



THE ART OF QUESTIONING

SUNY SCI Skills Workshop

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RYAN RIBEIRO

Assistant Director for
Student Conduct Practice
SUNY Student Conduct
Institute



Learning Objectives

Keep these objectives in mind as we move through today's training.



Explain the purpose of an investigation, traits of a competent investigator, and the essential characteristics of a successful investigation.



Design effective questions to elicit the most helpful and conclusive testimony and overall information.



Recognize common challenges in the investigation process and identify the most effective solutions.



Demonstrate active listening skills to formulate questions.

Training Overview

1. Purpose & the competent investigator
2. Effective question development
3. The Exemplary Interview Pyramid
4. Challenges
5. Active Listening
6. Q&A





0 response submitted

What are some essential characteristics of a successful investigation?

Scan the QR or use
link to join



<https://forms.office.com/r/PKPYq2HxAB>

 Copy link



Waiting for response...

Responses will be displayed as a word cloud

Wordcloud

All responses



1 of 3



Purpose of Investigations

- Collect most accurate, relevant, reliable information about an incident
- Investigations are neutral, fact-finding processes
- Organize investigative materials for decision-makers to make determinations

Traits of the Competent Investigator

- Free from conflicts of interest or bias
- Transparent & communicative
- Trusting, but committed to verification
- Organized & prepared
- Patient & confident
- Prompt & timely



Successful Investigators ...

- Ensure investigations are adequate, reliable, and impartial (language from Title IX)
- Take ownership of the process
- Collect evidence from multiple sources
- Practice transparency



Build rapport

- Leverage small talk skills
- Ask interviewees about themselves
- Assess how interviewee expresses themselves
- Offer basic amenities (water, tissues, breaks, etc.)

KINDS OF QUESTIONS

OPEN-ENDED

- Straightforward, broad
- Lets the interviewee talk
- Encourages rich, full answers
- How, What, Why

CLOSED

- Produces curt answers
- Useful with uncooperative or reluctant interviewees
- Yes or No, one-word answers
- Do, Were, Is/Was

PROBING

- More elaborate explanations for previously answered questions
- “Dive Deeper”
- Elicit any kind of response

