordinators. The frequency, format, and distribution method vary by school.

Staff in the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) offer consultations for individual faculty and departments about how to use course evaluation results to improve teaching and learning. More information on their instructional support services, workshops, and other resources may be found on the [CFE website](#).

Course Evaluation Coordinators

Each school participating in Carolina Course Evaluation Services has a dedicated [Course Evaluation Coordinator](#) who manages all aspects of the evaluation process for their individual unit. Each coordinator is selected by leadership in each school to build course evaluation forms, set evaluation schedules, communicate with students and instructors, and distribute reports, as needed.

Onboarding

At the outset of adopting Blue by Explorance for Carolina Course Evaluation Services, Course Evaluation Coordinators were selected in each adopting school. Over time, new Coordinators are selected by school leadership as individuals leave the university of transfer to new positions on campus.

It is incumbent upon outgoing Course Evaluation Coordinators to alert OIRA when they intend to leave their position as Coordinator. Additionally, outgoing Coordinators are expected to inform the appropriate leadership in their school that a new Coordinator must be selected and that the contact information of the new Coordinator must be sent to OIRA for processing.

Upon learning of a change to a school's Coordinator, OIRA staff work with the Explorance Customer Success Manager to onboard the individual. This involves registering the new Coordinator for self-paced or instructor-led training (to be decided by the Coordinator), reviewing campus-wide policies related to Carolina Course Evaluation Services, and notifying the Coordinator of campus contacts for support.

At the beginning of each year academic year, OIRA staff will make contact with the Campus Evaluation Coordinators on record in each school to ensure that appropriate contact information is up-to-date. When a Coordinator on record does not respond within 10 business days of contact, OIRA staff will follow-up with school leadership to identify the new Coordinator or to facilitate contact with the Coordinator on record.

Onboarding Checklist

- Connect Coordinator with OIRA Staff
- Connect Coordinator with Explorance Customer Success Manager
- Register Coordinator as a Blue Project Manager (ITS)
- Register Coordinator for Explorance Blue Training (self-paced or instructor-led)
- Invite Coordinator to Blue User Teams site
- Assign Coordinator to Course Evaluation Coordinator Mentor

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Expectations

Course Evaluation Coordinators are expected to maintain the course evaluation process for their school consistent with the expectations of their school's leadership. Coordinators should also operate within the guidelines set forth in the policies and procedures of this document and any associated directives that are communicated from the University.

Additionally, Coordinators are expected to alert OIRA staff of any concerns or issues arising with use of Blue by Explorance. This includes, but is not limited to, service outages, access concerns for students and faculty, and data security issues.

Coordinators are not expected to work directly with Explorance staff except in cases where individual Coordinators have submitted a service ticket through the Explorance Help Center. Any communication from Explorance staff (that is not the direct result of a submitted ticket) should be sent to OIRA staff immediately using the contact information located in the OIRA Contacts section of this document.

Organization

Carolina Course Evaluation Services are managed using a decentralized system with stakeholders across the university. OIRA manages Carolina Course Evaluation Services software on behalf of the university community. In addition, OIRA maintains relationships with Explorance and UNC Chapel Hill's ITS department to maintain a continual stream of service for campus users. All questions regarding Explorance, service outages, access, and technical difficulties should be directed to [OIRA staff](#).

Each school appoints a Course Evaluation Coordinator using selection criteria determined by relevant school leadership. These individuals may designate additional staff to assist in the coordination of course evaluations for their unit. OIRA maintains a list of primary [Course Evaluation Coordinators](#). All questions related to school forms, course evaluation staff, scheduling, and reporting should be directed to these individuals.

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Important Contact Information

General Course Evaluation Concerns: blueevalhelp@unc.edu

OIRA Contacts: Bryant Hutson, University Director of Assessment, bhutson@email.unc.edu

Laurie Buchanan, Senior Research Associate, lauriebb@email.unc.edu

School Contacts

School/College/Unit	Contact Name	Contact Email	Website
Department of Allied Health Sciences	Kayla Rankin	kayla_rankin@med.unc.edu	--
College of Arts and Sciences	Heather Thompson	heather_thompson@unc.edu	Website
School of Education	Lisa Johnson	lisajohnson@unc.edu	--
Friday Center	Ying Liu	ying.liu@unc.edu	--
School of Information and Library Sciences	Lara Bailey	ljbailey@email.unc.edu	--
Hussman School of Media and Journalism	Tricia Robinson	tmrobins@email.unc.edu	--
School of Law	Michela Osborn	mosborn@ad.unc.edu	--
School of Nursing	Jeff Szczypinski	jeffsz@email.unc.edu	--
Gillings School of Global Public Health	Nick Perrone	nperrone@email.unc.edu	--
School of Social Work	Beth Sauer	bhsauer@email.unc.edu	--
SOM-Biochemistry & Biophysics SOM-Cell Biology	Holly Shepherd	holly_shepherd@med.unc.edu	--
Adams School of Dentistry	Ashley Tittlemore	ashley_tittlemore@unc.edu	--
Eshelman School of Pharmacy	Christina Pomykal	cpomykal@email.unc.edu	Website

Ethical Practices in Conducting Course Evaluations

Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of student responses is essential for conducting honest and candid course evaluations. Strict adherence to procedures that protect anonymity and confidentiality is critical so that students feel comfortable providing their true perceptions of teaching effectiveness without concern of being identified.

