

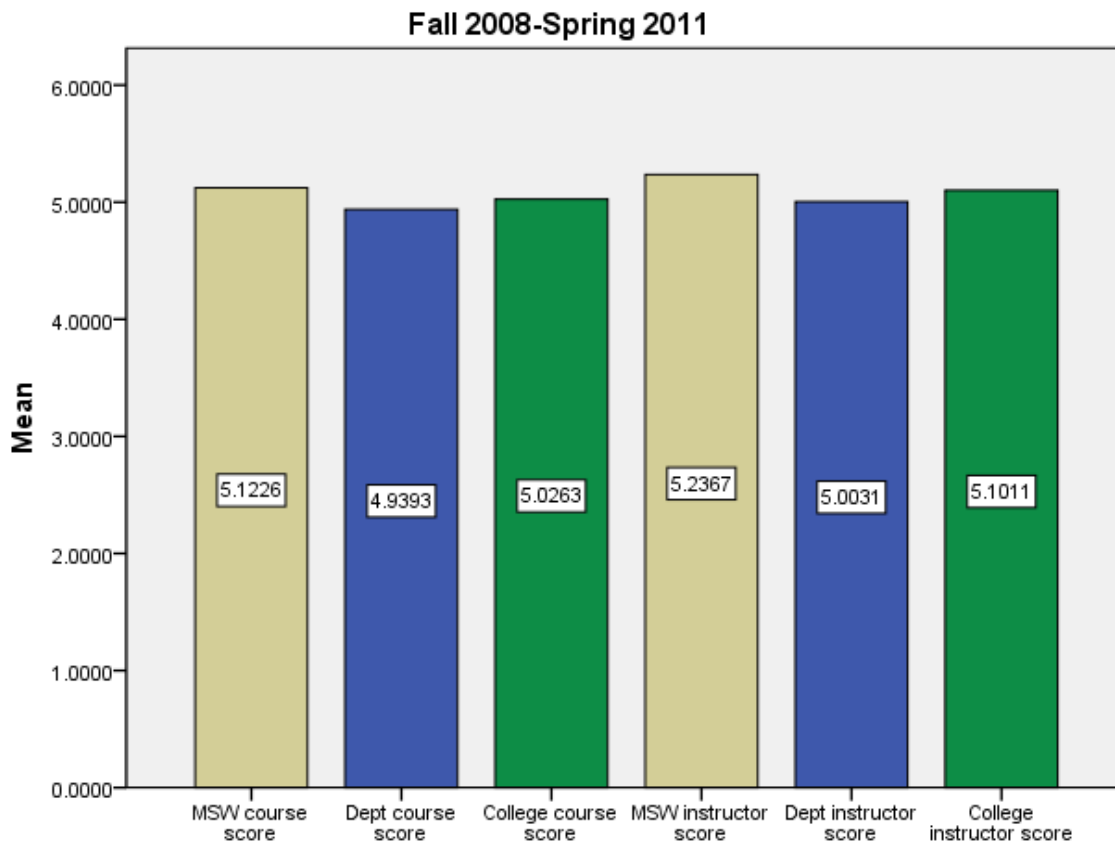
MSW Program Assessment and Improvement Results

Ongoing Assessment: Course Evaluations Assessment Results and Utilization

Course Evaluations

We examined course evaluation results for all courses taught between Fall 2008 through Spring 2011, which represents the entire period our MSW program has been in operation except for the summer term that has just ended. Our students rate our courses, on average, as “very good” (mean = 5.12, sd = .67) on a scale where 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = very good, and 6 = excellent. These scores exceed our Department (mean = 4.94) and College (mean = 5.0) which suggests that MSW students view our courses as well above average (see Figure 8.1 below) and that our students believe that our course objectives, which are tied to our program objectives, are being met. Instructor effectiveness scores also reflect positively on our faculty. These scores (mean = 5.24, sd = .73) rate as “very good” on a scale where 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = very good, and 6 = excellent and exceeds those of our Department instructors (mean = 4.99) and College instructors (mean = 5.1) which again suggests that MSW students view our instructors as well above average (see Figure 8.1 below).

Figure 8.1 Course Evaluation Scores (Means) by Program, Department & College



Supplemental Course Evaluation for Distance Education Courses

The supplemental evaluation instrument for distance education courses (SCEI-DE) was used for the first time in the summer of 2009 and has been used each semester since then. We primarily use this for courses offered through distance education to gather information about how technology may influence course evaluations. The results suggest that students rate face-to-face courses and instructors slightly higher (course score difference = 0.58; instructor score difference = 0.52) than distance courses (see Figure 8.2a and 8.2b below). However, unusually low scores in three courses taught in the part-time program by the same faculty member during the 2008-2009 year skew these results. If these courses are excluded from the analysis as outliers, the course and instructor scores differ by only 0.29 and 0.18, respectively. When face-to-face courses are compared with the same distance courses, in some cases the distance courses and instructors receive higher ratings and in other cases the opposite is true (see figures 8.2c and 8.2d below). There does not seem to be a consistent pattern to the data. Student feedback strongly suggests a struggle participating and interacting when more than two or three sites are connected to a single instructor.

Figure 8.2a. Course Evaluation Comparisons for Face-to-Face & Distance Education Courses: All Courses.

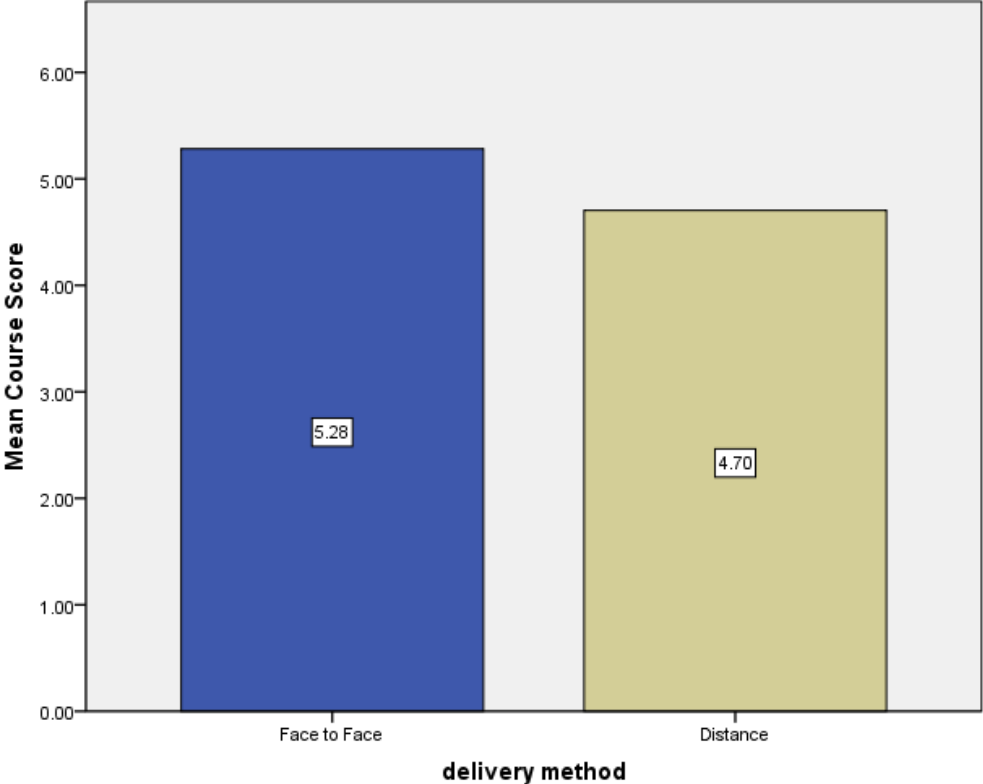


Figure 8.2b. Instructor Evaluation Comparisons for Face-to-Face & Distance Education Courses: All Courses.

