

Instructor's Guide to Improving Response Rates

Office of Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research
Office of the Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

This guide gives tips and recommendations for instructors who want to increase their survey response rates. Course evaluation surveys are conducted through Explorance Blue (also known as Blue). The following topics are covered in this guide:

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* **NOTE:** Recommendations listed below are organized into two categories: **Before Live Evaluations** and **During Live Evaluations**. Recommendations under **Before Live Evaluations** are meant to be done before the student survey fill out period begins, ideally early in the academic term. Recommendations under **During Live Evaluations** are meant to be done while the student survey fill out period is active, when students are allowed to fill out and submit evaluations. [The evaluation window dates can be found in your Blue portal by following these instructions.](#)

How to Log Into Blue

Blue is an online software program you can access through your browser (Chrome, Safari, Edge). To log into Blue, you need your UAF ID and password.

Go to <https://my-uaf.bluera.com> and log in using your UAF ID and password.

*Note that the link to log into Blue changed on 8/15/25 after the upgrade to Blue 9.
The previously used URL will redirect you to the new URL.*

Recommendations

Before Live Evaluations

1. Plan on **setting aside in-class time** so students can complete the survey in class. We recommend setting aside this time to be in the beginning, or close to the beginning of the class period.

2. **Include course evaluations as an item on your course syllabus.** Additionally, you can add a link that [directs them to the Blue](#), or a [QR Code that will link them to the course survey](#). Adding the evaluations onto your syllabus shows students that the evaluations are important to you, and that you are thinking about them early into the semester.
3. **Introduce course evaluations to students near the beginning of the term.** Tell your students why you value their input and give examples of how you've implemented previous survey feedback into your course content or instructional style.
4. **Offer a class-wide incentive** if a predetermined response rate or response count threshold is met. For example, if 80% of the class completes the survey, every student will receive 2 extra credit points added to their final grade. Or, if 12 out of 15 students complete the survey, then you will bring cookies to the final exam. *Note that individual incentives are not allowed due to UAF evaluation anonymity policy. Instructors are not permitted to know which students in a course submitted their surveys. If you have questions on incentives, or are unsure what can be offered, please email UAF-course-evs@alaska.edu.*

During Live Evaluations

1. (From #1 above) **Set aside in-class time for students to complete the survey.** Allow students 15-20 minutes to complete the survey, and step out of the room during this time. During this time, you can also monitor the survey submission count through the Subject Management Page within Blue. The count of submissions are updated live. (see below for more details).
2. **Monitor survey response rates** through the **Subject Management page**. From your Blue Homepage, find the "Subject Management" box in the left-side panel. The count of survey submissions and response rates for each course are displayed here and updated live.

If you see that response rates are low:

- a. Send an email to students in the course reminding them to complete the survey. A sample reminder email can be found below.
 - b. Remind your students of how you value their feedback and tell them how you've implemented previous survey feedback into your course content or instructional style. Emphasizing that the surveys are important to YOU will encourage students to complete them.
3. **Display a QR Code in class for easier access to the course survey.** Starting in Fall 2023, instructors can display an automatically-generated QR Code to their class which links directly to the course survey. Insert this QR Code into a slide, or simply display it on a projector during the class time you set aside for completing course evaluations. [Find instructions on accessing the survey QR Code here.](#)

Sample Reminder Email from Instructor to Students

Students receive a Blue system invitation email that includes a direct link to the course survey. An additional 1-2 reminder emails that also include the survey link are sent after the invitation email. Even though students receive system-generated emails, an email sent directly from their instructor usually receives more attention and is a great way to increase survey response rates. Below is a sample email that you can send to students reminding them to complete their surveys. This email can be modified in any way you wish, but we recommend including the Blue login link provided.

Suggested Email Subject: Reminder: Please complete your course survey

Suggested Email Content:

Hello to my [course name] students,

Please remember to complete the evaluation survey for this course by [insert date]. The survey is quick and helps me make the course better for the next cohort. To fill it out:

1. Go to <https://my-uaf.bluera.com>
2. If you're not already logged into your UAF account, you'll be prompted to log in. If you forgot your password, [follow these steps](#).
3. After logging in you'll see a list of course surveys to complete. Click on one, fill it out, and hit submit.

