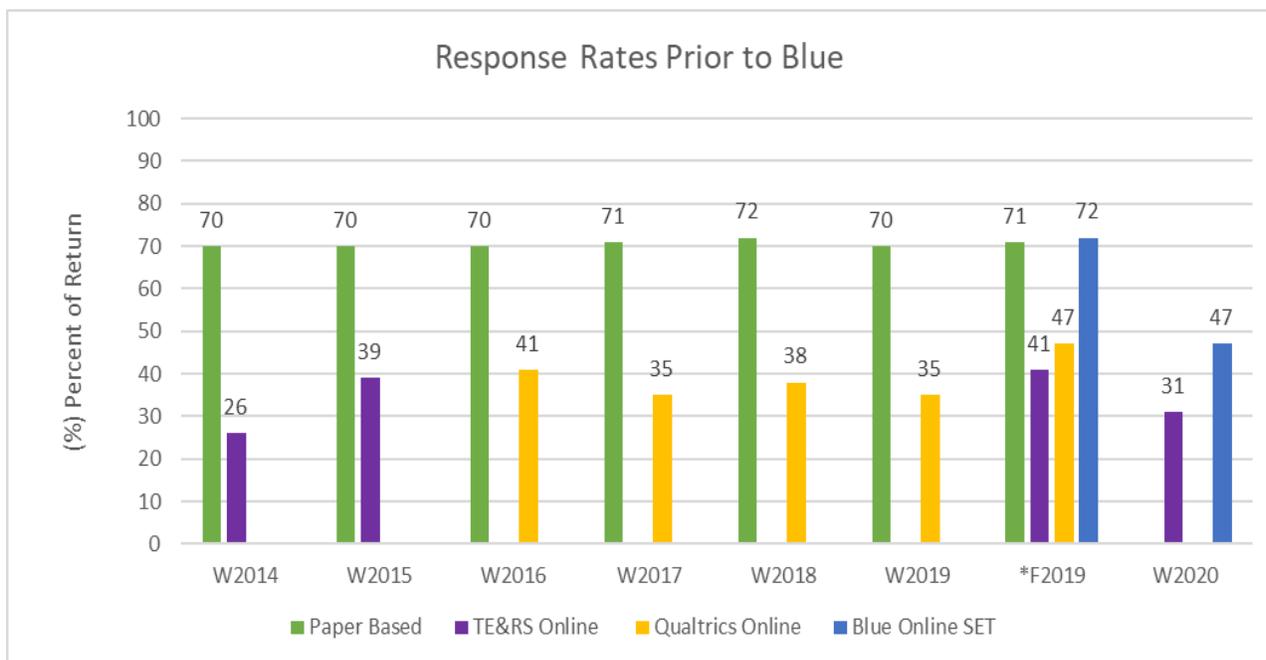


History of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Response Rates

by Reni Gresham, Petar Lazic, and Laura Woodward, 4/14/2022

For Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) to accurately describe student experiences of coursework with different faculty members, it is crucial for participation levels to be high. High levels of participation help improve the measure's reliability 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 to improve response rates for SET. Over eight years, the bar chart compares student response rates between paper-based and online student teaching evaluations.



The Testing, Evaluation and Research Services Program (TE&RS) was the first online SET system to be piloted and introduced in 2003. The system was a homegrown solution for online evaluations. Fifteen courses participated in the pilot. An early improvement during this time was the usage of reminder emails targeted to follow-up with students who had not completed the survey. Instructor and student feedback was positive, and the response rates increased.

At the request of the 2N SET Committee, the questionnaire was modified in 2014. The questions were revised and reduced from 24 to 22.



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In 2015, a media campaign was developed with Marketing/Communications and the Dean of Students offices to encourage student participation. The media campaign increased response rates by 13%.

In 2016, a Qualtrics Online SET application was programmed by Joshua Armes of Computing and Information Technology (C&IT) to replace the TE&RS system. The program integrated information from Banner with the online survey to make distribution more efficient.

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 Online SET response rates to 41%.

From winter 2016 through winter 2019, under the Qualtrics online system, the response rates ranged from 35% to 41%. Unfortunately, Qualtrics abandoned the feature that allowed our university to link the survey to Banner, and we were forced to look for another system.

In Fall 2019, we piloted Explorance Blue. The service provided students access to their online evaluation through Canvas and emailed automated invitations and reminders.

A feature that helped response rates tremendously was the grade book reminder in Canvas. Students were required to complete or opt out of their evaluation to access the grade book on Canvas. As a result, the online student response rate increased to 71% for the first time, which was better than paper-based response rates.

SET was unexpectedly moved online for the entire university following the pilot during the winter of 2020. Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, most classes were evaluated by Explorance Blue, resulting in a response rate of 47%.

As part of the pilot, we gathered feedback from faculty, students, and administrators. The response across the board was positive. However, despite the helpfulness in improving response rates, the grade book link proved controversial. The faculty requested its removal in Fall 2021.

These variations over time suggest that SET response rates are affected by various factors. Although the response rates for online SET do not yet match those for paper-based SET, we continue to try different approaches to improve response rates.



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
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	--	60984