



Compare and select your backchannelling tool

This guide presents a comprehensive comparison table for the Microsoft Forms, MS Teams Q&A, iClicker, Kahoot!, Mentimeter, Piazza, Padlet, Poll Everywhere and Top Hat.

Many instructors and teaching team members already make adjustments to class activities in real time based on student response, whether it's by watching faces/body language to get a sense of what they're understanding, using clickers, or using some of the "**backchanneling**" apps available to get students actively involved in lectures (e.g., Mentimeter, PollEverywhere, Kahoot!).

This guide provides an overview of some popular backchanneling tools (both included in the [U of T Academic Toolbox](#) and [un-vetted](#)) that you could implement in your courses (and not all are typical classroom response tools). There are several features for you to consider, in addition to pedagogical value, including the support model, the cost, and if the tool has passed U of T's security audit. You will also want to consider how much time and energy you have to build and implement these tools.

It is highly recommended that if you would like to implement a new tool, that you leave yourself a few months prior to the beginning of the class to fully test. You are also encouraged to talk to the [Education Technology Office](#).



Learn about the benefits and rationale of implementing online chatting tools in a physical classroom in our blog post: [Let's Chat about Chatting! \(Session Review\)](#)



Before you select your tool, please review the University of Toronto's [Provostial Guidelines on the use of Digital Learning Materials](#).

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1. Overview of Backchanneling Tools

1. **Microsoft Forms** - With Microsoft Forms, you can create surveys, quizzes, and polls, and easily see results as they come in.
 - Free: part of U of T Office365 license.
 - Get Started: [Create a form with Microsoft Forms](#)
2. **Microsoft Teams** (Chat and Q&A) - Use real-time chat and Q&A features in MS Teams that allows for instant messaging, fostering quick and efficient exchanges during meetings without disrupting the main conversation. Integration with other Microsoft 365 applications facilitates easy file sharing, document collaboration, and access to shared resources.
 - Free: part of U of T Office365 license.
 - Get Started: [First things to know about chats in Microsoft Teams](#) | [Chat in Microsoft Teams meetings](#) | [Q&A in Microsoft Teams meetings](#)
3. **iClicker Cloud** - a classroom response system that allows instructors to integrate interactive questions into presentations and collect student responses via mobile devices, laptops, or iClicker remotes.
 - Part of the U of T Academic Toolbox, integrated with Quercus
 - Has a fee associated with it, usually paid for directly by students
 - Get Started: [Enable iClicker Registration in your Course](#)
4. **Kahoot!** - Create a fun learning game in minutes – called ‘kahoots’. You can make a series of multiple choice questions or try our new game – [Jumble](#). The format and number of questions are entirely up to you. Add videos, images and diagrams to your questions to amplify engagement.
 - [Membership plans for Kahoot!](#)
 - Get Started: [How to create a kahoot on your computer](#)
5. **Mentimeter** - Mentimeter is an easy-to-use presentation software. With Mentimeter you can create fun and interactive presentations. We help you make your events, presentations, lectures, and workshops innovative and memorable.
 - [Membership plans for Mentimeter](#)
 - Get Started: [Sign up for Mentimeter](#)
6. **Piazza** - The incredibly easy, completely free Q&A platform. Save time and help students learn using the power of community. Wiki style format enables collaboration in a single space. Features LaTeX editor, highlighted syntax and code blocking.
 - Free: part of U of T Academic Toolbox
 - Get Started: [How to use Piazza in your Quercus Course \(Instructors\)](#) | [How to use Piazza in your Quercus Course \(Students\)](#)
7. **Padlet** - An online collaborative platform that allows users to create and customize virtual boards where they can easily add and organize various content such as text, images, links, and files. The tool is commonly used for collaborative projects, brainstorming, and information sharing.
 - [Membership plans for Padlet](#)



- Get Started: MMYes | [Padlet Knowledgebase](#)

8. **Poll Everywhere** - Poll Everywhere transforms one-sided presentations into two-way conversations with the audience. This web-based audience response system lets you embed interactive activities directly into your presentation. The audience responds on the web or via SMS texting on their phones.
 - [Membership plans for Poll Everywhere](#)
 - Get Started: [Getting started with Poll Everywhere](#)
9. **Top Hat** - Top Hat's student engagement software enhances the course experience by motivating students to learn, participate and ultimately master the content you teach.
 - [Pricing for TopHat](#) (students purchase licenses)
 - Get Started: [Professor - Quick Start Guide](#)



Support for TopHat will be deprecated and the tool will be removed from the Academic Toolbox by May 1, 2024.

2. Backchanneling Tools Comparison Table

Tool	Cost	Part of U of T Academic Toolbox	Integrated with Quercus?	Start Up Effort	Analytics
Microsoft Forms	Free with U of T Enterprise License	Yes; Centrally Supported (U of T)	No	Low	Yes
Microsoft Teams (Chat and Q&A)	Free with U of T Enterprise License	Yes; Centrally Supported (U of T)	No	Medium	Yes
iClicker	Requires student purchase	Yes; Implementation Support (U of T) Technical Support Website (U of T)	Yes	Medium	Yes
Kahoot!	Free for limited features; Pro account for	No; Support available via Developer	No	Low	Yes



Tool	Cost	Part of U of T Academic Toolbox	Integrated with Quercus?	Start Up Effort	Analytics
	full features				
Mentimeter	Free for limited features; Pro account for full features	No; Support available via Developer	No	Medium	Yes
Piazza	Free; Part of the U of T Academic Toolbox	Yes; Centrally Supported (U of T)	No	Low	Yes
Padlet	Free for limited features; Pro account for full features	No; Support available via Developer	No	Medium	Yes
Poll Everywhere	Free for audience size up to 25 people; Paid plans for additional features	No; Support available via Developer	No	Medium	Yes
Top Hat	Requires student purchase	Yes; Centrally Supported (U of T)	Yes	High	Yes



Keep up to date on Quercus Integrations on the [Integration Update](#) website.