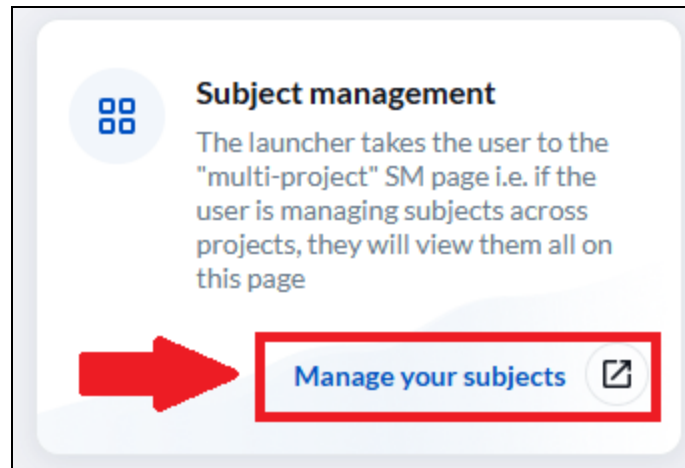
I appreciate you taking the time to complete the course survey, your honest feedback is important to me! [*If you set a class incentive: As a reminder if X% of you complete the survey, X points will be added to everyone's grade.*]

Thanks,
[signature]

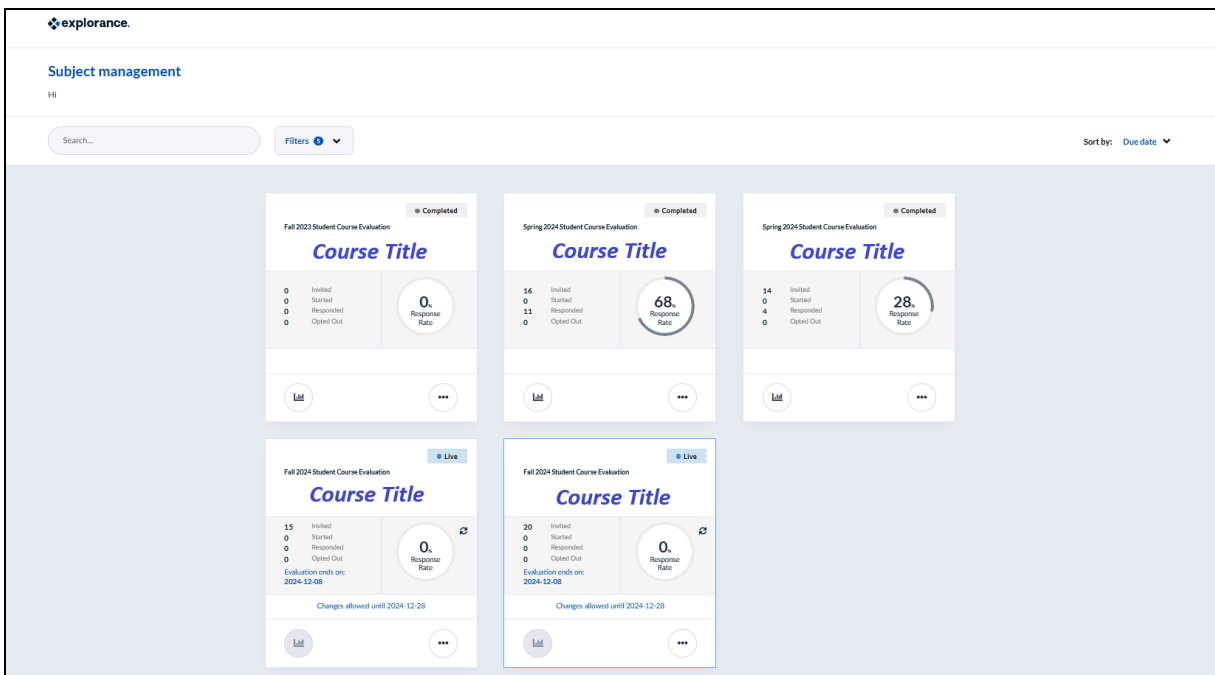
Find Evaluation Window Dates (When Students Can Submit Surveys)

