



# Structured Focus Groups for Course and Program Assessment

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# Outline

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- What Are Focus Groups? Components
- Proces: Before, During And After
- Tools To Gather The Data
- Analysis And Summary
- Examples Of Use

# What are Focus Groups?

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- Highly structured
- Interactive
- Aimed at volunteering students
- Variety of capturing techniques for qualitative data



# Components

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- Series of open ended questions for discussion/ **Transcript**
- Survey/ **Survey Data**
- Index card activity/ **Histogram**
- Roundtable/ Ranking Activity/ **Color Coded Table**

# Before

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- Discuss the objectives and the requested area of assessment
- Prepare the questions and activities (carefull!)
- Design logistics: time and place
- Notify students

# Open-ended questions

<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Welcome!</b></p> <p>Legal Studies Major Focus Group</p> 	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>Please write one describe your studies major or</p> <p>... a number from 1 (highest) to describe the major.</p>	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Expectations</b></p> <p>... our expectations Studies major? ... expectations met?</p>	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Table Activity)</b></p>	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Teaching Methods</b></p> <p>... teaching methods used in Legal courses helped you learn? ... provide examples.</p>	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Anything Else?</b></p> <p>... other comments I like to make the Legal Studies major?</p>	<p>United States Air Force Academy Center for Educational Excellence</p> <p><b>Contribution End!</b></p>
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Remember to set up a recorder for the discussion!

# Survey

Survey

Assigned Number:

1. Why do you think your instructor assigns preflight?
2. How are the preflights used during class time?
3. Do you think that doing the preflight is a good use of your study/preparation time? Please explain.
4. Compared to your other activities, what is your estimate (hours spent or percentage of your time) for time spent with physics?
5. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = lowest and 5 = highest) rate your amount of effort in the course:  
Compared to other students in your section? 1 2 3 4 5  
Compared to your other courses? 1 2 3 4 5  
Compared to the amount of effort you might have extended? 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Do computer network problems impact your work in this course? If so, what percent of the time?

0-10% 11-20% 21-30% 31-40% 41-50% More?

Comments:

7. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = lowest and 5 = highest) how would you rate the effectiveness of the evaluation methods (quizzes, papers, exams, etc.) used in the course? Please add explanatory comments.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

# Tools: Index card

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Index Card

Assigned # 3

word/phrase: .....

number from 1-5: (1=low, 5=high): .....

# Roundtable/ Ranking

Index card numbers (top right corner): \_\_\_\_\_

## Roundtable Activity # 1

Passing this sheet of paper rapidly from one person to another, please jot down all of the relevant strengths, saying them aloud as you write.

Working as a team, rank order the strengths you identified, with the most important ones at the top of your list. Rank at least three by writing the numbers "1," "2," and "3" next to the strengths you identified.

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## Roundtable Activity # 2

Passing this sheet of paper rapidly from one person to another, please jot down all of the "negatives" – the things you would change, saying them aloud as you write.