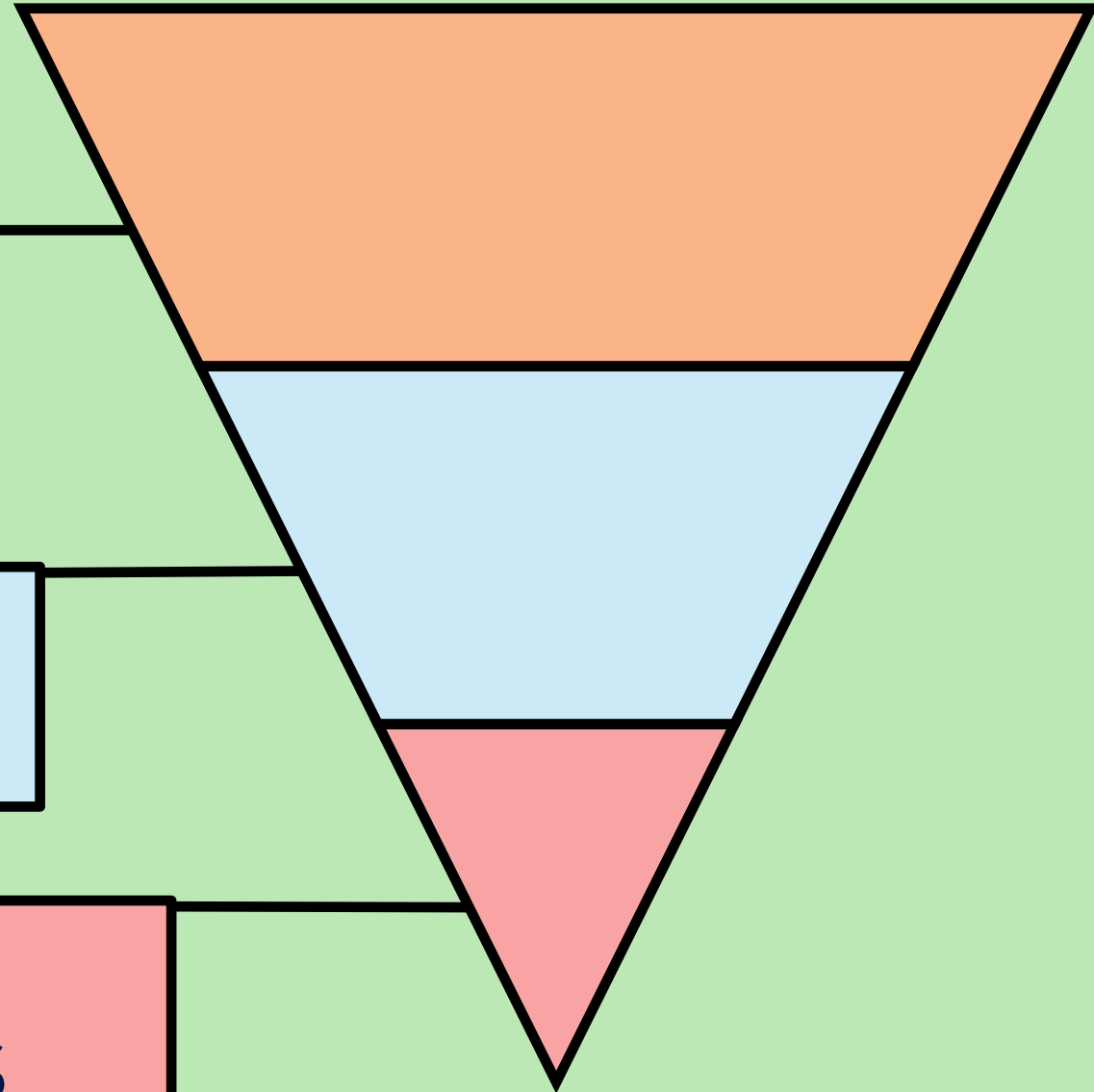


INTERVIEW PYRAMID

GENERAL
QUESTIONS

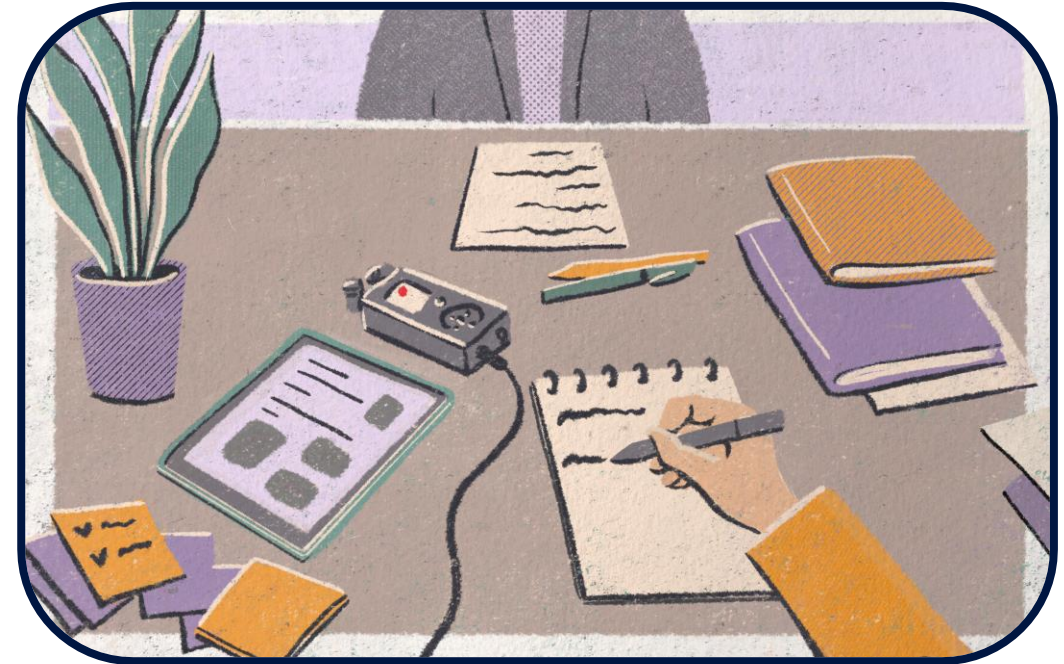
PROBING
QUESTIONS

SPECIFIC
QUESTIONS



General Questions

- Establishes ground rules/tone
- Allows interviewee to provide their view of events and get comfortable
- Permits interviewer to demonstrate competence & trustworthiness
- Utilizes open-ended & fact-finding questions
- Prompts long-winded responses & digressions



