



STUDENT AFFAIRS

STEP BY STEP: FOCUS GROUP

What is a Focus Group?

A focus group is a small group of 6–10 people. This group participates in an open discussion led by a facilitator.

Focus Group Goal:

To generate as many different ideas and opinions as possible

Focus Group Guidelines

1. Each session is 45–90 minutes in length
2. Need to have 3 to 4 sessions with different participants
3. Assign the same topic to each session with 10–12 predetermined questions
4. Questions will not be seen by focus group participants
5. Questions should be:
 - a. Open–Ended
 - b. Focused on one dimension
 - c. Short and to the point
6. Provide a facilitator/moderator guide for the leader of the focus group

Three Types of Focus Group Questions

1. Engagement Questions– Introduce the topic for discussion
 - a. Ex. What is your favorite aspect of the program?
2. Exploration Questions– The “meat” of the discussion
 - a. Ex. What are the Pros and Cons of the program?
3. Exit Questions–Check for anything that is missed
 - a. Ex. Is there anything else you would like to say about the program?

Focus Group Participants:

Participants are chosen based upon the purpose of the study. All participants should have a shared experience. Participants may be invited to participate in a focus group by nomination, random selection, members of the same group/role, or volunteers. All participants should complete a consent form before participation.

Collect & Analyze the Data

1. Practice active listening
2. Take notes during the focus group discussion
3. Record the focus group sessions
4. Transcribe the sessions
5. Compile all responses from the focus group sessions
6. Identify common categories or themes (need to complete this step for each focus group session)
7. Write summaries of each category/theme
8. Review themes to:
 - a. Determine major findings
 - b. Make conclusions/recommendations
 - c. Write executive summary
 - d. Use results to make improvements and inform decisions