

Valencia College

Focus Group Facilitator Training Outline

Welcome (5min)

The purpose of this facilitator training—

1. Introduce a standard format for facilitating focus groups as a form of assessment.
2. Create opportunities to practice the skills necessary for facilitating focus groups that produce quality data.
3. Provide clear guidelines for confidentiality and reporting assessment information.

As a result of this training participants will be able to...

- work with other departments to support improvements to learning based programs.
- create environments in which information about thinking processes is shared.

Introduction—Discussion of Roles (25 min)

Distribute the Facilitator Guide.

1. Overview the role of facilitator and note taker and the purpose statements.
2. Each trainee prepares an introduction and delivers as the facilitator.
3. Other trainees evaluate the introduction following the guidelines in the introduction section of the Facilitator Guide.

Skills Development—Maintaining Focus (10min)

1. Read through the Discussion Guide highlighting a few areas where the facilitator should make sure every participant gives a response.
2. Trainees practice taking notes during example scenarios.
3. Trainer leads brief discussion of redirection techniques to keep the conversation focused on the discussion questions (thank the speaker, invite another participant to respond, shift the focus to one of the probe questions for more direct feedback, and/or use the “interest of time” to move to the next question).

Training Module—Managing Time (60min)

1. Trainees are assigned to lead one of the sections of the Discussion Guide.
2. The trainee leading “Their story” facilitates for 10 min, the trainee leading “Document what students learned” facilitates for 15min, and the trainee leading “Reflect on the impact” facilitates for 20 min. Facilitators take notes on board or flip pad. (Adapt timing as needed to 5 min per trainee).
3. Select trainees take notes when they are not facilitating using the Notes Template and ask any follow-up questions while other trainees act as focus group participants.

The Research Questions—Debrief (10min)

1. Discuss notes from the training module that fit with each of the research questions.
2. During the debrief, allow for silence. Trainer emphasizes silence is okay, and facilitators can ask participants to jot down their responses before opening the floor.
3. Trainer discusses report as listed in the “Afterwards” section of the Facilitator Guide.

Next Steps—Scheduling (10 min)

Trainees work with the trainer to schedule days and times for upcoming Focus Groups.

Valencia College
SEE UCF – Scenario

Scenario #1 Dominant Speaker

The students have been asked:

“Upon transferring to UCF, what are some ways you can get involved on campus or within your intended major?”

Student A—

I think I really want to get involved in student government. I like the fact that you get to make actual decisions for UCF in if you are in SGA. I mean SGA gets to make decisions on how UCF spends its money and I think that is really cool. I think that is the best way to get involved on campus at UCF. I also think running for SGA will give me the opportunity to meet and talk to a lot of new people when I get to UCF. I may even try for more leadership roles at UCF like the Homecoming Committee or something like that. I have a friend that goes to UCF and she said that the Homecoming committee gets to, like, pick who comes to Homecoming like the entertainers and stuff and I think that would be really fun. I also just want to get a lot of leadership experience because I think I might want to go into politics one day.

Student B—

Well I think I might want to join a professional organization for teaching to get more information about the career.

Student A—

But I don't think you should just get involved just to get information. You need to get involved to do things and to get more experiences. You should really look into clubs that do activities and stuff rather than just professional organizations that will only send you an email newsletter or something like that.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- What was it like to try to capture all of that?
- Were you able to document an answer to the question?
- How could the probe questions have helped?

Valencia College New Student Experience – Scenario

Scenario #1 Dominant Speaker

The students have been asked:

“What are some connections you have made between your values, goals, interests and/or strengths and your academic plans?”

Student A—

I have always wanted to be a teacher, ever since I was in the fourth grade, and once I got to college I thought a lot of these courses aren't really relevant. I mean, how much Biology are my 4th grade students going to have to know, unless they add it to the state standardized tests or something. Anyway, it wasn't until we were completing the MEP assignment that I really looked at the kinds of courses I need to take. There are a lot of things in the degree at UCF that I didn't think I would have to do, but in my research I found out they were on the list. And, I learned there are prerequisites that I wasn't even going to register for at Valencia. These will be required before I can go on to take other education classes.

Student B—

When I wrote about my career in nursing I found out that I can end up waitlisted.

Student A—

You can look at all the prerequisites and make sure you are taking those. I mean, I don't have very much interest in nursing, but I hear there are a lot of prerequisites. You had to do the research on two universities for the MEP assignment so you know that you can start taking the classes now that would help you get started in the programs.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- What was it like to try to capture all of that?
- Were you able to document an answer to the question?
- How could the probe questions have helped?

Valencia College Career Services— Scenario

Scenario #1 Dominant Speaker

The students have been asked:

“How did you learn about the Career Center?”