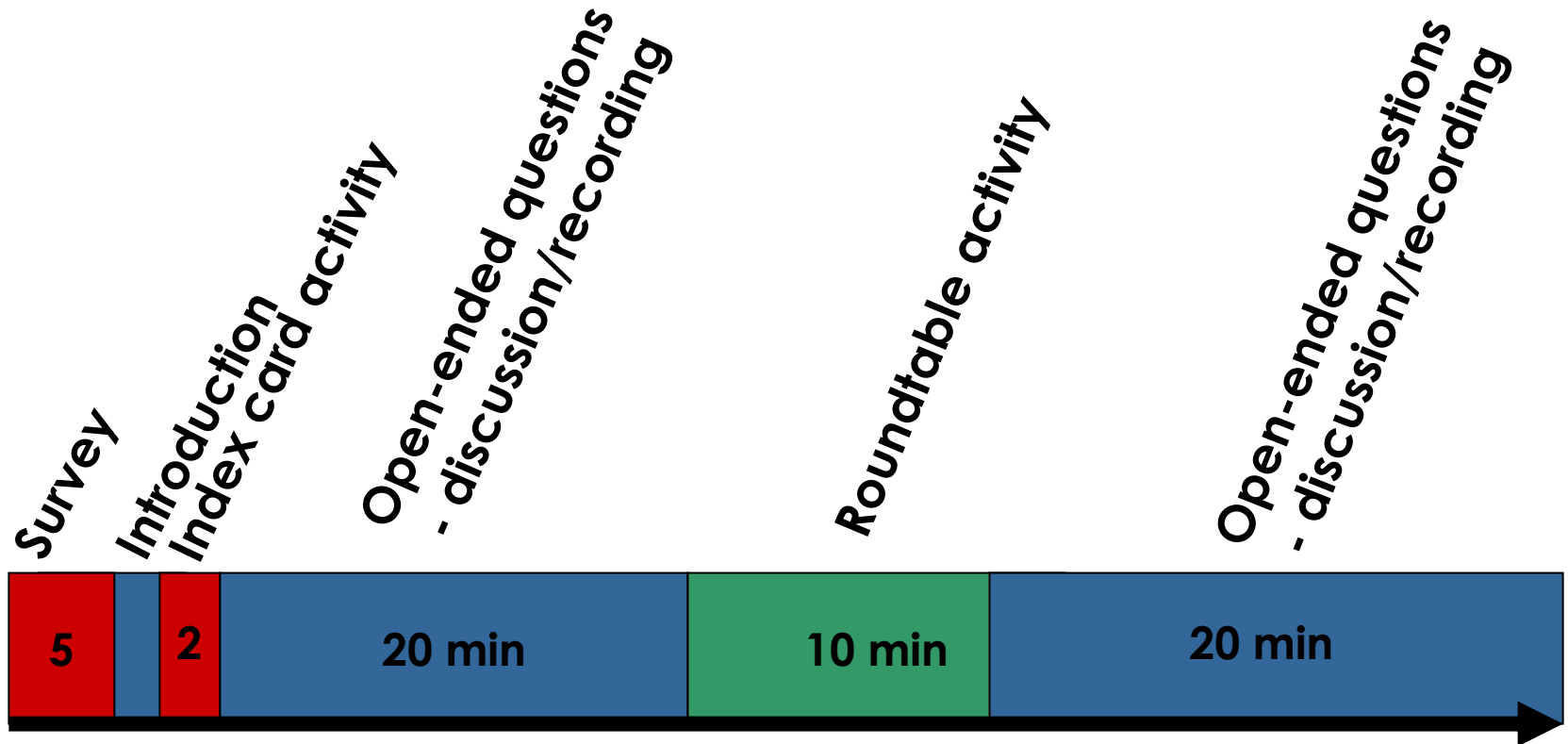
Working as a team, rank order the weaknesses you identified, with the most significant ones at the top of your list. Rank at least three by writing the numbers "1," "2," and "3" next to the weaknesses you identified.

# During

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- Set up early
- Ease the students
- Introduce the number system and follow the protocol of the FG
- Actively moderate and probe responses during discussion and activities
- Thank students

# Timeline



50-60 minutes

# After

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- Gather and combine the data
- Transform the data (transcript, histogram, colorcoded table)

[http://teaching.unr.edu/etp/Focus\\_Groups/focusgroups.html](http://teaching.unr.edu/etp/Focus_Groups/focusgroups.html)

- Make and present a summary
- Discuss and help implement changes
- Encourage further Focus Groups for longitudinal data