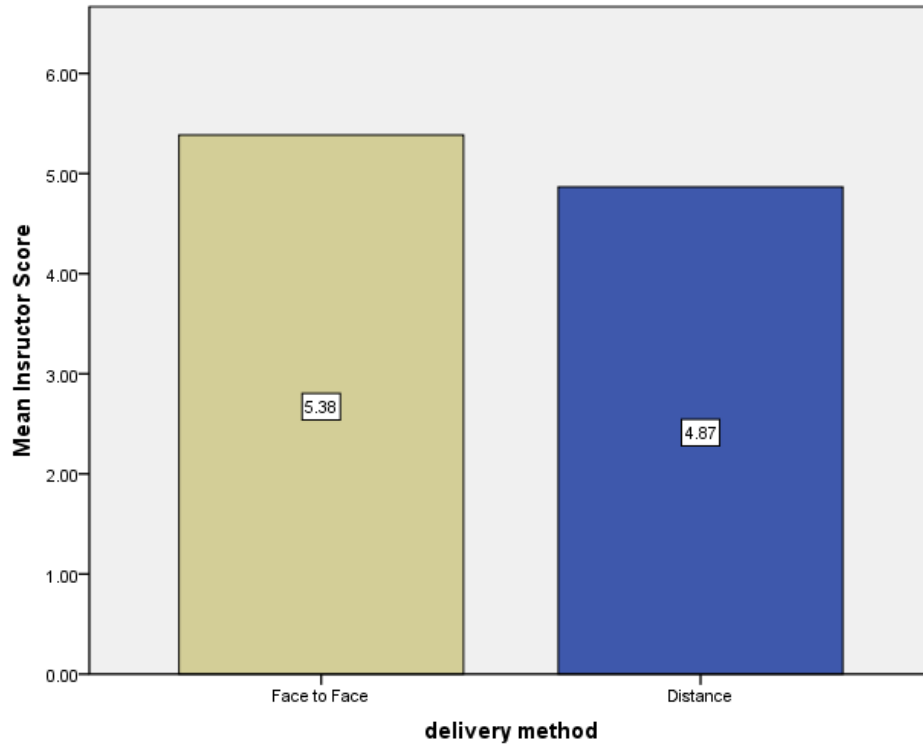


Figure 8.2c. Course Evaluation Comparisons for Face-to-Face & Distance Education Courses.

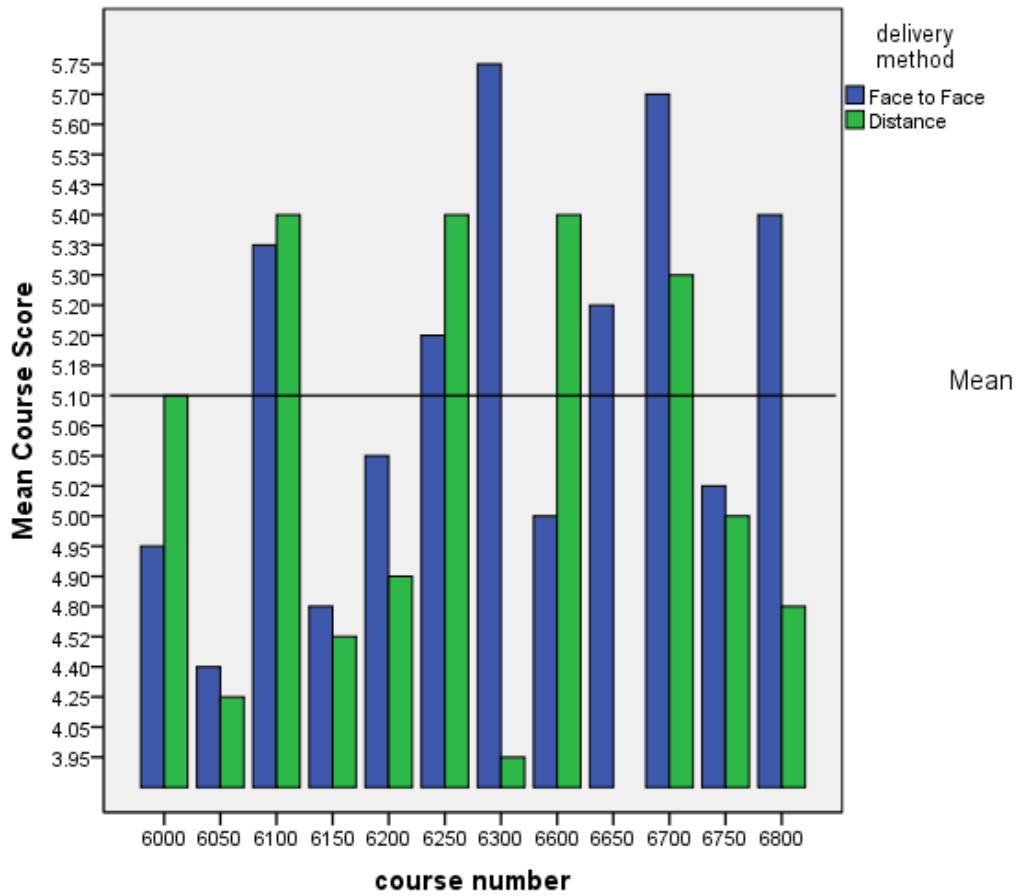
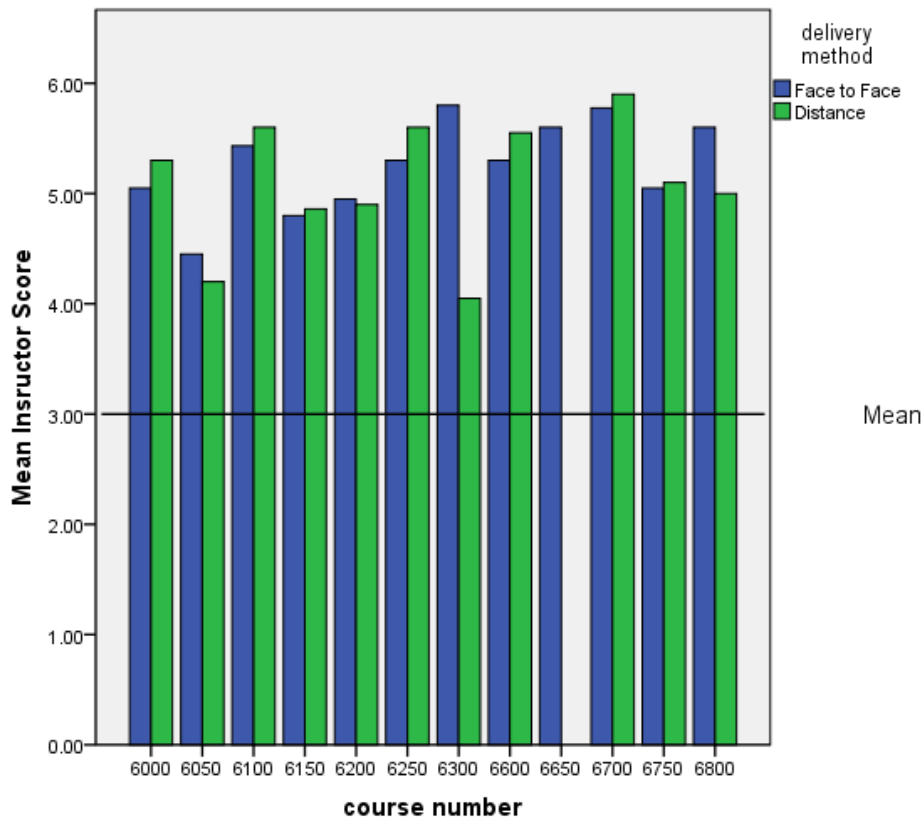