Probing Questions

- Sets up a line of inquiry
- Explores areas of contradiction
- Confirm undisputed facts
- Examine disputed facts
- Inquires about evidence specifically
- Dives deeper into surface-level information
- Open-ended questions are very helpful here
- *Allow interviewee to complete train-of-thought before interjecting*



Specific Questions

- Inquires about specific claims or answers made during interview
- Toughest questions come last
- Very narrow in scope
- Revert to closed questions to nail down specifics



Behind the question ...

Ultimately, the interviewer should have a reason as to why a question is being asked:

- Why is the question necessary?
- What information does this question intend to discover?
- Is it reasonable to presume this interviewee to have the desired information?

Breakout Activity – Question Development

Read the incident reports in the training materials (two) and based on your group number, develop at least ten (10) questions directed to the corresponding individual.

These questions should follow the template of the inverted pyramid (located in training materials) and should include at minimum five (5) open-ended questions.

When developing questions, participants should also include the reasoning behind the question.

Select a designated speaker for your group for share out after the breakout room.

1	Elliot Kirkham
2	Barrett Milosevich
3	Patric Kolluri
4	Hailee Lewis
5	Leo Neumeister
6	Shepard Gonday
7	Natalie Dupree
8	Deja Watkins
9	Jenn Rhodes
10	Officer Jackson Taylor

Common challenges

- Failure to prepare
- Difficulty communicating
- Presence of conflicts of interest or bias
- Emotionally-charged situations
- Contradictory or conflicting testimony

Failure to prepare

- Know what the allegations are
- Know the general circumstances beforehand
- Plan a rundown of your questions/objectives
- Gather all available pieces of information prior to asking any questions





Difficulty communicating

- Communicate role & interview objective
- Let parties share their own information
- Keep discussion informal
 - Note demeanor
- Diffuse tension whenever possible
- Repeat or paraphrase to seek clarification
- Follow-up questions
- Encourage engagement without judgment

Conflicts of interest or bias

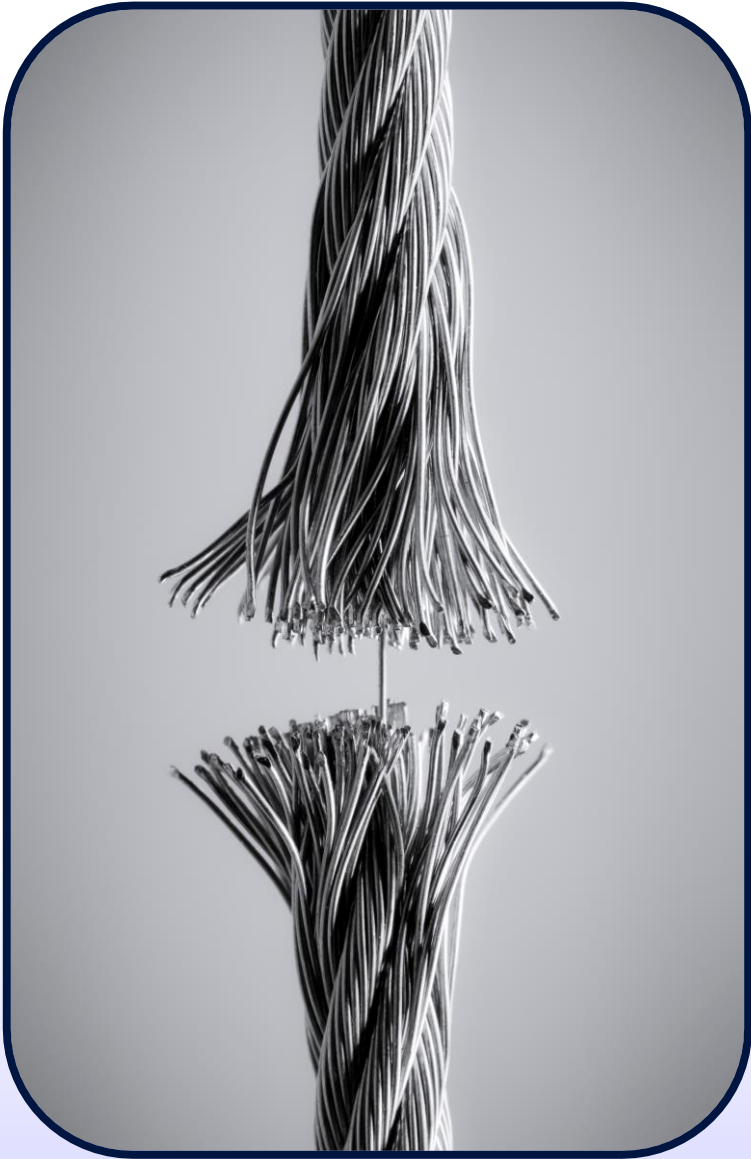
- Demonstrate neutrality
- Maintain presumption of non-responsibility
- Assume parties are being forthcoming
- DON'T apologize for your job