The dates when students are permitted to fill out and submit course evaluation surveys vary from term-to-term and course-to-course. You can find the dates when the evaluation window opens and closes by following these steps:

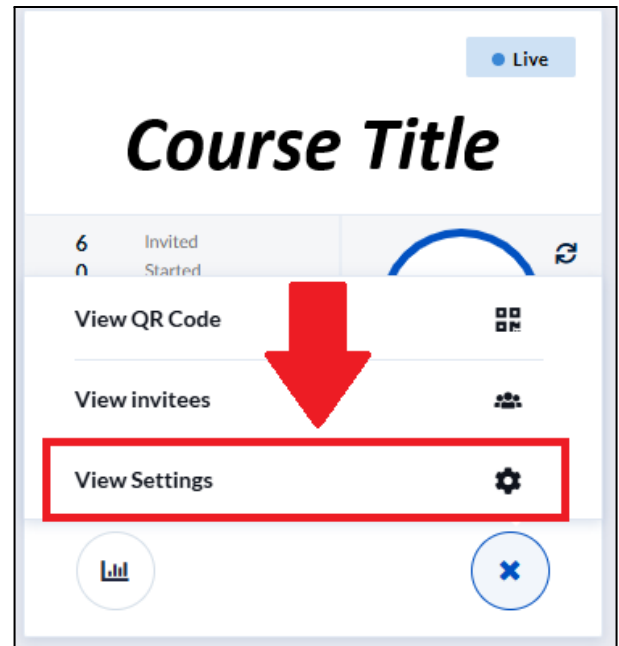
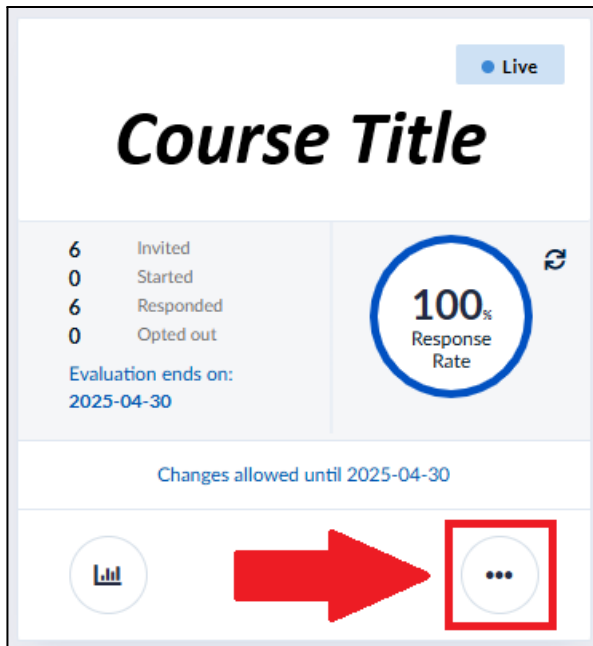
1. [Log into Blue](#)
2. On the left-side panel, locate the box titled **Subject Management**. Click on **Manage your subjects**. The link will open in a new tab.



3. On this page, courses you are teaching are displayed in boxes. Each box is labeled with the course title.



4. Locate a course that you wish to find the evaluation window dates for and click on the **three dots (ellipses)**, then **View Settings**.



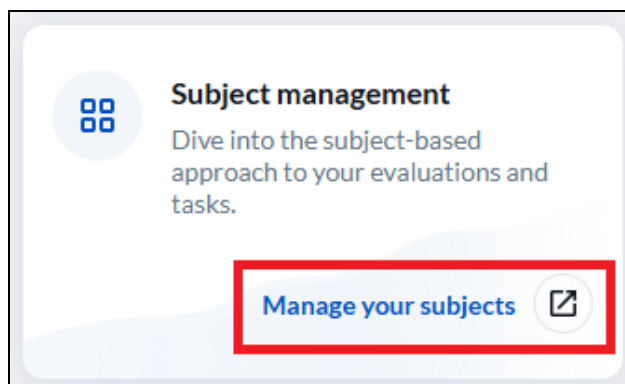
5. In the pop-up window, the **Start Date** is the date and time when students are first allowed to fill out and submit the survey for that course. The **End Date** is the date and time when students are no longer allowed to fill out and submit a survey for that course. These are the evaluation window dates.