Figure 8.2d. Instructor Evaluation Comparisons for Face-to-Face & Distance Education Courses.



As for whether students feel that using technology to deliver courses impacts the effectiveness of these courses and their instructors, 67% (N= 134) say that use of technology to deliver courses either “does not” impact (38.8%), or “somewhat positively” impacts (16.4%), or “very much positively” (11.9%) impacts their ability to achieve course objectives; 32% report that use of technology “somewhat negatively” impacts course objective achievement, while less than 1% indicate that use of technology “very much negatively” impacts achievement of course objectives (see Figure 8.3a below). These results also indicate that students feel that using technology (e.g., interactive video conference) to deliver courses does impact course and instructor evaluations in a somewhat negative manner (see Figure 8.3b below). Other items in the survey help contextualize these results. Eighty-eight percent of students view the accessibility and quality of technical support as “sufficient” (56%) or “excellent” (32%); 12% rate this support as “insufficient.” Eighty-seven percent of students rate their ease of access to instructors outside of class as “excellent” (49%) or “good” (38%); 81% of students rate the quality of interaction with their instructors as “excellent” (44%) or “good” (43%), while 15% rate their interaction as “fair” and 4% rate this interaction as “poor.” Eighty percent rate the quality of instructional methods as “excellent” (40%) or “good” (40%); 16% rate the quality of instructional methods as “fair” and 4% rate the quality as “poor.” Eighty-four percent of students report that their instructor provides prompt feedback “always” (36%) or “frequently” (48%). Sixty percent

believe that very little class time (less than 1 hour) was lost due to technical problems; an additional 26% report less than 3 hours were lost to technology problems.

Our analyses do not suggest that these responses are related to levels of comfort with various forms of technology (Blackboard, microphones, cameras, etc.) or number of distance courses taken. Some responses to open-ended questions indicate that students are annoyed by technology glitches and prefer face-to-face courses even though courses delivered via technology are rated as equally effective. The following quote represents these sentiments.

“I like the Distance Education experience. I would like to have had a TA in the room more often (they were good to come when called). For instance, last night the Kaysville microphone was so loud that we literally had to hold our hands over our ears, but then the guest speakers came on and they were so low it was a strain to listen. The TA set the volume the best she could. However, after I could stand no more, I ask for them to talk quieter into the mic. After the instructor had them adjust the outgoing mic the problem was significantly better. Having a knowledgeable TA could have made the environment more learning friendly.”

As is alluded to above, these results also suggest a student preference all distance sites not be linked together in the same courses unless a team of instructors teaches the course.

Given the developmental stage of this instrument, these results are not yet definitive. Even so, the faculty discussed them and feel that students who rate distance-delivered courses are reacting to frustrations with site-specific issues like poor facilitator performance, microphone problems, etc. -- all issues over which the instructor has little control. We agreed to track these problems more systematically to better enable program administrators to work with regional campus administrators in resolving such problems in a timely manner. We also agreed not to combine all distance sites in a single class section unless a team of instructors teaches the course. Finally, we agreed to continue to think about how these issues may impact course and faculty evaluations. That is, should course evaluation scores be contextualized when used for promotion and tenure decisions?

Figure 8.3a. Student Ratings of the Extent to Which Use of Technology Impact Course Objective Achievement (N=134)

To what extent did the use of technology (i.e. video conferencing system, BlackBoard, etc.) impact your ability to achieve the course's objectives as stated in the syllabus?

