Paper or PICA? Turnaround Time.

Feedback about courses is most useful if it arrives in time to make improvements in the next course.

Turnaround time is not an issue in courses evaluated in PICA. The evaluations are made available to the faculty and the departments on the day after final grades are due in the registrar’s office. This is the earliest that evaluation results can be disseminated, so, in fact, there is no turnaround time for evaluations done in PICA.

The turnaround time for paper evaluations is determined by several factors. MARS has no control over when evaluations are sent delivered from the department to MARS. All factors listed here are those that affect turnaround time after MARS receives the forms.

1. Time of arrival. Forms that arrive during the final exam period have lower priority than final exams and might not be processed until after finals.
2. Length of the queue. Forms are processed on a first-come/first-served basis.
3. Condition of the forms and course packets. Header sheets need to be bubbled correctly. Packets need to be in order by course number. All forms in the packet need to be facing the same way behind the header.
4. Scanning time. The high speed scanner is rated at 6000 forms per hour. In spring 2011, 119,268 forms were scanned. If the hopper were large enough to hold that many forms, the scanner would have been in continuous operation for twenty hours.
5. Error-checking and editing. The header sheet information needs to match up with the correct courses and instructors. A combination of computer and human effort is required to check the forms and make corrections.
6. Analysis and reporting. Once the forms are scanned and any errors corrected, the analysis runs quickly.
7. Printing reports. Reports are printed either at MARS on a desktop printer, or at Teague on the high speed printer. Teague is faster, but the forms are not delivered until the next day.
8. Stuffing the reports into the envelopes for the instructors. This is done manually and large departments require more time and effort than small departments.

In spring 2011, the turnaround time for paper evaluations, ranged from 0 working days to 10 working days with a median turnaround of 6 working days. The forms were received and reports stuffed in envelopes in the same day for four departments.