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What is Bluepulse?

Bluepulse is an adaptive, formative feedback tool designed to help instructors assess students’ learning needs and areas of perceived understanding. Currently, Bluepulse is accessible within Canvas for the Bloomington campus. It provides an anonymous and safe way for students to submit immediate feedback to instructors. By putting an equal emphasis on how students perceive learning goals as much as what they are learning, instructors can make real-time adjustments using real data exclusive to them. By receiving continuous feedback, instructors can take the “pulse” of the classroom to address questions or concerns prior to mid- and end-of-term evaluations. This provides instructors with an additional avenue to communicate with a diverse learner population and allows instructors to refine their teaching methodologies.

How to Enable Bluepulse in Canvas

Enabling Bluepulse in Canvas is a quick and easy process. From your Canvas Dashboard, click the Courses icon or click on any course on your dashboard. To view a short demonstration video on YouTube, click on How to Enable Bluepulse in Canvas.
Your courses appear. To see all of your courses, click the **All Courses** link. Click on any course you would like to use with Bluepulse.

![Figure 2: Canvas Dashboard](image)

On the course menu, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click the **Settings** link.

![Figure 3: Canvas Courses](image)
The course Settings page opens. Click the **Navigation** tab.

![Figure 4: Bluepulse Settings](image)

The Navigation menu allows you to customize your course navigation as well as enable or disable options for your course. To enable Bluepulse, scroll down the menu to the list of disabled options.

![Figure 5: Canvas Navigation Menu](image)
From here you can enable Bluepulse in two ways:

1. **Drag and Drop** by holding down on the left mouse button and dragging the Bluepulse title to the top menu, or

2. Click **Enable** from the dropdown arrow on the Settings icon.

Regardless of which method is used, click **Save** when you are done. You will see the Bluepulse link on your course set list at the left side of your screen.
Bluepulse Features

Bluepulse offers instructors several ways to keep track of student learning.

1. **Student Suggestions.** Student Suggestions allow students to submit one suggestion a day about something that would assist them in better understanding lesson concepts. This informs instructors on what they need to improve on, add, or delete from their course.

2. **Learning Polls.** Learning Polls help instructors access student understanding of course content. It also helps students assess their progress in the course.

3. **Teacher Initiative.** A Teaching Initiative or Instructional Goal allows instructors to measure students’ perceptions of their overall grasp of course learning goals. Using this feature allows instructors to tweak the course as they go.

4. **Anonymous Coaching.** As classroom learner diversity increases, a student’s need for more diverse communication also increases. Anonymous Coaching provides an additional platform for students to communicate with instructors. Instructors are able to identify and help at-risk students quicker and easier. It also allows instructors to engage with students anonymously and coach them through challenging learning activities.
How to use Bluepulse to Improve Your Class Communication

Now that you have enabled Bluepulse and know what features it offers, you can start maximizing its capabilities. To begin, open Bluepulse by clicking the Bluepulse link that you just enabled. Next, locate the Access Bluepulse button in the upper right corner of your screen.

![Figure 8: Bluepulse Access](image8.png)

Next, click the Instructor Space icon.

![Figure 9: Bluepulse Home Page](image9.png)
Managing Student Suggestions

When Bluepulse opens to the Instructor Space, the Suggestions page is displayed. Students can submit suggestions throughout the duration of the course. However, to avoid an inundation of notifications, students are limited to making one suggestion per day. Managing suggestions effectively allows the instructor to address issues and take action quickly.

Here you will see a listing of suggestions made by your students. Bluepulse offers several filters to help you find the suggestions you are looking for or want to view. First, select the course by clicking on the arrow for the dropdown box. You can enter search criteria to locate suggestions. You can restrict the type of suggestions that will be displayed to Read, Unread, Blocked, or the default, All (except blocked.)

This section continues on the next page.
Bluepulse offers five ways to manage student suggestions:

1. **Link to a Teaching Initiative** (Instructional Goal)
   An instructor can link one or more suggestions to a Teaching Initiative (Instructional Goal) by clicking the link icon next to the suggestion. Students will receive a notification when one of their suggestions has been linked to a Teaching Initiative.

2. **Direct a Broadcast Message to the student that submitted the suggestion.**
   Instructors can begin a discussion with the student who submitted the suggestion. Messages are anonymous and private. To send a message, click the Message icon to the right of the suggestion you want to respond to. Broadcast Messages appear in a pop-up message box when the student logs on so that they are encouraged to reply promptly.