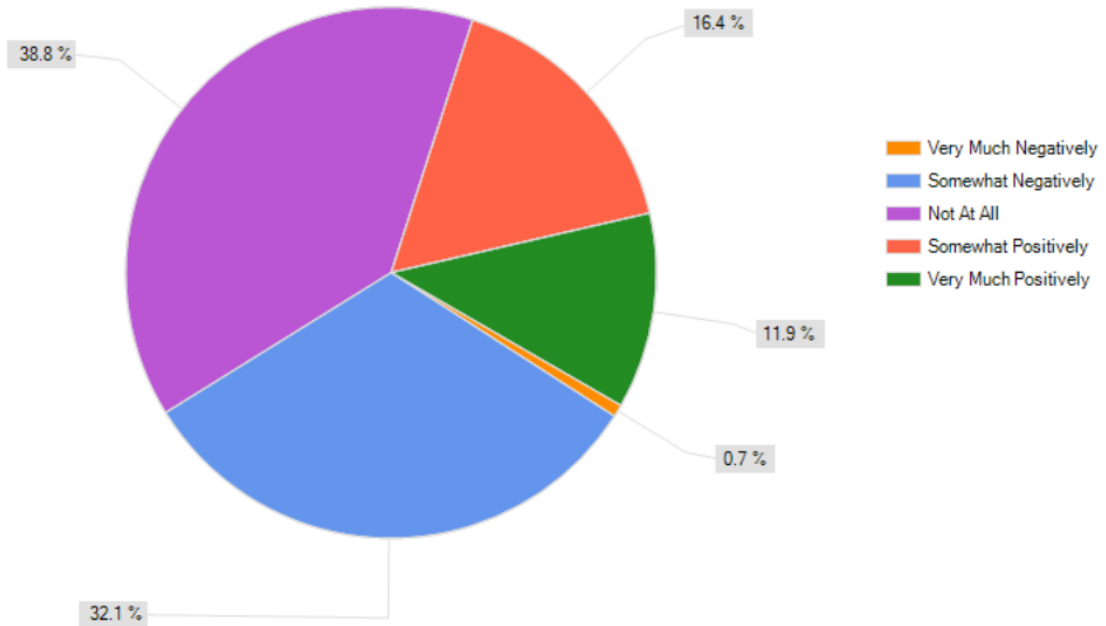
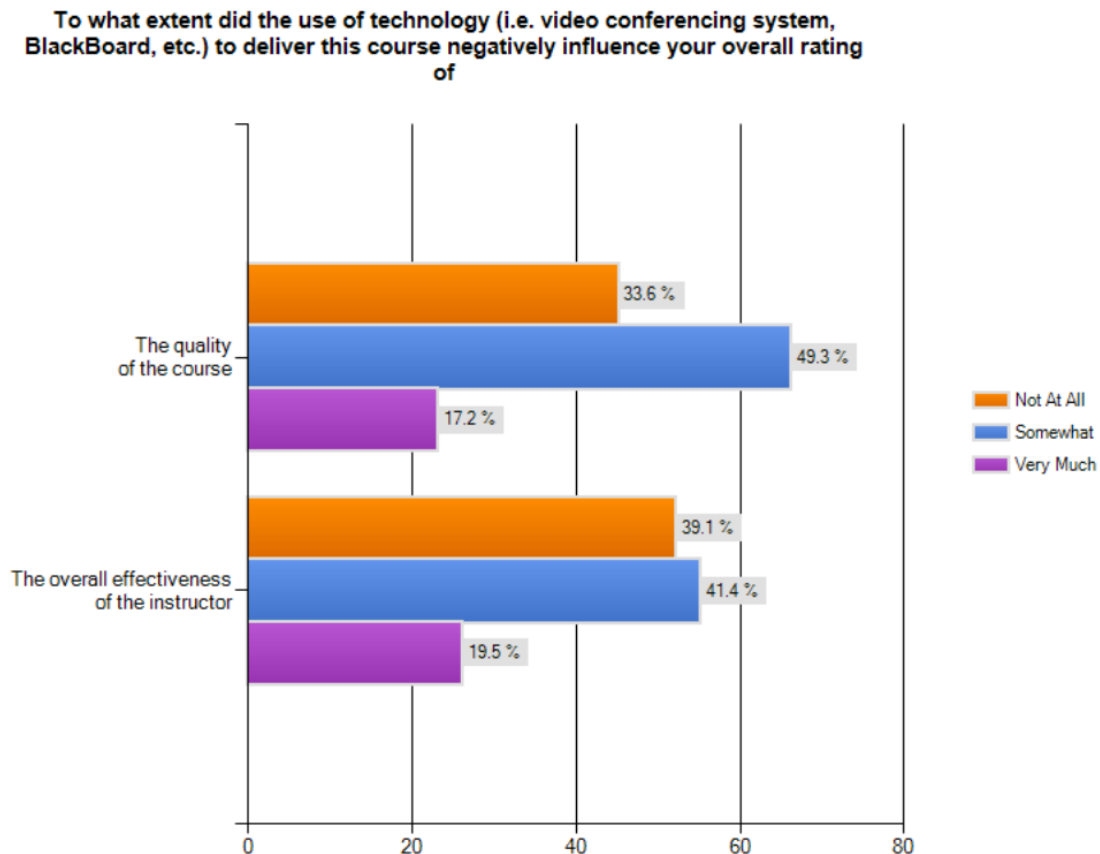


Figure 8.3b. Student Ratings of the Extent to Which Use of Technology Impact Course & Instructor Evaluations (N=134)



Ongoing Assessment: Course-Embedded Assessment Results and Utilization

Designated Program Assessment Assignments (DPAA)

We implemented the DPAA component of our evaluation plan Fall 2009. Our faculty wanted another assessment tool that links student performance to program objectives. We now have DPAA data from six terms and results indicate that our students are achieving course and program objectives (see Table 8.5 below). Program average ratings for all objectives are above 3 and the overall average for all objectives is 3.8 -- a score of 3 indicates competence. Over 90% of all students achieved scores of 3 or better for each objective assessed through the DPAA's. The faculty has discussed and will continue to discuss these results in regard to what, if any, adjustments need to be made to the DPAA's and/or the program. At this time, faculty think that the DPAA's are useful for identifying particular students who struggle to achieve certain competencies that are tied to program objectives. But, we also believe that evaluation redundancy exists and that the system can be streamlined to be more efficient while still maintaining its utility. We see the possibility of refining the current system as we move towards adopting the 2008 EPAS in the future.

Table 8.5. DPAA Mean Scores by Program Objectives

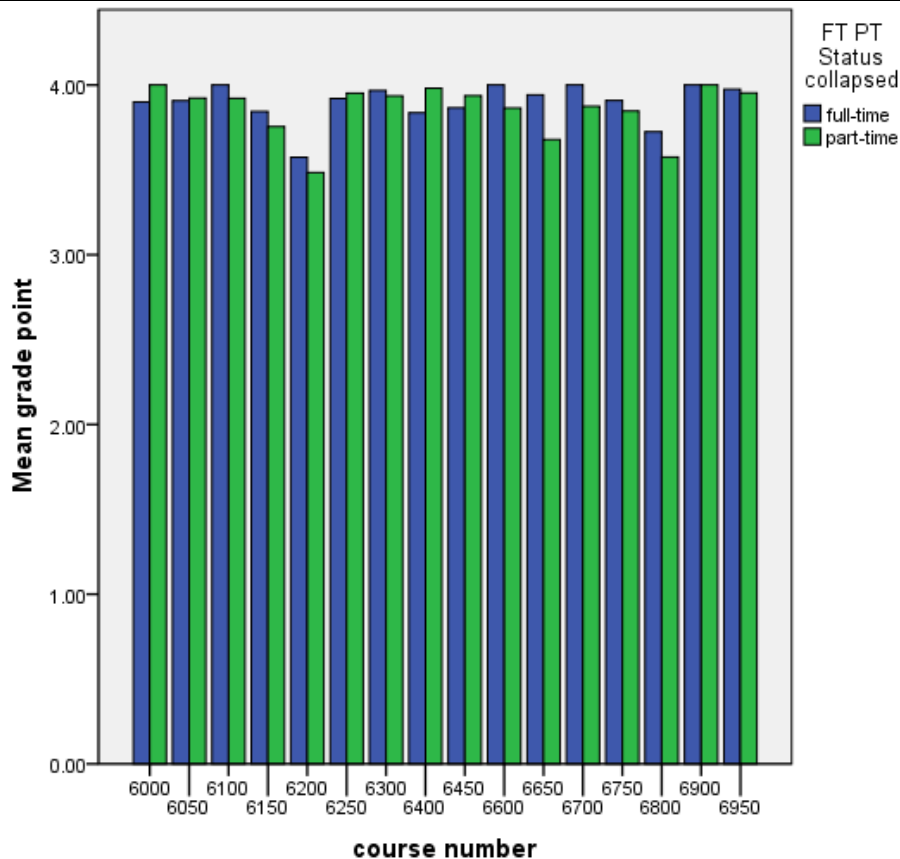
Program Objective	1	2	2a	3	4	5	6	6a	7	7a	8	8a	9	9a	10	11	11a	12	12a	13
Course																				
6000	3.9	3.9		4	3.9	3.8					3.9									
6050	3.9				3.9	3.8			3.4						3.8					
6100	4	4			4		3.9		3.9				4		4	3.8				
6150	3.5				3.6		3.5								3.5					
6200	3.5						3.5						3.5		3.5					
6250	3.9	3.9			3.8	3.8			3.9											
6300	4	4			4	4	3.9		3.9											
6400/6450		3.7		3.8		3.7			3.8		3.7				3.8	3.8		3.7		3.7
6600	3.7		4		3.9	3.8		4		3.9		3.9					4			
6650	3.8		3.8					3.8						3.5	3.7				3.6	
6700	3.9							3.7		3.8										
6750	4		4		3.9	3.9		3.8		3.8										
6800	3.7		3.6														3.8			
6900/6950	3.8		3.8	3.6	3.4	3.7		3.8		3.8		3.6		3.9	3.8		3.7		3.8	3.7
Program AVG= 3.8	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7