Students should never feel pressured to complete an evaluation. If a student feels their anonymity may be compromised (for example, in a very small class where comments could reveal their identity), they may choose not to submit an evaluation without penalty.

No incentives should be offered that could increase response rates in a way that pressures students. Participation must remain completely voluntary.

All faculty and teaching assistants assigned to teach a course will be evaluated each time that course is offered, without exception.

To avoid any conflicts of interest or bias, faculty and administrators must not access evaluation data until after final grades have been submitted for that course.

Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

Since student evaluation results are used for personnel decisions, interpreting the data must be done carefully and in context.

Evaluating teaching effectiveness should utilize multiple sources of data, not just rely on a single source like student evaluations. Other inputs like peer reviews, faculty self-evaluations, teaching portfolios, exit interviews, and alumni surveys should also be considered.

Departments must establish clear guidelines for interpreting student evaluation data that will be used in any personnel decisions affecting employment status, promotion and tenure, or compensation. These guidelines must be set at least one year prior to the decision, to avoid any potential biases.

Personnel decisions should follow the interpretation guidelines strictly and be based on a holistic evaluation of teaching effectiveness using multiple inputs, not just student evaluations alone.

Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to maintaining the documentation found in this Policies and Procedures manual, OIRA also maintains a list of frequently asked questions for students, instructors, department staff, and Course Evaluation Coordinators.

Students

- Q. I believe I made a mistake while filling out my course evaluations. Can I change my scores?
- A. No, OIRA does not allow students to reopen any completed course evaluations.
- Q. I do not see all of the courses I am currently enrolled in. What should I do?
- A. Some courses do not have an end-of-semester course evaluation. Small classes, like independent study courses, do not have an evaluation because of the small number of students enrolled in the course. Additionally, if the course you are taking is housed in a school that does not use Blue to manage their course evaluations, you will not see that course listed in your student dashboard.
- Q. Can I see a copy of the questions I will be asked on my course evaluations before I complete the form?
- A. To obtain a copy of your course evaluation, please contact the Course Evaluation Coordinator in the school your course belongs to.

Instructors

- Q. What questions are included on my course's end-of-semester evaluation?
- A. To see your course's evaluation form, please contact your school's Course Evaluation Coordinator using the contact information in the School Contacts section of this document.
- Q. What questions are included on my course's end-of-semester evaluation?
- A. To see your course's evaluation form, please contact your school's Course Evaluation Coordinator using the contact information in the School Contacts section of this document.
- Q. I would like to add questions to the standard course evaluation form. Is that possible?
- A. Some schools allow instructors to include their own questions on the standard form. To see if your school allows this, please contact your school's Course Evaluation Coordinator using the contact information in the School Contacts section of this document.
- Q. Will my course be evaluated this semester?

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- A. In most cases, all instructors and their courses are evaluated each semester. In some cases, a course may not be evaluated because of the courses size or the nature of the course.
- Q. Will I be sent a copy of my student's responses to my course evaluation. If so, how can I expect to receive it?
- A. In most cases, all instructors and their courses are evaluated each semester. In some cases, a course may not be evaluated because of the courses size or the nature of the course.
- Q. Will I be sent a copy of my student's responses to my course evaluation. If so, how can I expect to receive it?
- A. Yes! Each school develops their own process for reporting student responses to course evaluations. In many cases, reports will be transmitted in PDF format. All reports feature summaries of student responses. No individual level responses will be provided to instructors.
- Q. Do Graduate Teaching Assistants get evaluated?
- A. Yes, Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Instructors will be evaluated at the end of each semester.

Course Evaluation Coordinators

- Q. Help! Blue is down and my course evaluations are live. How do we restore access to Blue?
- A. In the event the Blue service is unexpectedly down, please contact OIRA using the contact information located in the OIRA Contacts section of this document. OIRA staff will work with campus ITS and Explorance Staff to restore access quickly and limit interruptions to the service.
- Q. I am a new Course Evaluation Coordinator for my school. How can I get access to training and support resources.
- A. Your outgoing Course Evaluation Coordinator should have contacted OIRA staff to alert us of the change. If they have not, or you have not been contacted, please feel free to reach out to OIRA staff.
- Q. I want to change the questions on my course evaluations form. Is there anyone who can help me develop new questions .
- A. Yes. For assistance writing new questions, please contact OIRA staff.

Departmental Staff

- Q. I am the Chair/Business Manager/DUS/DGS of my department. I need access to my department's course evaluation reports. Who can grant me that access?

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- A. In most cases, your school's Course Evaluation Coordinator can grant this access. If they have additional questions, they can contact OIRA using the contact information located in the OIRA Contacts section of this document.