3. **Mark a suggestion as new or read.**
   Once a suggestion has been reviewed, it can be marked as read. Marking a suggestion as read helps when filtering a long list of suggestions to ensure that all suggestions are appropriately considered. To mark a suggestion as read, click the Envelope icon to the right of the suggestion. The closed envelope icon should now be open.
4. **Block a student who is making inappropriate or unhelpful suggestions.** Unfortunately, some students may decide to abuse the system because of its anonymous nature. To minimize disruption, instructors can block suggestions from students who are acting inappropriately. Students won't know that they are blocked and instructors won't have to waste time weeding through them. Blocked suggestions can always be accessed by changing the filter. To block a student from making further frivolous suggestions, click the **Eye** icon.

5. **Delete suggestions.** At times, it may be necessary to delete suggestions that are old, irrelevant, or are no longer needed. **Use caution here.** These can be easily deleted but, once gone, cannot be restored. To delete a suggestion, click the **Trash Can** icon to the right of the suggestion.
Using Learning Polls in Bluepulse

A Learning Poll is a quick survey feature used to gather precise data about how well individual students feel they were able to grasp topics or complete assignments. Instructors can access the Learning Poll results and parse the data to identify trends among students who are excelling or falling behind. Instructors can keep a “pulse” on the class by identifying where problems areas occur. Learning Polls are almost always written “I” statements. For example, “After today’s lesson, I am confident I can create a pivot table in Excel.”

To create a Learning Poll, click the Instructor Space button on the Bluepulse menu.

Figure 12: Bluepulse Menu

This section continues on the next page.
In the instructor space, click the **Learning Polls (pie chart)** icon.

![Figure 13: Bluepulse Instructor Space](image)

Click the **plus sign** icon next to “Create a new Learning Poll.”

![Figure 14: Bluepulse Learning Polls](image)

On the left of the screen is a white text box where instructors can enter a question or statement. There is a limit of 160 characters, including spaces. On the left side, decide the type of answer you want to receive. If you ask a question like “What topic would you most like to discuss next week?” you would choose “*Users should respond using open form text.*” If it is a statement such as “I thought the quiz today was difficult” you would click the radio button next to “*Use answer choices.*” When you have finished writing your question or statement and selecting answer type, click the **Create** button.
Your learning poll has been created but is not yet published. To publish the poll, click the Cloud icon. Notifications will be sent to students. You can also send a follow up message using the Broadcast feature. To open the Broadcast dialog box, click the Tower icon.

In the Broadcast dialog box, you can decide to whom you would like to send a message. You can send a message to the entire class or only those who answered in a particular way.
To send to “All students enrolled in the class,” leave the radio button filled in (1).

If you want to target a group of students such as those who answered “Not at All” and “Very Little” to a statement, click the “Student who responded: …” radio button. Then click the Black Cyclone icon (2) to the right. This will open a Check Box (3). Make your selection by checking or unchecking the options.

You also have the option to Allow Replies (4). If you do not want students to reply, uncheck the Allow Replies box. Fill in the Broadcast a message box. You are limited to 160 characters including spaces. When you are finished, click the Broadcast button. Your message will be sent to the students’ notifications. To exit, click the X on the top right of the dialog box.
Designing Teaching Initiatives (Goals)

Teaching Initiatives or Goals are established by the instructor as an area of the instructional experience tied to course objectives. Instructors can monitor their progress on a particular initiative through daily ratings provided by the students. While the Learning Poll helps to understand how the student is progressing, Teaching Initiatives helps the instructor understand his/her own progress in meeting a goal or initiative.

To create a new Teaching Initiative, return to the Instructor Space. From there, click the Star icon.

![Figure 18: Teaching Initiative](image)

The Teaching Initiatives page opens. To create a new initiative, click the plus sign.

![Figure 19: Creating a Teaching Initiative](image)
In the white text box, type your initiative or goal. When you are done, click the **Create** button.

![Figure 20: Creating a Teaching Initiative](image)

To publish your initiative, click the **Cloud** icon. Notifications will be sent to students.

![Figure 21: Publishing a Teaching Initiative](image)

To view the results, return to the Bluepulse home page by clicking the **Keypad** icon on the upper right side of the screen. You can also use the Broadcast feature to communicate further about the initiative with your students. To broadcast, click the **Tower** icon.

This section continues on the next page.
On your home page, you will be able to see the status of your current Teaching Initiatives. Students can view this on their home page as well and can make suggestions to help meet the goal. To view more detail about an initiative, click the arrow on the upper right corner of the course block.

![Figure 22: Home Page Teaching Initiative Status](image)

Here you will be able to see lists, graphs and charts to track your goals.