Course Grades

Analysis of student grades for the courses taught through Spring 2011 suggests that our students demonstrate mastery of course objectives. The mean GPA for the entire program for the Fall 2008 through Spring 2011 period is 3.88 (sd = .36, N= 100 students or 1338 unique grades). The mean GPAs for full and part-time students are very similar (FT= 3.89, sd= .324, N= 55 students, 719 grades; PT = 3.86, sd = .39, N = 43 students, 619 grades). Each group has included 2-3 students who have struggled in some classes. Faculty worked with these students to develop plans for improving their performance; three students implemented their plans and are improving. The other two, both from the part-time program, did not improve and withdrew from the program.

Course-by-course comparisons reveal similar GPA averages between the two full-time cohorts and the part-time program (see Figure 8.4). In some cases, the part-time GPAs are higher than the full-time, and in others the opposite is true. The biggest difference is found in SW 6650 (advanced research course). We believe that the variation has to do with a change in instructors, although faculty members are discussing other possible interpretations of the data. In any case, both groups of students perform at high levels (FT GPA= 3.95; PT GPA= 3.68). An alternate interpretation may be the difference in time elapsed between the foundation and advanced research courses for each group. Full-time students take the foundation and advanced research methods courses back-to-back (with only the summer break in between), whereas the part-time students wait more than a year between these courses. Feedback from the part-time students suggests they prefer to have these courses taught closer to each other and we are changing the part-time course sequencing accordingly. More generally, the faculty has engaged in several discussions regarding the issue of grade inflation. That is, we wonder if the high student GPAs truly represent student ability or if there is some other possibility, for example, perhaps a need to challenge the students more? At this point we agreed that both scenarios may be true to some degree. Consequently, we have determined to “raise the bar” a bit in our courses and to communicate to our students that an “A” grade will indicate excellence rather than competence while also clearly defining what excellence looks like in the context of a particular course. One tool toward this end will be grading rubrics. We will continue to re-evaluate this issue and make adjustments as needed.

Figure 8.4. GPA Comparisons for Full and Part-Time Programs by Course (Required)



Ongoing Assessment: Generalist Practice Test (GPT-MSW) and Advanced Practice Test (APT-MSW) Assessment Results and Utilization

The GPT-MSW was administered to our first full-time cohort Spring 2009, to the second full-time cohort Spring 2011, and to our first part-time cohort Spring 2010. The % correct mean score for the 80 students (87% of all students) who completed the exam is 76%. The % correct means for the full and part-time programs are nearly identical (FT=75.4%, PT=75.8%). Eighty-one percent of students achieved a score of 70% or better. The percentage of students who scored 70% or better was slightly higher in the part-time program (PT=82%, FT=80%). Although the goal of a 70% average or higher for the program was met, we would prefer to see an increase in this average score. We also want to see a higher percentage of students achieve that 70% or better goal. We are analyzing the questions students missed to determine if we need to make adjustments in the curriculum or whether there are problematic questions, which item analyses suggests there may be. Data suggest that we may need to place more emphasis on Objective 7 (*Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the lifespan and the interactions among individuals and between individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities*) and Objective 1 (*Understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues*). During this year's fall retreat, the faculty discussed these results and decided to increase our focus on Objective 1 in the

Principles and Philosophy of Social Work course (SW 6000) and also charged the HBSE curriculum committee to identify ways to improve students' knowledge and understanding of theoretical frameworks. One change being considered is the adoption of a different text for HBSE I.

The APT-MSW was administered to full-time students Spring 2010 and to part-time students Summer 2011. The % correct mean score for the 52 students who completed the exams is 68% (sd=.16) – and over half of the students who took the exam did not achieve a score of 70% or better. We are currently analyzing the questions students missed to determine if we need to make adjustments in the curriculum as well as whether there are problematic questions, which item analyses suggests there may be. The data suggest the need to place more emphasis on Objective 7a (*Demonstrate the ability to apply empirically supported theoretical frameworks for understanding individual, family, group and organizational development and behavior to advanced social work practice with individuals, couples, families, groups, & organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency*), and Objective 6a (*Demonstrate the ability to synthesize and then apply the knowledge acquired in the Advanced-Concentration classes to advanced practice with individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency*). However, until we have more thoroughly discussed the results of the item analyses, made necessary adjustments to questions, and administered the revised version of the exam to the current full-time cohort, the faculty will consider all possible responses. Incidentally, our graduates are passing the licensing exam at a high rate; over 90% of our graduates who have taken the ASWB Clinical exam (the APT exam is designed to be similar to this exam) passed on their first attempt. This may mean that students don't take the APT exam as seriously as they do the licensing exam. Again, we will continue to evaluate and discuss these results.

Ongoing Assessment: Annual Focus Groups with Students Assessment Results and Utilization

As described above, student focus groups generally take place during a cohort's final semester in the program, although we have held them at other junctures as well. We held focus groups with the first graduating class of full-time MSW students in April 2010 and with the current full-time cohort at the end of its first year (April 2011). We also held focus groups with the full and part-time students in 2009. Results from the focus groups suggest that students are generally pleased with the program. A focus group with the part-time cohort that graduated August 2011 will be held shortly. The questions we ask in these groups are related to our mission, goals, and objectives and include:

- Has the Social Work program prepared you for your career?
- What was done well?
- What could be done better?
- We would like to know your perception of the social work curriculum, how do you feel about the required coursework (Research Methods, Social Policy, Practice Classes, HBSE, Administration, Electives)?
- About the Practicum (internship experience and seminar)?
- What would you add or change to the MSW curriculum?