This screenshot shows a pop-up window titled 'Fall 2024 Student Course Evaluation'. It has a 'Cancel' button and a close icon (X). The 'Course Title' is displayed in blue. Below it, it says 'Changes allowed until 2024-12-28'. There's a 'Preview questionnaire' section with a 'Done' status and an update date of '2024-11-08'. Under 'Choose timing', the 'Scheduled' option is selected. At the bottom, there are two rows for setting dates and times, each with a calendar icon: 'Start Date' is set to '2024 - 11 - 25 10 : 00' and 'End Date' is set to '2024 - 12 - 08 23 : 59'. Both rows are highlighted with red rectangular boxes.

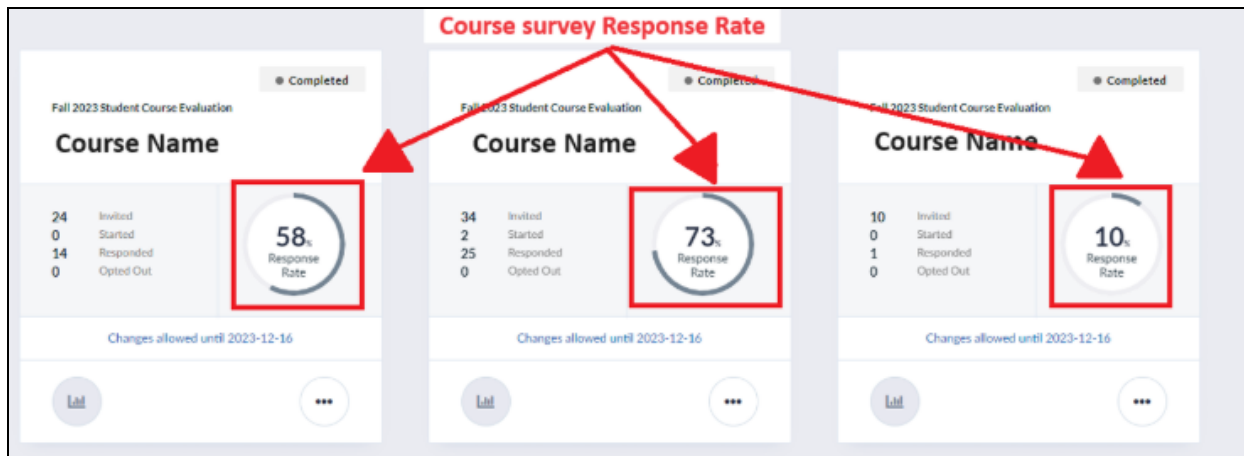
Find Survey Response Rates

The Survey Response Rate is the percentage of students in a class that have submitted a course evaluation survey, divided by the number of students in the class who were invited to complete the survey. Response Rates are available to view once the survey has opened to students, and are updated live. To view the Response Rate follow these steps:

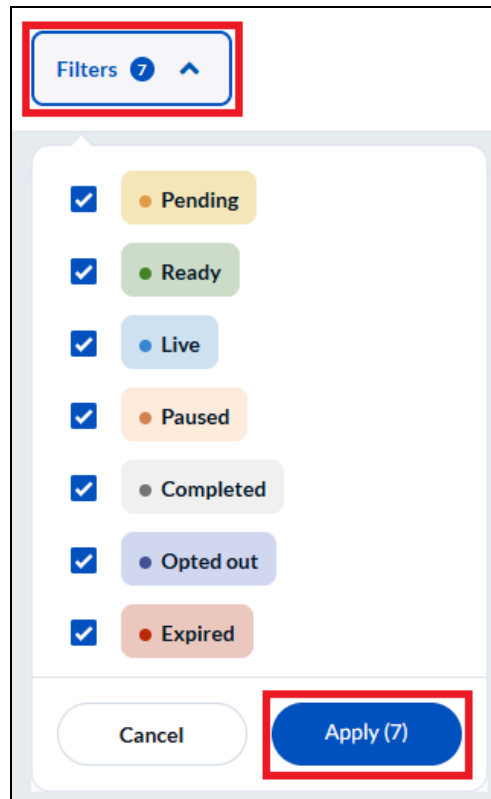
1. [Log into Blue.](#)
2. On the left-side panel, locate the box labeled "Subject Management" and click on "Manage your subjects".