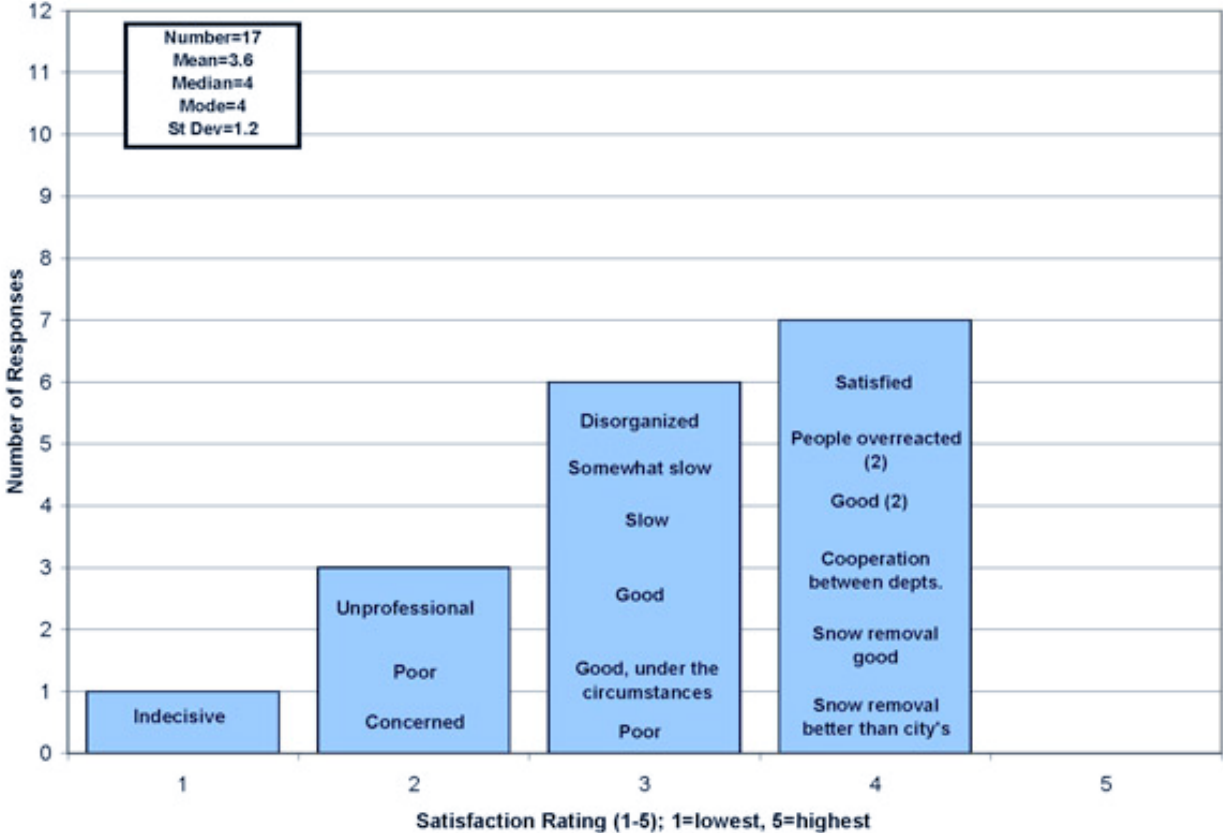
# Transcripts

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- Prepared independently
- \$75-80 per transcription
- Final in-house edits

# Histogram

UNR Weather Emergency Committee Focus Group  
Friday, January 28, 2005



# Color-coded Table

UNR Weather Emergency Committee  
Focus Group  
January 28, 2005

Rank-Ordering of Strengths			
Team One	Team Two	Team Three	Team Four
Delay of closure decision	Continuous effort to remove snow	B & G response	Faculty/staff e-mail
Snow clearance	Use of outside contractors	Departmental cooperation	Decision to close
Departmental cooperation	Snow clearance	Notification of campus closure	Police weather alerts
Continuous effort to remove snow	Got to use snow gear	Snow removal	Good procedures

Rank-Ordering of Weaknesses			
Team One	Team Two	Team Three	Team Four
Communication	Decision to close made too late	Closure delay led to injuries	Decision to close campus not timely
Overreaction	B & G not given sufficient opportunity to clear campus	Communication	Communication
Too many employee expectations	Poor prioritization for clearing areas	Lack of cleared parking	Lack of parking
City could do a better job at clearing	Communication		Fielding questions reduced productivity

Thread	Color Code	Number of Occurrences
Snow Clearance		5
Campus Response		5
Coordination		4
Other		1

Thread	Color Code	Number of Occurrences
Communication		4
Decisiveness		4
Prioritization/Parking		3
Clearing Operations		2
Other		2

# Quick Course Diagnosis (QCD)

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- “Bright Idea” at POD 2001
- Short version of Focus Groups: only Index Card and Round Table Activities
- Longitudinal assessment

# Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)

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- 30 min in-class interview with students
- Students discuss questions in groups
- Strengths and weaknesses backed by concrete examples and suggestions for changes
- Time and labor intense

# Purpose/Examples of Use

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- Assessment and accreditation
- Curriculum/program/course review
- Marketing/management
- Administration
- Testing new ideas/products/services

# Summary

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- Facilitators ensure the appropriate data collection
- Lively and mutually enjoyed activity
- Students feel they have a voice
- Rich info, concrete anecdotes, subtleties of meaning and deep explanation is generated
- More efficient than single interviews and more productive than surveys

# Thank you!

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# Questions?