

To: All Administrators

From: Mary Ann Heverly
Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Date: August 21, 2003

Re: Conducting surveys using “scannable” survey forms

The Research Office uses a software product (“Remark Office OMR®”) that eliminates the step of manually entering survey data. It works this way:

- using Microsoft Word, a survey is created that contains “bubbles” next to each response option. (These bubbles are small circles that the respondent darkens with a pen or pencil.
- using Remark Office OMR®, a template is created that “trains” the software to recognize the OMR (Optical Mark Reader) bubbles.
- the survey is conducted, and the completed survey forms are scanned.
- the Remark software reads the scanned forms and creates a data file in a spreadsheet format that can be imported into various software products.
- the Research Office imports the file into its statistical software for analysis and reporting. (The Remark software is also capable of analyzing and reporting survey data, grading tests and conducting item analysis.)

This approach to conducting surveys can save time by eliminating the need for manual data entry. However, it is not appropriate for all surveys. For example, we recently developed an employer survey for an academic department. Because the survey would have required more time and effort to plan and set up in Remark than would be needed to manually enter the data, we decided not to develop it as a “scannable” survey.

Although all surveys require time to develop, create, and pilot test, conducting a survey using Remark Office OMR® requires even more planning and development than usual. Without careful planning and development, several problems could occur:

- the Remark software might be unable to read the bubbles properly. This could necessitate manual data entry. However, the survey responses would require manual coding prior to data entry, thus making the data entry process more time consuming than usual.
- survey respondents might not follow directions. Various errors can occur. When they do occur, the scanning process is interrupted. The software issues an error message and waits for the operator to correct the error. This can result in a time consuming process of scanning surveys.

Careful planning of surveys prevents most of these problems and takes advantage of the Remark Office OMR® capability to process surveys efficiently.

If you would like to explore using this method of conducting a survey, please contact the Research Office (write us or call extension 5106 or send an e-mail to Karen McGinn).

From the Research Office

GUIDE TO PREPARATION OF "SCANNABLE" SURVEYS

1. Contact the Research Office for survey samples/templates/guidelines.
 - Ask Karen McGinn to test the survey to check if the scanning process is working properly.
2. Duplicate survey on white paper.
 - Please send Karen McGinn a blank copy of your duplicated survey.

(Please do not use surveys left over from previously duplicated batches. Each batch of surveys needs its own template for scanning.)

3. Send Mary Ann Heverly an electronic copy of the survey.
4. If there are multiple sheets in the survey, staple sheets. Number stapled surveys on front sheet.
5. When administering the survey, stress the need for following directions: **use pencil to darken circle of response choice. Erase mistakes completely.**
6. If you have questions, please call Karen McGinn at X5106.
7. Do you have work study help? Work study help can type responses to open-ended questions.

We appreciate your cooperation.