3. On this page, you will see box(es) labeled with courses you are teaching. The Survey Response Rate is displayed as a percentage within each of these boxes.



4. If you don't see the course you're looking for, locate the **Filters** drop-down at the top of the page, select all options, then click "Apply". All courses will now appear.



The screenshot shows a 'Filters' dropdown menu with a red box around the header and another red box around the 'Apply (7)' button. The menu lists seven status options, each with a checked checkbox and a colored circle: Pending (yellow), Ready (green), Live (blue), Paused (orange), Completed (grey), Opted out (purple), and Expired (red). At the bottom of the menu are 'Cancel' and 'Apply (7)' buttons.

Status	Selected
Pending	Yes
Ready	Yes
Live	Yes
Paused	Yes
Completed	Yes
Opted out	Yes
Expired	Yes

Offering Incentives

In November 2025, [UAF's Faculty senate passed motion 2025/2026-292-4](#), focused on ensuring student anonymity in course evaluations. This motion allows instructors to offer incentives to students for completing the survey, but only on an 'All or Nothing' basis. Here are the highlights:

- Incentives must be rewarded to everyone in the class or no one in the class
- Incentives CANNOT be rewarded on a student-by-student basis
- Instructors CANNOT ask individual students if they have completed the survey or not
- Instructors CANNOT ask students for proof of survey submission

The type of incentive offered to the class is up to you (use your judgement on what is appropriate), but the most popular reward is extra credit points.

To implement an incentive, we recommend setting a threshold based on the percent or number of students in the class who complete the survey. For example, if 75% of the class completes the survey, then everyone in the class gets 5 extra credit points. Or, if 8 (out of 10) students complete the survey, then you will bring cookies to the final exam.

Use [the steps above](#) to find the percent, or how many, students completed the survey. If you have questions on how to implement an incentive, reach out to the Course Evaluations Administrator at UAF-course-evals@alaska.edu.

How to Use Course Evaluation QR Codes

Instructors are able to use an automatically-generated QR Code that links directly to that course's survey. Information on what QR Codes are, how to find a course's QR Code, and how to use that code are listed below.

What is a QR Code?

A QR Code (Quick Response Code) is a type of barcode that when scanned by a phone's camera, will link directly to a specific webpage. Each QR Code is unique and consists of black squares arranged in a grid on a white background. QR Codes are able to be screenshotted or downloaded as an image file (.jpg or .png) to distribute them.

How Do Course Survey QR Codes Work?

Instructors are able to use QR Codes to direct students to a specific course evaluation survey. Starting two weeks before each course starts, you can access course evaluation QR Codes. Students do not have access to these QR Codes unless you distribute them.

Each course evaluation QR Code is unique to that course (including section), meaning every course in a term is assigned a unique QR Code. The code will only link to the survey for that specific course. If a student scans a QR Code for a course they are not enrolled in, or when the survey submission window is not yet open, the link will not work.

How Do I Share the QR Code to my Students?

For in-person courses with an in-classroom screen: We recommend displaying the QR code on the in-classroom screen during the time you have set aside for students to complete the survey. You can screenshot the QR code and add it into your lecture slides, or simply have the browser tab open showing the QR code.

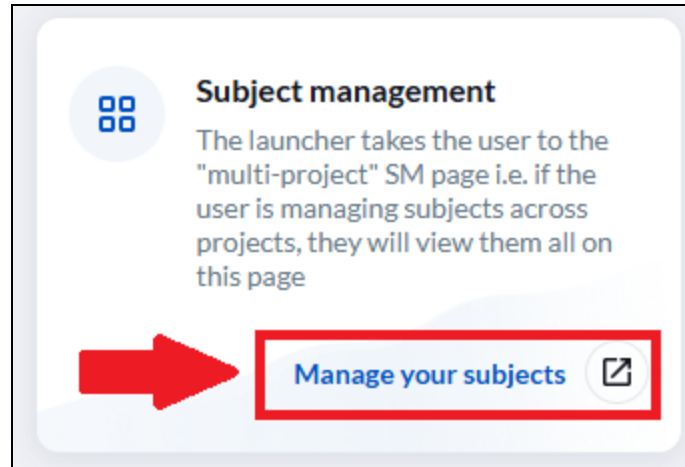
For in-person courses without an in-classroom screen: We recommend printing out the QR code on a handout, and distributing the sheet during the in-class time you set aside for students to complete the survey. You can also add tips on how to complete the course survey on this handout, from the [Students Guide to Course Evaluations](#).

