Writing Effective Survey Questions

There are three main types of survey questions. The following section provides information about each type.

1. Multiple Choice
   - Two or more responses; May offer a “yes/no” response or a series of responses.
   - Good questions are specific as to activity, time, and response options.
     - Single item: How many residence hall events did you attend this quarter?
       - (response options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more)
     - Bank of items: How many of each of the following events did you attend this quarter?
       - (response options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more)
       - residence hall events
       - club meetings
       - parties
     - Categorical/Demographic: In which residence hall do you reside?
       - (response options: Dykstra, Reiber, Delta Terrace)
     - Factual/Test Question: What is the correct answer to the following problem: 2+2=
       - (response options: 4, 6, 7, 8)

2. Rating:
   - Allow respondents to indicate their feelings on a scale (e.g. agree/disagree, satisfied/dissatisfied).
   - Response options should include a “not applicable” (N/A) response if there was a chance the respondent may not have had the experience.
   - Response options can include a “neutral” response worded as “neither ______ nor ______.”
     - Single Item: “How satisfied were you with the food in the dining hall this quarter?”
       - (responses: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, N/A)
     - Bank of Items: “Think about the last time you ate a meal in the dining hall, and indicate your agreement with the following statements:
       - (responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A)
       - “The dining hall was clean,”
       - “It was easy to find a place to sit,”
       - “There was enough food available”

3. Open-ended:
   - Allow a respondent to share about their experiences in their own words.
   - Should be written to allow individuals to elaborate.
   - “What other services would you like the residence hall to provide?”
   - “How can dining services improve the breakfast experience?”

For more information check out the following documents, located at http://www.sairo.ucla.edu/AssessmentSupport.html

- Worksheet for Assessment Planning
- Matching Survey Scales to Desired Outcomes
- Survey Planning Checklist
- Links to Additional Resources