# WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

An Investigation into Response Rates in Student Evaluation of Teaching

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8/6/20

For Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) to be accurate in describing student experiences of coursework with different faculty members, it is important for participation levels to be high. High levels of participation help to improve the reliability of the measure and better reflect the average experience of students.

The following summary provides a record of our attempts to improve data collection approaches over the years, with the goal of improved response rates for SET.

Response Rates Over the Years
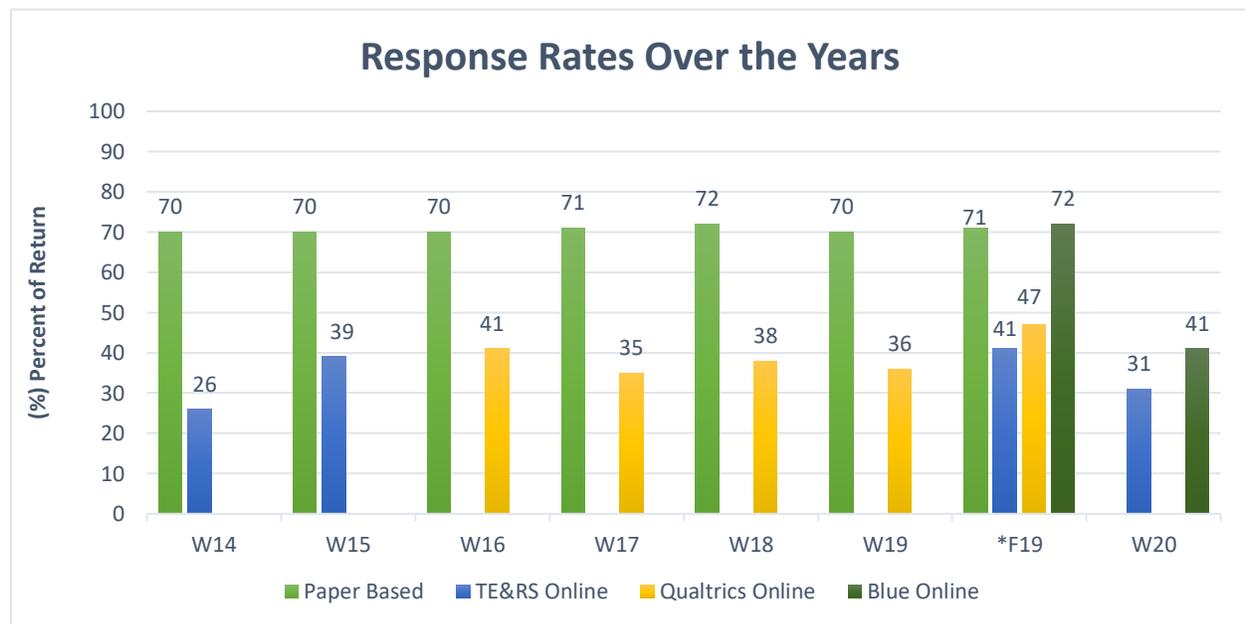
The bar chart compares student response rates between paper-based and online student evaluations of teaching over an eight-year period.

The Testing, Evaluation and Research Services (TE&RS) was the first online in-house system. The next online system introduced was the Qualtrics SET App online system. Today, we have advanced to Explorance Blue which provides something we have not had in the past, an interface with the Canvas online learning system.

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SET Online Introduction

The TE&RS was the first online SET system to be piloted and introduced in 2003. The system was a homegrown solution allowing for a possible movement from paper-based evaluations, 15 courses participated in the pilot. An improvement later added was the creation and inclusion of reminder emails. This process was a follow-up to students who had not completed their online survey. The feedback was positive, and the response rates continued to increase.

At the request of the 2N SET Committee there were modifications made to the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) questionnaire in 2014. The questions were revised and reduced from 24 to 22.

Another improvement introduced, was the addition of a media campaign to encourage students to participate with assistance from Marketing and Communications and the Dean of Students Office (DOSO) in 2015. The add-on of the media campaign resulted in a rise in response rate to 13%.

Moving Forward

We continued to look for more opportunities to improve online SET. Following the questionnaire changes and with the enhancement of the media campaign, the new Qualtrics SET online app was piloted and introduced to replace the TE&RS system in 2016. The pilot project included instructors from 15 courses. With this new system faculty could release their surveys as part of an announcement or release on a special in-class day, like the method used in paper-based administration. Despite the small sample size, there was an increase in the response rate to 41%.

From winter 2016 through winter 2019, under the Qualtrics online system the response rates hoovered between 35% to 41%. After viewing overall statistics, and not seeing an upward trend. It was determined that to improve student response rates, a look for another online system was needed.

Online SET Today!

We piloted a new, external, enterprise-level Online SET App called Explorance Blue in fall 2019*. The app provided students access to their online evaluation through Canvas and emailed invitations/reminders. We added another option to online processing during the pilot: the grade book link in Canvas. To access the grade book in Canvas, students had to first complete or opt-out of their evaluation. As a result, for the first time, the online student response rate increased to 72%, which was better than paper-based response rates.

As part of the pilot, we gathered feedback from faculty, students, and administrators. The response across the board was positive. However, students requested the removal of the grade book link in Canvas. During the following winter 2020 semester, the link was removed.

Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, SET was unexpectedly moved online for the entire university during winter 2020. The overall response rate was 41%. Although it was a rare semester, in which traditional courses were evaluated online for the first time, we still believe that the grade book link was an essential ingredient for response rate improvement.

These changes over the years indicate that SET response rates are related to different circumstances. Although online-based SET does not yet match paper-based SET response rates, the difference between the two is getting smaller.

Sample Size Over the Years

(n = Number of Students Enrolled)

SEMESTERS	SET PAPER BASED N	TE&RS ONLINE N	QUALTRICS ONLINE N	EXPLORANCE BLUE ONLINE N
W2011	50704	7303	--	--
W2012	50946	10976	--	--
W2013	50149	9616	--	--
W2014	48229	12608	--	--
W2015	48027	13321	--	--
W2016	47683	16104	892	--
W2017	48637	8437	12978	--
W2018	45724	13029	17657	--
W2019	62554	231	22733	--
*F2019	65841	451	1373	28417
W2020	--	571	--	60180

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