Online Courses: If the course has synchronous meetings, we recommend you screenshare the QR code during the in-class time you set aside for students to complete the survey. If the course is asynchronous, we recommend taking a screenshot of the QR code and either emailing it to students, or uploading it to Canvas.

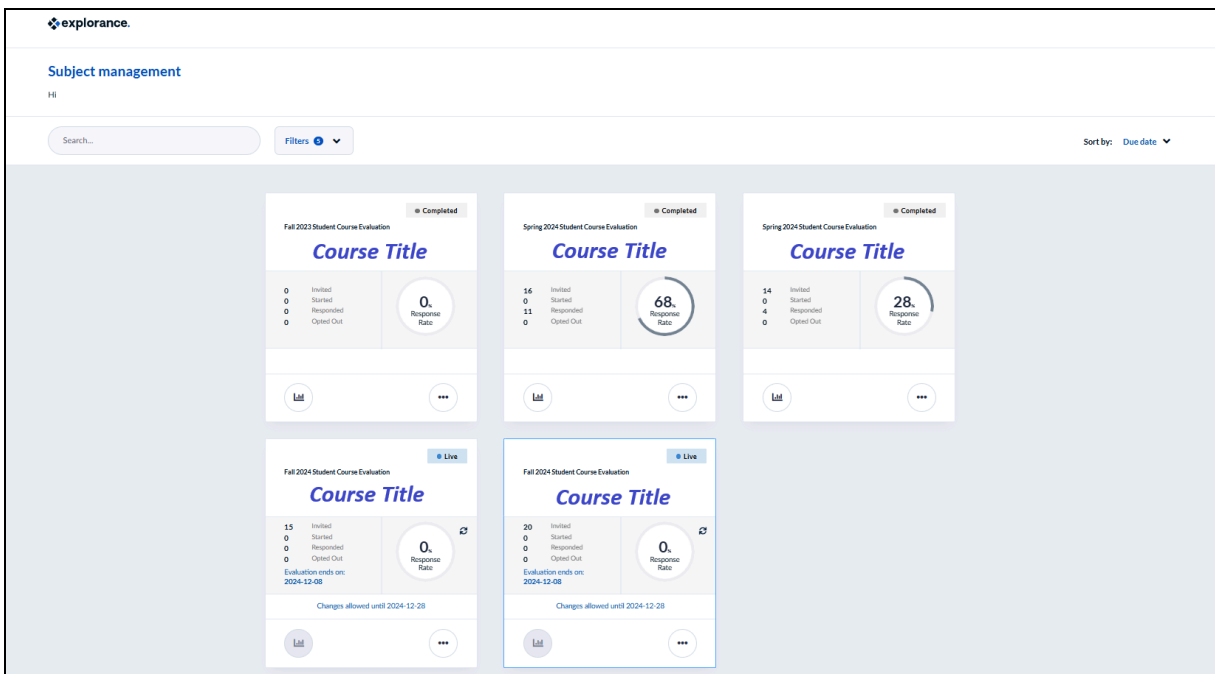
Using QR Codes to direct students to their course surveys is optional, but can make distributing a survey link to your class easier.

How Do I Find a Course's QR Code?

1. [Log into Blue](#)
2. On the left-side panel, locate the box titled **Subject Management**. Click on **Manage your subjects**. The link will open in a new tab.



3. On this page, courses you are teaching are displayed in boxes. Each box is labeled with the course title.



4. Locate a course that you wish to view the QR Code for and click on the **three dots (ellipses)**, then **View QR Code**. Remember that if you are teaching multiple courses in a semester, each course's QR Code is unique.

