



CASE STUDY

INCAE Business School Develops Best Practices for 360 Feedback Using Explorance Blue for Academic and Non-academic Surveys

Institution:

INCAE Business School

Location:

Alajuela, Costa Rica; and
Managua, Nicaragua

Details:

1,500 students

Solution:

[Explorance Blue](#)

Challenge:

INCAE needed a streamlined approach for distributing evaluations and creating user-friendly reports for key stakeholders while integrating with other systems.



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Key Benefits

- Automation leading to time and resource efficiencies
- Consolidation of responses into a single repository
- Impact on student completion rates and increased speed/transparency during the process
- Easy-to-use and visually appealing reports for faculty and Dean's office
- Integration with Canvas LMS and other systems

Introducing INCAE Business School

INCAE, a leading business school in Latin America, promotes the region's development by training leaders through its MBAs and Executive Programs. For 60 years, INCAE has worked with businesses, organizations, and professionals to solve problems, develop capacities, and prepare them for the future. It has two campuses in Costa Rica and Nicaragua and offers high-impact online courses.

In 2018, INCAE received AMBA accreditation, positioning itself with the 2% of business schools worldwide that are 'Triple Crown' (AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS) accredited. It is consistently highly ranked for its MBA and Executive Education provision by the FT, including 22nd in the world for Executive Education, second in the world for International Programs and Executive Education, and first in Latin America for its Executive MBA, as well as number one Global MBA in Central and South America in the QS Global MBA Rankings.

Developing Best Practices for 360 Academic Assessments and Program Evaluation

INCAE Business School has been working with Explorance since 2016, when it sought a developed and specialized 360 degree feedback system. Specifically, administrators at the institution wanted a system that would allow them to create the best practices in the region for 360 academic assessments, faculty evaluations of degree programs, and other student surveys.



Addressing Multiple Functionality and Reporting Needs

"A few years ago, INCAE was doing paper evaluations and had designated people to deliver forms to the classroom," said Ana Victoria Alfaro Solis, Director of Academic Records at INCAE Business School. "Back then, a member of the Academic Records team would count the answers of these sheets one-by-one to generate an Excel file with the faculty evaluations."

Although INCAE found a way to automate their 360 assessments, which they developed in-house, the system was not flexible enough to cover all their needs.

"The challenge was born when we decided to look for a tool that would allow us to create user-friendly and easy-to-view reports for our faculty and Dean's office," Ana Victoria continued. "After searching the market for options, contact was made, and from the beginning, Explorance seemed to be the best option for us."

Gabriela Obando, Director of Online Experience in INCAE Business School's Executive Education team, recalled: "We liked Explorance because they worked with schools very similar to INCAE's level. Although we are a school in Central America, the truth is that our approach is more like the ones in the Ivy League in the United States, so Explorance brought that experience and also the possibility of being able to integrate with our wider network of systems. They had what we were looking for, which was to automate reports and distribution because a lot of the degree program evaluations were done physically on paper. And, at that time, we were also thinking forward, 'What are we going to do when the programs are virtual?' So, we thought Explorance was our best option."

A Single Repository of Information

After a successful implementation, INCAE Business School has used Explorance Blue for 360 academic assessments and other surveys, moving from a series of decentralized systems.

"We want to boost the use of Explorance Blue in different areas because we can consolidate the results in a single repository of information," Gabriela explained. "Many evaluations, either 360 or non-academic, were previously on Google Drive, MailChimp, or other free evaluation systems, which did not allow us to process the collected data further. This is something that we are able to do with Explorance Blue, enabling us to provide our key stakeholders with reports quickly."

"An additional benefit is that our software connects with each other. For example, Explorance Blue is integrated with Canvas, our Learning Management System. We also use the data from Blue with Power BI and other data/KPIs visualization software, as this whole network of systems has allowed us to do the work that used to be done by hand."

Student Engagement Tactics Using Explorance Blue

Timesaving is a huge benefit of INCAE's partnership with Explorance. "From the perspective of one who administers the system, we are able to focus our resources on those processes that truly add value, leaving aside all the 'carpentry' work," Gabriela said. "By practically eliminating manual work, we can be much more efficient and be more of a resource for the students. This is one of the main motivations because the user experience is at another level, both from the point of view of the visual interface and its agility."

She continued: "On average, we have over 50 projects open at a time. So, by processing all these responses in Explorance Blue, we can consolidate them and give feedback to the student in a matter of minutes, which previously took many weeks and months. In the specific case of the 360 academic assessment, there is transparency between INCAE and the students. Students can know how their process is going and whether their evaluators received the evaluations. We can answer in real time if asked who has not been evaluated. So the whole student experience has seen a substantial improvement."

In fact, student completion rates are "practically 100%", Gabriela revealed about their 360 assessments with Explorance Blue. "The follow-up we have to do is very little compared to what we had a few years ago. Having this completion rate allows us internally to implement or consider the feedback students give us to improve our academic experience and services. This has created a virtuous circle in which the Explorance team has been a really great contributor," she added.

Adaptable Explorance Blue Offers Other Opportunities for Survey Consolidation

Building on Gabriela's feedback that Explorance has consistently supported INCAE's "adaptations and specific needs," a project is being developed to use the software in 'non-degree' programs. Each year, INCAE has an average of 45 corporate and 60 open programs for approximately 3,500 students. While evaluations are currently run through Canvas, moving these to Explorance Blue will lead to standardization and consolidation of reporting. Other surveys and forms are also being considered for Explorance Blue.

"The support we receive from the Explorance team whenever we need a new functionality, for me, is a 10 out of 10 quality service," Gabriela said. "Then, in general, the whole organization, not only those who use it daily, but all stakeholders, our professors, our deans, our students, people within INCAE who require information, are happy because we are giving them that. Data delivery is effortless and in a visually appealing way, which is a complete 180-degree shift from what we had."

Ana added: "Our reports to our faculty and Dean's offices are now at the expected level. In addition to automating the sending of evaluations and the flexibility of options that Explorance Blue has provided INCAE, it has helped us be at the level of many other international universities. There has been a visual impact, the ease of data analysis, in terms of students being able to fill out their evaluations from a mobile device. Now we are targeting machine learning and data analytics with open comments via a multi-language dictionary."

Conclusion

As a renowned institution committed to leadership and excellence in Latin America, INCAE sought to revolutionize its approach to 360 academic assessments and program evaluations. The strategic partnership with Explorance Blue streamlined their processes and elevated the student experience, further solidifying their Triple Crown accreditation.

By centralizing data and automating previously manual tasks, INCAE has unlocked efficiencies, allowing them to focus resources on value-added activities. The substantial increase in completion rates for academic assessments demonstrates Explorance Blue's user-friendliness and its profound impact on the student experience. In addition, the adaptability and responsive support provided by Explorance have enabled INCAE to innovate and explore new opportunities for survey consolidation continually.

As Higher Education continues to evolve, INCAE's experience provides invaluable guidance for institutions seeking to enhance their educational landscape through innovative solutions.



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