

Overview of Qualitative Research Methods for Assessing the Core Competencies

The Research Question (RQ) defines the topic of interest. This keeps us focused on a doable goal:

Research Question: According to participating faculty and tutors, what do our students need to perform better on this core competency, and what steps can we take to meet those needs?

We are taking a **Grounded Theory** approach toward answering our RQ, which means we are going to do everything possible to create an environment where we can listen closely to our participants to try to build a new theory, from the ground up. This means we won't just be looking for answers that fit our current conception of the issue, but also unanticipated answers that arise from our participants.

The RQ is necessarily broad, in order to cover anything that might be useful to our goal, even findings we might not anticipate. To help us to guide our analysis to be able to eventually answer our RQ, we develop Analytic Questions (AQs), which are a little more specific, to orient our focus of attention toward promising areas. We start out with a few AQs that seem promising from the beginning, and can develop more AQs as we learn more from our participants:

Analytic Question 1: What do our students need in order to gain the skills and knowledge that are to be demonstrated in this competency?

Analytic Question 2: What strategies can we take in the classroom to meet our students' needs?

Analytic Question 3: What strategies can be used to meet our students' needs in other areas of the College, including through policies?