

## Focus Group Guidelines

### Tips:

- Held with a group of ten to twelve people
- Of 1 ½ to 2 hours in duration
- Two people should conduct the focus group - one to interview/manage the discussion and one to take notes and keep time
- Make a clear statement about the confidentiality of the info provided by participants and explain what will be done with the info when collected
- Make sure that all people participate in the discussion - and that one person does not dominate the discussion
- Record good quotes verbatim if they will be useful for reports
- When closing, summarize key issues that were addressed, explain that the focus group records will be returned to them to check for accuracy, explain what actions will be taken, and how this all will be communicated.

### Types of questions:

- Open probe: Questions that begin with how, what, which, when, and who. Effective to encourage responsiveness and reduce defensiveness.
- Compare and contrast: Questions which ask the other person to look for and discuss similarities or differences, these types of questions help the responder to develop and express ideas while allowing the interviewer to steer the direction of the interview.
- Extension: A question that builds on information already provided.
- Clarification: Questions designed to get further explanation about something already said.
- Laundry list: Techniques where the interviewer provides a list of choice options to the interviewee. This encourages the other person to see beyond a single choice and to state a preference.

### Specific questions (plan for 30-45 mins on the assessment portion):

- 5 min:
- When did you learn about PLOs in the course of your program?
- How did your instructors approach communication about program learning outcomes? In what way did your instructors speak with the class about learning goals for the course and how they relate to the overall program learning goals? How did they communicate which assignments in the course align with which program learning goals?

\*Hand out the program learning outcomes but do not show them curriculum map\*

- 20-30 min at most:
- Are there any learning outcomes that you do not recall being addressed at all in your program across any of these courses?
- How well do you feel that your coursework addressed the learning outcomes? Give examples of assignments you felt could be improved in addressing a learning outcome.
- How useful/meaningful do you feel the learning outcomes themselves were?

- Are there any topics you think should be assessed that perhaps were taught in your courses and are not listed as learning outcomes? Is there anything you wish would have been listed in the learning outcomes and developed in the curriculum that you did not learn about?

\*At the end to close: Give students blank curriculum map to fill out and ask them to identify which course(s) (if any) addressed each learning outcome\* (5-10 min)