If you cannot demonstrate neutrality or a lack of bias, withdraw as investigator



Emotionally charged situations

- Maintain professionalism
- Offer pauses or breaks to allow emotions to settle
- Calm, empathetic questions
- Focus on facts
- Remind individuals of their rights, including the right to an advisor



Contradictory or conflicting testimony

- Exercise caution
- Highlight discrepancies
- Use directed follow-up questions to address constructive inconsistencies
- Allow interviewees opportunities to address discrepancies or inconsistencies, maintaining interview integrity



GENERALLY, AVOID ...



- Poorly framed or biased questions
- Repetitive questions
- Badgering or pestering the interviewee
- Jumping from one topic to another
- Violating decorum
- Accusatory or leading questions



C R E E P

A TECHNIQUE FOR ACTIVE LISTENERS

Concentrate attention on interviewee

- Maintain focus on interviewee
- Demonstrate your commitment to the discussion and your objective



Recognize verbal/non-verbal cues

- Keep an eye out for signs of discomfort
- Maintain an open body, face during interview
- Demonstrate engagement (eye contact, nodding your head, etc.)
- Avoid interrupting as much as possible



Eliminate distractions



- Keep schedule open on both ends of your interview
- Put phone away, silence everything (smart watch, etc.)
- Utilize signage indicating Do Not Disturb outside office and physical space

Exercise patience

- Silence is not your enemy
- Leave space to allow interviewees time to think, collect thoughts
- Process information to consider next question to ask, or pivot to another topic



Paraphrase information shared

- Reiterate their responses to ensure your comprehension
- Adopt language used by interviewee
- Allow for corrections by interviewee



LISTENING TO ASK QUESTIONS

1. Select a person who will narrate an impromptu 1-2 minute speech related to the instructions for your group.
2. This person will not give specific information that will tip the listeners to a specific answer,
3. Remaining breakout room listens to speech.
4. Asks questions of the person in order to make a suggestion at the end of the breakout room.
5. Make a recommendation for the speaker based on their answers after about 5 minutes.



TIME FOR AN ATTENDANCE CHECK

1. If you are brought to a login page, please sign into your SUNY SCI account using the **local login function**, this should bring you to the attendance check page where you can begin the quiz.
2. Complete the attendance check survey in the **same browser** in which you are accessing this Zoom call.
3. Log into your **SUNY SCI Dashboard**, scroll down to the **My Courses** section, select today's L@D course and choose the **Attendance Checks** module where you can complete the check. 😊
4. If you experience issues, please direct message @StudentConductInstitute in the Zoom chat or email STUDENTCONDUCTINSTITUTE@SUNY.EDU.

**ATTENDANCE QUIZ APPEARS DURING THE TRAINING BREAK FOR A LIMITED TIME.
PLEASE TAKE THE QUIZ IMMEDIATELY ONCE IT IS POSTED IN THE CHAT.**