In 2009 we held focus groups with all the students, both part-time and full-time. They identified several *program strengths*, for example, **the faculty**, students feel that the faculty are knowledgeable and really care about the students; **program structure**, they appreciate having faculty at each program site and are grateful for the ability to take classes on a part-time basis; **curriculum**, which students feel is challenging and relevant, and the small class sizes. In addition, students identified some *areas for improvement* that include addressing **unnecessary overlap** among the foundation policy, HBSE II, and practice II courses; the need to **emphasize diversity issues more** at the beginning of a cohort's program experience; and **clarifying expectations** regarding assignments in several courses.

The faculty discussed this feedback in May 2009 and outlined a plan for program adjustments. Faculty agreed to concentrate more on diversity at the outset of each new cohort by dedicating a larger percentage of the Principles and Philosophy of Social Work (SW 6000) course to diversity issues. Accordingly, the syllabus for this course was revised to reflect this feedback. Diversity content in the HBSE courses was also enhanced.

Our second focus group was held with the first cohort of full-time students during the latter part of their final semester (April 2010). This group was anxious about life after graduation. Consequently, a prime topic of conversation was their self-perceived readiness for employment and the licensing exam. Some students already had jobs waiting for them and anxiety was evident among those who did not. One student mentioned being "anxious about finding a job, not doing the job." And several students mentioned changing their original career goals as a result of their education (e.g. "see moving into administration," "became interested in many fields of practice, which was a surprise," and "started with schools in mind but now love mental health"). In response to the question, *has the Social Work program prepared you for your career* [a program goal], these responses are typical:

- No job yet but has not been looking really hard yet. Feels confident that she will find a job fast. Program has prepared her well. Courses well planned out. Wants to stay in mental health. May go on to Ph.D.
- No job but working on some things. Prepared well.
- Has job. Feels like last year gave her good foundation. Feels like she's had a very valuable experience.
- Has job and is excited about prospects. Enjoyed program.
- Has a job. Going to stay where she's at. Move into clinical area. Plans to get certified in critical stress incident de-briefing. Enjoyed the program. Really likes the generalist philosophies. Feels it is better preparation than she would have gotten at another program she was considering, which has clinical focus.

In response to questions about the curriculum, students were focused on what they perceived would prepare them for post-graduation, e.g., more clinical material in more classes, more on how to use the DSM-IV-TR, more about how to be a professional, more about licensure, and more case studies. Students loved the Law & Ethics class (SW 6800) because they knew that material would be on the licensing exam (e.g. "great class, tough but good, very useful, good teacher").

The faculty discussed this feedback and decided to increase content on the DSM-IV-TR, diagnosis, and the licensing process in the advanced curriculum. Accordingly, changes were made to Advanced Practice I (SW 6700), and our advanced practice elective, SW 6850: Advanced Practice with Individuals: DSM-IV Assessment and Diagnosis. We also contracted with a company who creates licensing exam preparation materials to allow us to use their bank of test questions to create a practice exam that we incorporated into our assessment plan (APT-MSW). These changes seem to have paid off as the vast majority of our students are passing the licensing exam.

A third focus group was held Spring 2011 with the full-time cohort which had just completed the first year and was looking forward to the advanced curriculum. They mentioned that it was very stressful starting a new and demanding graduate program. They said that there's probably not much the program can do to relieve that stress but they did make a few suggestions that include sending out a reading list during the summer before the program begins (30% of the group felt like this was a good suggestion while the others said they wouldn't have read ahead of time if we had sent out a list). A few students suggested that we explore the idea of moving the lighter credit load from the second semester to the first (research seems like the best fit for such a move). We mentioned that the program was making some adjustments to the beginning of the field practicum that would result in a gradual entry into the field with more seminar and preparation time up front. Many of the students felt like this would lessen their stress and was a good idea. A few others, particularly those with BSW degrees, expressed a preference for some flexibility with this policy for those who had completed a field experience as undergraduates and were ready to move directly into fieldwork at the beginning of the MSW program. The group suggested that we should be careful not to scare them too much during orientation as anxiety levels were already high and telling them how challenging the program is going to be did not help matters. However, some students said it was helpful to hear straightforward talk about how they would need to make adjustments in their lives in order to succeed in the program.

Other suggestions for improving the program included making sure the faculty know how much the students appreciate timely feedback on assignments. They said feedback time did improve during the second semester and that some faculty members do provide great feedback on assignments. A few students indicated that they would like to have courses from a greater cross-section of the faculty. When asked to grade the program based on their first year experience, they felt that an A- was appropriate and that improving the timeliness of feedback and clarifying assignment expectations would raise the grade to an A. They went on to say that they feel very good about the faculty and program overall and were happy to be part of it.

Our discussion then moved to the curriculum. We asked them what they liked and disliked about each of the foundation year courses as well as how we could improve these courses. With regard to SW 6000, they said that the course provided a good introduction to the profession and was helpful for those who didn't have a social work background as undergraduates. As for what could be improved about this course, they mentioned that the reading responses sometimes felt like busy work and could perhaps be reduced. When asked about SW 6050, they mentioned that there were too many presentations ("too much time spent on presentations") and that they liked the textbook. In the case of SW 6200, they said although the class was difficult they learned a lot. They offered a few suggestions for improving the course including more clearly explaining the assignments in the syllabus, providing more detailed feedback on some

assignments, and modifying the single-subject design project to accommodate rather than penalize students for situations that are out of student control (e.g., clients dropping out of treatment). They appreciated the instructor's willingness to let them re-do assignments for additional credit. They also appreciated the accessibility and preparation level of the instructor. As for SW 6300, they felt like the coursework was very applicable and that the class promoted critical thinking. Regarding SW 6100, they mentioned their appreciation for the real-life practice experience the instructors brought to the classroom. They also appreciated the instructors' willingness to modify the class plan to meet student needs. As for what could be improved they indicated that doing more role-playing would be helpful. In the case of SW 6150, they mentioned the need to clarify assignment expectations. They also said the group assignments were useful but some flexibility in this area would be a good idea. We asked them to clarify what they meant by this comment and they replied that it was difficult for some people to work in groups because they lived outside of the Cache Valley area. In these cases they felt it would be helpful to allow people to do assignments in smaller groups or individually as circumstances require. They also mentioned the need for study guides or reviews to help them prepare for exams. Some suggested that in-class quizzes could replace some of the reading responses. When asked about the child welfare elective that was offered for students with BSW degrees (SW 6500), they said the reading levels during two of the weeks were extreme. They also mentioned the need for debriefing as a class given that many of the readings are very difficult to read in terms of their emotional impact. Otherwise, they really loved the class and instructor.

When students were asked to comment on the practicum and seminars, they mentioned wanting more information about what was expected of them earlier in the field experience. They added that spending more time up front in seminar and moving into the field more gradually would be helpful in this regard. Those that were doing a block placement during the summer of the foundation year mentioned that they wished they had done a concurrent placement because they could see how it helped their classmates integrate what they were learning in the classroom with their field practice. However, they also mentioned that the block placement was a good option to have in the program. As for the seminars, they said they really enjoyed them. The only change they would like us to consider is requiring fewer learning journals, as they feel like they become repetitive.