![Figure 23: Teaching Initiative Status Detail](image)
Anonymous Coaching

Some suggestions an instructor receives might be cries for help. Students are often reluctant to speak up in class when they are having difficulty understanding something. Some learners have a hard time meeting with an instructor face-to-face. Bluepulse allows conversations and coaching to happen between instructor and student anonymously.

To begin a one-on-one conversation with a struggling student, click the “bell” icon to view notifications. Open a notification by clicking on the question.

![Notifications](image.png)

*Figure 24: Notifications*

This section continues on the next page.
Responses to a recent learning poll appear. Click the **Start a One-on-One Conversation** icon next to the student response that is of concern.

![Figure 25: Start an Anonymous One-on-one Conversation](image)

The **One-on-One** message box opens. Complete the starred text boxes and click **Start**.

![Figure 26: One-on-One Conversation](image)
To view your One-on-One conversations, click the icon on the **Menu** bar. Here you can keep track of all your conversations.

*Figure 27: Tracking One-on-One Conversations*
BLUEPULSE QUICK HOW-TO GUIDE

There are 3 main pillars that users can engage using Bluepulse*: suggestions, initiatives, and ratings. With these 3 pillars working in unison, both students and instructors can achieve teaching and learning excellence in classroom.

STUDENT SUGGESTIONS
In Bluepulse 1.4, all users (instructors and students) can make suggestions, however this functionality should be reserved for students. Suggestions are:

- 160 characters maximum, spaces included
- Submitted once per day, per course (per tile)

Suggestions should be:

- Concise, on-topic, constructive
- Used to create initiatives
- Focused on things that CAN change
- Balanced

Examples of student suggestions:
GOOD: The real world example that you used to demonstrate the 2nd law of thermodynamics was very helpful for my understanding. More of those would be great!
GOOD: I find the PowerPoint slides have too much information on them. I can’t take notes quickly enough. It would be helpful if you posted them online after class.
BAD: This class is boring!

TEACHING & LEARNING INITIATIVES
Instructors can create a maximum of 14 initiatives. At any one time, only 7 initiatives can be published. Good initiatives should be:

- Statements
- Focused on behaviour
- Formulated using the present tense
- Written to ensure that positive ratings mean positive agreement

Examples of teaching initiatives: (Written from the first person perspective)
GOOD: I provide enough in-class review time to prepare for quizzes and exams.
GOOD: My decision to invite guest speakers in class is an effective way to convey course concepts.
BAD: Do you think I should put less graphs in and move the quiz date?
Examples of learning initiatives: (Written from the second person perspective)
GOOD: You effectively delegate tasks during your group meetings.
GOOD: You are able to explain, in detail, the process of mitosis to a fourth grader.
BAD: You shouldn’t wait until a week before the exam to start studying and finish your assignments.

RESPONSES
Responses are the cumulative number of ratings for a particular initiative. Ratings can be made once per day, per initiative, per course. This means that if a student is enrolled in 5 classes using Bluepulse, there are 5 course tiles each with a maximum of 7 published initiatives, for a total of 35 possible responses each day. Ratings can be:
- Selected (“Not at all” to “A great deal”)
- Changed (once selected)
- Removed (once selected)
Ratings are officially logged as responses each day at 12:00 AM and cannot be changed or removed after this time.

Bubble Chart
The bubble chart provides two pieces of information:
1. The size of the bubble corresponds to the volume of responses for that initiative;
2. The vertical position of the bubble corresponds to the average aggregate rating (score) for that initiative;

Line Chart
The line chart provides information on the change in average aggregate rating (score) over time for an initiative. Users can toggle the graph to display this information over days or weeks.

OTHER FEATURES
• Blocking Flagrant Users: Instructors can block students from making suggestions. Students will not be alerted they have been blocked. This can be done in the Admin Tile.
• Student Suggestions: Instructors can delete, sort, filter, and search by keyword in the Suggestions tab of the Admin Tile. Once student suggestions are deleted, they cannot be retrieved.
• Teaching and Learning Initiatives: Instructors can create, delete, sort, filter, and search by keyword in the Opportunities tab of the Admin Tile. Once an initiative has been deleted, all the data (responses) collected will be deleted and will be irretrievable.
• Personalized Interface: Users can select the size, colour, and icon representing a course tile in the Settings menu.
Scenario #1: Delivering a superior learning experience

A first-year university class in French includes eight modules. By the end of October, the class has covered two modules: counting money and going to a restaurant.

But Professor Emilie Ducharme is getting blank looks from some students whenever she does any simple math or mentions food in French. She isn’t sure how many of her students have really mastered both modules.

The prof decides to take a learning poll to see how her students feel they are doing.