Student A—

I knew all about it, even though I've never been. Since the first day when I came to orientation I make a point of knowing everything the college has to offer. I think they even talked about it in orientation, so how could you not know. I mean anyone who has ever been to a fair out there on the lawn, they have all the brochures and tables with people telling you anything you still don't know about Valencia so I don't see how anyone could not know.

Student B—

I don't think I knew. I guess I just thought you go to an advisor for that.

Student A—

So advisors are for your registration and stuff like that, but this would be more for choosing your job. I've never been to an advisor, but I don't think they can tell you much about the job market. I've never been to the Career Center either, but that's because I know about the job I want and I just need to get these specific credits and I'll be able to make a good salary right as soon as I finish my degree.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- What was it like to try to capture all of that?
 - Were you able to document an answer to the question?
 - How could the probe questions have helped?
-

Valencia College Career Services – Scenario

Scenario #2 Speaker Volley

The students have been asked:

“How did you feel right after you left the Career Center?”

Student Y—

I was so excited. I mean I felt like the point of college was actually starting to make some sense. I still can't see all the reasons to take all these classes, but I could tell there was a clearer way to get to what I want to do.

Student Z—

I didn't get any of that. I just got confused because I left with more options.

Student Y—

Well that means you didn't plan ahead and prepare before going to the center.

Student Z—

I think the point of a service at the college is that you can show up and get the help without knowing what you are doing already.

Student Y—

It is college, so I think that they expect you to do some prep work.

Student Z—

Then they need to tell us that when we sign up to come.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- Which techniques for facilitating could help here?
 - Whose role do you think that is?
 - When would have been the best time to step in?
-

Valencia College LifeMap Student Handbook – Scenario

Scenario #2 Speaker Volley

The students have been asked:

“How much of the LifeMap Student Handbook have you used?”

Student Y—

I use it all the time. We started using it for class and my professor went through it and told us about all the sections. I use it a lot for reference. But I really thought the, sort of, self-discovery sections were really helpful.

Student Z—

I really didn't think those sections were that helpful. I already knew what I wanted to do.

Student Y—

That section was just designed to make sure what you thought you wanted matched up with what you really wanted to do.

Student Z—

But I think we are in college and we are adults and we should be able to figure out what we want to do for ourselves. I really don't think doing some worksheet is going to help that.

Student Y—

Not everyone is in the same place when they get here. I wasn't really sure which route I wanted to take and I thought the worksheets were really helpful to figure that out.

Student Z—

I just think that we should be adults and not be dependent on a worksheet to tell us what to do.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- Which techniques for facilitating could help here?
- Whose role do you think that is?
- When would have been the best time to step in?

Valencia College Community Inclusion – Scenario

Scenario #2 Dynamic Interchanges

The participants have been asked to:

Sort your cards into two groups by those that make you *feel* more on the right and those that make you *think* more on the left. There is no requirement that they be equal size groups. You can turn over any that don't fit either group. Please leave them spread out at we take photos of your selections.

Tell us why you chose the ones on the feeling side.

Participant Y—

This one catches your eye. Since my eyes attached to it I felt like it was drawing me in without thinking. It was all about movement.

Participant Z—

I didn't see it that way. Since it says to step in I was immediately starting to think about what I would step into, and how to do that safely. Or if I even would.

Participant Y—

I don't think it really invites you to think that hard about it. It's kind of just fun looking. Gives you a good feeling.

Participant Z—

Well, I really only picked two that gave me any feeling and those are the ones that have colors other than red or yellow.

Participant Y—

I agree that those are less attractive to the eye, but they can still make you feel first or even shock you with that yellow, like that one that is almost a construction warning. But then when it says "Be Me" it's not necessarily making me think too hard about how to do that.

Participant Z—

Red and yellow is just classic Valencia. That's why some of those were my least favorite.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- Which techniques for facilitating could help here?
- Whose role do you think that is?
- When would have been the best time to step in

Valencia College New Student Experience – Scenario

Scenario #2 Speaker Volley

The students have been asked:

“Thinking about the co-curricular activities you have completed, how did the experiences impact your ability to communicate with diverse groups?”

Student Y—

I had a really interesting discussion at the Ben and Jerry’s event where I met this person who works in Student Development. They were able to tell me how many different student groups they work with. I didn’t really talk to a lot of people that night, but this one person made me feel like I had met so many other people with so many perspectives I never knew existed at Valencia.

Student Z—

I went to Ben and Jerry’s too, and I talked to a lot of people but I didn’t get anything out of it.

Student Y—

Well talking to a lot of people means there isn’t much time for depth.

Student Z—

I don’t think they invited all those people from the college if they didn’t expect us to meet them.

Student Y—

I think they wanted us to find out how we interact.

Student Z—

I think I know how I interact.

After trying to take notes during this set of responses...

- Which techniques for facilitating could help here?
- Whose role do you think that is?
- When would have been the best time to step in?