The faculty discussed this feedback and decided to implement changes to the field practicum to allow students a more gradual entry into field practicum. These changes will be initiated with our current part-time cohort and next full-time cohort in 2012. The faculty also discussed making changes to the time devoted to presentations in the HBSE I course; these changes were implemented in the fall of 2011. We will hold a focus group in September with the part-time group that graduated August 2011; those results will be disseminated to faculty and discussed during our monthly faculty meetings.

Ongoing Assessment: Practicum/Field Experience Evaluation Assessment Results and Utilization

Results from the PIESI evaluations indicate that our field supervisors rate nearly 100% of our students as meeting or exceeding expectations overall for the foundation practicum and 100% as meeting or exceeding expectations for the advanced practicum (see Figures 8.5, 8.6 & Tables 8.8, 8.9, recall that a score of 3 = met expectations & 4 =

exceeded expectations). We also achieved our benchmark for student performance on individual PIESI items for both the foundation and advanced practicum. Just a handful (between 1% and 5%) of students were rated as not meeting expectations on any of the 6400/6450 (foundation practicum) PIESI items. Two of those ratings occurred during the first semester of the foundation practicum experience. Faculty liaisons worked with field instructors and the students to address these concerns. One student was able to increase his rating on his particular area of concern to meeting expectations during the second semester; the other student withdrew from the program prior to the end of the second semester. Another student was given a “far below expectations” on the agency involvement item because she did not participate in group and individual supervision according to the field instructor’s expectations. The primary obstacle was her work schedule, which conflicted with the group supervision meeting. Practicum faculty worked with this student during her advanced placement to ensure that her performance in this area improved, which it did. Two other students struggled throughout their foundation practicum experience. In these cases, the faculty determined that these students would need to repeat the foundation practicum in another setting if they were to continue in the program. Happily, both students were able to have successful block field experiences this summer; both received positive ratings from their field instructors and A’s for the course.

Just two students (1%) were rated lower than meeting expectations on one or more 6900/6950 (advanced practicum) PIESI items. One student received a “below expectations” rating on the ethics and professionalism item. This rating stemmed from a personal/professional conflict within the agency. Practicum faculty worked with the student and field instructor to address this concern. Although the concern was ultimately addressed, the field instructor believed this rating was still appropriate. The second case involved a student who found it difficult to work with the population the practicum agency serves (people with severe mental illness). She was never inappropriate with clients but struggled to establish rapport them. This was a barrier to effective assessment and intervention. The field faculty worked with this student to help her work on these issues with limited success. In the end, all parties involved agreed that she would be more comfortable and effective working with other populations. Both of these students did receive overall “meets expectations” ratings.

Table 8.8. Mean Practicum Instructor Evaluation of Students (PIESI) Scores SW 6400/6450

Objective/Competency	All Students N*=140	Full-time Students N=73	Part-time Students N=67
Understanding of Social Work Principles	4.09	4.08	4.09
Ethics & Professionalism	4.16	4.20	4.12
Critical Thinking	4.06	4.11	4.01
Diversity	3.99	3.99	3.99
Advocacy	4.00	3.97	4.03
Evidence-Based Practice	3.93	3.95	3.91
Human Behavior & the Social Environment	4.01	4.11	3.91
Policy	3.94	3.99	3.90

Involvement	4.14	4.16	4.12
Multi-Systemic Practice: ENGAGEMENT	4.19	4.25	4.13
Multi-Systemic Practice: ASSESSMENT	3.89	3.99	3.78
Multi-Systemic Practice: INTERVENTION	3.99	4.11	3.85
Multi-Systemic Practice: EVALUTION	3.88	4.97	3.78
OVERALL RATING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE	4.14	4.16	4.11

*Students are typically evaluated twice during each academic year

Figure 8.5 Overall Student Performance Foundation Practicum (PIESI 6400/6450)

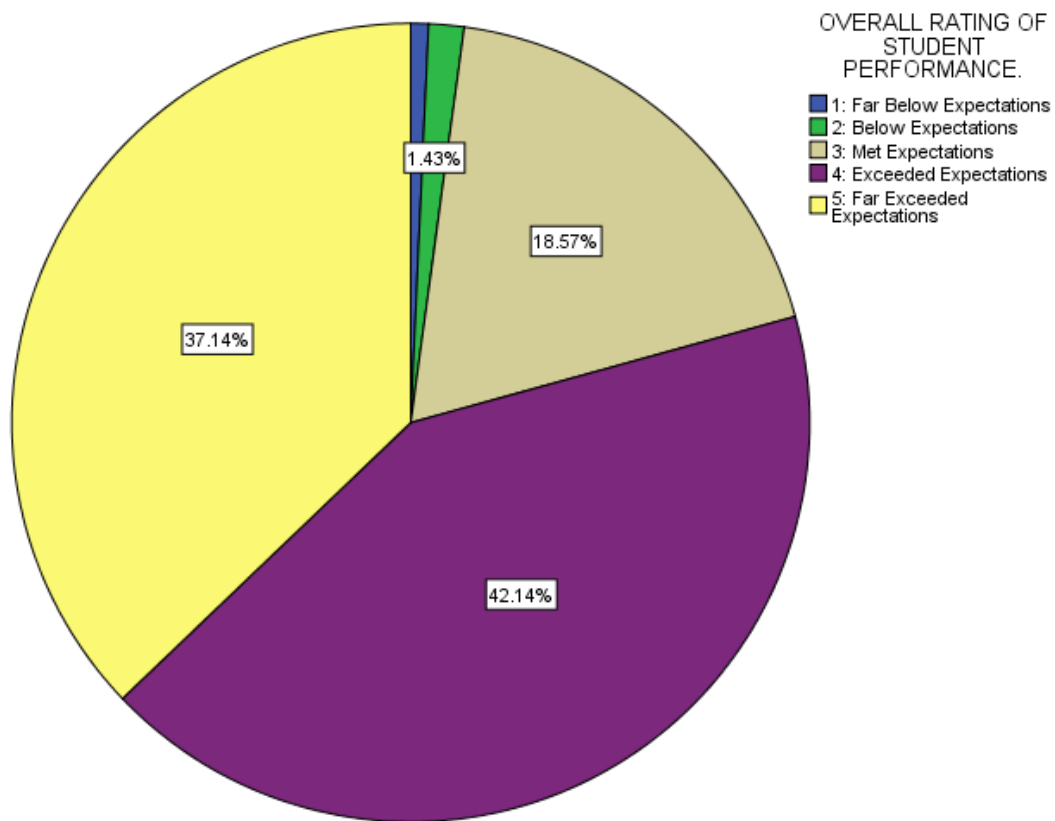
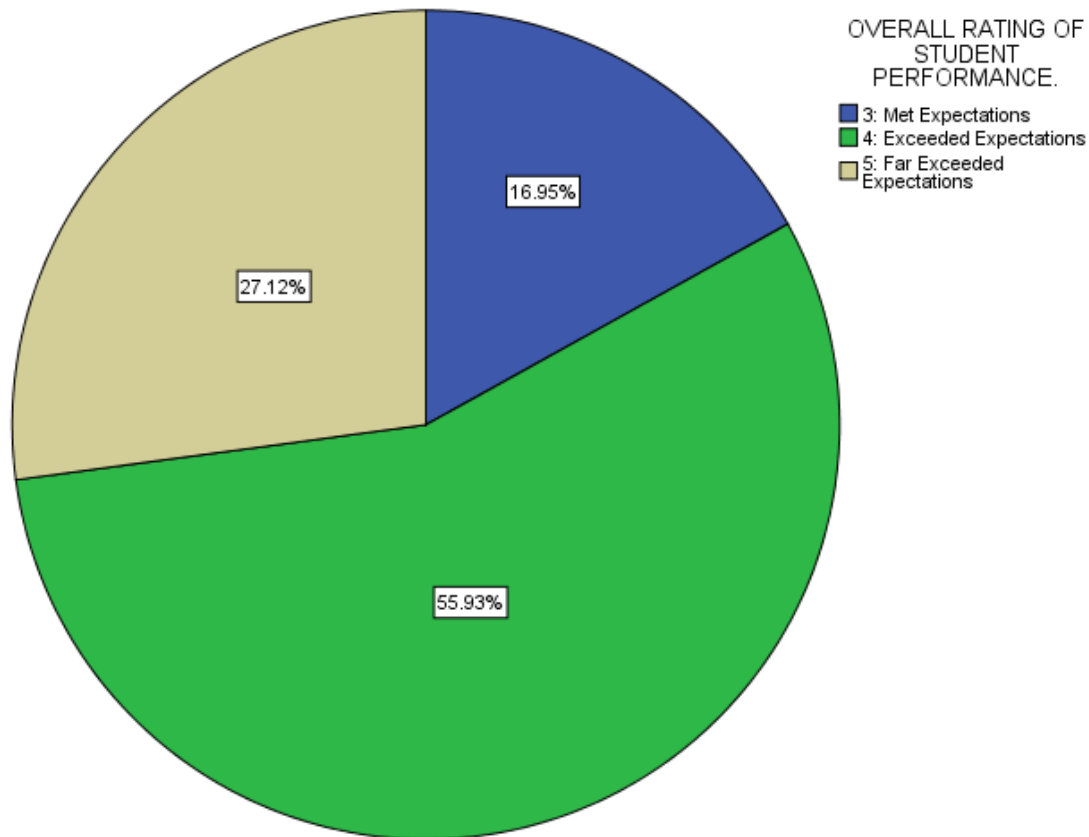