She logs into Bluepulse and creates a learning poll, a statement students can rate to self-assess their progress in a course. Students use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not at all” and 5 means “A great deal.”

Ducharme’s learning poll states, “I am comfortable ordering in a restaurant and paying the bill, all in French.” All students are then prompted to answer, “How much do you agree?”

The next time any student from her class logs into Bluepulse, they see a feedback box with that learning poll, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Learning Poll for Students to Rate
Over the next several days, the responses come in from most of Professor Ducharme's students. As she suspected, more than one-third of her students are not confident enough in French to go to a restaurant.

To find out more, Ducharme broadcasts a message to all students who rated the learning poll at 3 or less, asking why they're not more confident. She doesn’t ever see their names.

When those comments come back, the clear message is that the textbook exercises set in Paris don’t connect to the “real world.” Many students have no chance to use their French, and they say more practical exercises would help them to learn and retain it.

Reviewing the course material

Professor Ducharme can't leave so many students behind. So she announces that the next class will be a review of the first two modules.

But she decides to try something different.

For the next two-hour class, she brings props: French restaurant menus, plastic fruit and vegetables, empty wine bottles, and poker chips to use for euros. And she stops off in the cafeteria to borrow a cart piled with plates, cutlery, napkins, and wineglasses.

She assigns every student a role, either as:

- Customers ordering in a French restaurant
- Waiters setting tables and taking orders
- Sommeliers recommending wine
- Cashiers collecting the bills
- “Gendarmes” (police) who circulate and “fine” any student who lapses into English, five euros per infraction
If a student speaks so much English they can’t pay their bill, they have to leave the restaurant for a few minutes to “wash dishes in the kitchen.”

The students love playing their roles, and the two-hour exercise goes by in an instant.

**Taking another poll**

After the role-playing exercise, Ducharme wonders how well it worked.

So she uses Bluepulse to take another learning poll. This one states, “After doing our role-playing, I feel more comfortable ordering in a restaurant and paying the bill, all in French.” All students are prompted to answer, “How much do you agree?”

This time, it’s clear many students got a lot out of the restaurant exercise.

Compared to the first poll, only half as many answer “Not at all.” And many students comment how much the exercise motivated them to learn more French.

**Adjusting the course**

After seeing this feedback, Professor Ducharme feels her students are ready to move on to the next module. And she’s excited to update the course outline. At the end of every module, she plans to stop doing traditional reviews and start running a real-world scenario. She shares her excitement with some colleagues, and they pool ideas to use for each module.
Delivering an excellent learning experience

In this scenario, Bluepulse ensures that more students have a positive learning experience.

By taking the pulse of her classroom, a professor discovers many students are lagging behind. She reviews the material with a more lively approach, which many students appreciate. Then the prof adjusts the course outline going forward.

Listening and taking effective action ensures that more students have a positive learning experience; this motivates many of them to master the course content.
Scenario #2: Promoting excellence in teaching

It’s near the end of term in a college computer science course, and a student named Emru notices teacher Terry Ogsden speeding up. He used to leave time at the end of class to answer everyone’s questions; now he only leaves time for one or two questions, and sometimes none at all.

Giving instant feedback

Back in his room that evening, Emru logs into Bluepulse and sends the teacher an anonymous suggestion, “We used to have lots of time to ask questions at the end of class? What happened?”

Emru’s comment is sent to Ogsden only; no one else sees it.

Later that evening, when the teacher logs into Bluepulse, he sees Emru’s suggestion, but not his name. Ogsden notices two other anonymous suggestions on the same issue—that there’s not enough time for questions.

Ogsden wonders: How many more students need help to absorb the material? Is he trying to cover too much material too fast?

Digging deeper

Without knowing who the students are, the teacher uses Bluepulse to broadcast a message to all three. He queries them, “Please tell me more. Where do you have questions?”

None of the students see each other’s interaction with the teacher.

Since he’s still online, Emru responds immediately. He even sends in his question on that day’s class. Later that same evening, the other two students reply.

When the teacher checks Bluepulse the next morning, he sees that all three students want time to ask questions. Two send him their questions. One asks for more examples.
Ogsden uses Bluepulse to answer both questions, and to send the third student some links to online code samples. He realizes that in a few minutes, he could answer all his students’ questions, and give them more confidence in the course material.

But how many of his students really need that?

**Rating a teaching initiative**

To find out, Ogsden uses Bluepulse to create a teaching initiative, a statement that every student in class can rate. His initiative says, “There’s plenty of time to ask questions at the end of class.”

The next time any student in that class logs into Bluepulse, they see the new initiative. Each student can rate how much they agree with the initiative on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not at all” and 5 means “A great deal.”

Within a day, almost half the class votes, and Bluepulse displays the results in an easy-to-understand bubble chart, as shown in Figure 2.

Ogsden is surprised to see that many of his students want more time to pose questions after class.

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**Figure 2:** Student Reaction to a Teaching Initiative

(Obscured figure showing a bubble chart with average agreement ratings per initiative.)
The teacher takes action

Osgden figures it’s better for his students to get their questions answered as they go, instead of making coding errors later.

So he decides to stop rushing, and start devoting more time for questions after every class. And he encourages his students to give him feedback on that initiative.

Over time, he watches the student responses go up and down, and he tweaks the balance between lectures and questions. When the feedback on the initiative reaches a steady positive line, he’s found the mix that works best for most students.

Promoting excellence in teaching

In this scenario, Bluepulse helps to detect a teaching issue quickly, and deal with it effectively.

By taking the pulse of his class and getting timely feedback, the teacher knows what to start, stop, and continue doing.

He makes a small adjustment, tests it with ongoing feedback, and gains new insights he can apply to every class he teaches in the future.

Listening to student feedback and taking concrete action to address it makes Osgden’s students more motivated to fill in the end-of-term course evaluations, and more likely to award him higher scores.

Bluepulse generates a win-win for both the teacher and his students.
Scenario #3: Engaging and retaining at-risk students

Geometry is a compulsory subject that Grade 11 student Jamie must pass to graduate from high school. But Jamie is floundering.

For example, he can’t understand $\pi$. The whole idea doesn’t make sense to him. He can’t imagine any practical reason to find the area of a circle.

Jamie is doing well in other subjects, especially Spanish and shop. But if he doesn’t pass geometry, he won’t get out of high school.

Without that, he could experience a lifetime of fewer opportunities. In fact, statistics show that young adults who don’t complete high school earn a median of $7,100 a year less than those who graduate. And they only earn half as much as college grads.¹

Giving spontaneous comments

Sitting by himself on the bus home from school, Jamie logs into Bluepulse and sends a rather hopeless suggestion to his teacher, “I don’t get $\pi$. Why do we gotta learn that? I’m gonna flunk math again.”

That evening, when geometry teacher Brandi Anderson logs into Bluepulse and sees Jamie’s message—although not his name—she’s alarmed.

She knows several students are repeating the class and not doing well on their tests. This must be one of them.

Finding at-risk students

Anderson thinks, “This student doesn’t understand basic geometry. I wonder how many others feel the same way?”

So she creates a learning poll that states, “The material we’re covering on geometry is clear and understandable.” All students are prompted to answer, “How much do you agree?”
The results trickle in over the next several days.

One afternoon Anderson looks at the results on her laptop in the teacher’s lounge. The majority of students say they agree “Quite a bit” (4) or “A great deal” (5). These are clearly students who aren’t likely to fail.

But Anderson sees two students who both disagree strongly with the poll, answering, “Not at all” (1). These are likely students at risk of failing.

Offering extra help

Anderson wants to help those two students before it’s too late, and they flunk their final exam. So she uses Bluepulse to broadcast a message to both of them.

“I’m here to help,” she says. “What if we text? I will never see your name, or tell anyone. You can ask me questions. I will answer. Or suggest pages in your text to review. Or send you neat stuff to look at on YouTube.”

When Jamie sees this message, he perks up. “Wow,” he thinks. “She really cares!”

He texts back eagerly, saying he needs help with $\pi$. He just doesn’t get it.
Coaching anonymously

Anderson moves Jamie into a private one-on-one conversation, as shown in Figure 3. Over the next few weeks, she sends Jamie YouTube videos to watch, websites to visit, and apps to look at. Jamie does everything she suggests.

One YouTube video really helps him understand $\pi$: A homeowner needs to calculate how much paint to buy to recoat his circular swimming pool. Doing this correctly saves him more than $150. “At last,” thinks Jamie, “a practical use for $\pi$!”

A few breakthroughs like this encourage Jamie, and he applies himself to geometry with more energy than ever. When the final exam comes, he passes, clearing the way for him to graduate from high school. Unknown to him, so does the other student getting anonymous one-on-one coaching.

Retaining at-risk students

In this scenario, Bluepulse helps a teacher detect at-risk students, and engage them anonymously for extra coaching and support.

For their part, the students feel like someone is paying attention without singling them out in front of the whole class.

This personalized, but anonymous, attention encourages students to identify areas where they need extra help. And it motivates them to make a concerted effort, instead of giving up and flunking out.

By taking the pulse of the classroom, Bluepulse makes sure no students are left behind.