Table 8.9. Mean Practicum Instructor Evaluation of Students (PIESI) Scores SW 6900/6950

Objective/Competency	All Students N*=118	Full-time Students N=52	Part-time Students N=66
Understanding of Social Work Principles	4.11	4.21	4.03
Ethics & Professionalism	4.20	4.23	4.18
Critical Thinking	3.92	3.85	3.97
Diversity	4.03	3.96	4.09
Advocacy	3.86	3.78	3.94
Evidence-Based Practice	3.85	3.87	3.83
Human Behavior & the Social Environment	3.93	3.90	3.95
Policy	3.84	3.92	3.77
Involvement	3.97	4.04	3.92
Multi-Systemic Practice: ENGAGEMENT	4.03	3.98	4.08
Multi-Systemic Practice: ASSESSMENT	3.84	3.77	3.89
Multi-Systemic Practice: INTERVENTION	3.82	3.83	3.82
Multi-Systemic Practice: EVALUTION	3.79	3.83	3.76
OVERALL RATING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE	4.10	4.08	4.12

*Students are typically evaluated twice during each academic year

Figure 8.6. Overall Student Performance Advanced Practicum (PIESI 6900/6950)



Analysis of the responses to the open-ended PIESI questions reveals a high level of satisfaction with our students. Typical examples of field supervisor comments regarding our students are as follows:

“K was a great asset to our department. She implemented social work values in her practice on a daily basis. She was excellent at getting involuntary clients to engage in goal setting and treatment. She will do well in the social work profession.”

“A was so effective in our school setting that we felt he was part of the staff.”

“J has shown great judgment and when questions arose (he) sought out appropriate supervision.”

“C has had to work with a couple of difficult clients and he shows respect and deference to their needs and differences.”

“M always strives to use research-informed-practice when working with clients. One of her major goals this semester has been to improve her level of knowledge of evidence-based practice related to some of her more difficult clients.”

“J is a great member of our team here at South Campus. She always goes the extra mile to be there for our students. Whenever we need her, J is there. She is dependable, very personable, professional, and a wonderful social worker. We love her!”

“T’s strengths: compassion, client advocacy, desire to learn, good interpersonal boundaries, good work ethic and accountability, Weaknesses: struggled engaging clients who are not yet ready to change, would benefit from additional experience in diagnosis (don’t we all!).”

“M is an excellent student-intern who is very committed to working in ways that not only improve quality of care given to our patients /families but also ways to improve delivery of our services.”

“H provided extraordinary care and support to the patients and families she came in contact with as well providing excellent professionalism with staff and community organizations. I am so glad to continue to have the opportunity to work with her at the Bear River Valley Hospital.”

“C did an outstanding job in his internship and is ready to engage in top quality practice as a social worker.”

Student Evaluation of Agencies/Field Faculty

Results from the 6400/6450 (foundation placement) Student Evaluation of Practicum Agency and Faculty (SEPAF) evaluations indicate that, overall, nearly 100% of our students rate their foundation field agency experience and field supervisors as meeting or exceeding expectations (see Figures 8.7, 8.8 and Table 8.10, refer again to Table 8.9 for scaling). The two students who gave sub-par ratings to their foundation placements felt like they did not receive enough support and supervision. Field faculty have looked into these situations and made adjustments including additional field instructor training. Over 90% of students rated 4 of 5 SEPAF items as meeting or exceeding expectations. Ratings for Item 4, which rates agency physical facilities, fell just below our 90% “meets or exceeds expectations” benchmark at 85%. Responses to open-ended questions also indicate a high level of satisfaction with the field experience, and with field instructors in particular. However, students did offer a few suggestions as to how their field experience could be improved. These suggestions include improving the workspace allotted to them at the agency (always a struggle given the limited physical resources typically available in agencies), increasing time with supervisors, and increasing the breadth or depth of the placement experience -- examination of the comments section of the instrument reveals that a few students want a broader experience while others want to focus more on a particular facet of practice. Not surprisingly, the desire for greater depth in the foundation practicum is more likely to be a concern for students with a BSW degree. Typical examples of student comments regarding their foundation placement experience are as follows:

“There is not a lot of workspace, but we made the best of it.”

“I had a lot of opportunity to work directly with clients, which was great!”

“It was a great help for me as I learned the job to be able to take things back to the classroom and get help from my supervisor and my colleagues.”

“I learned a lot about dealing with people, especially those of different ethnic backgrounds who may be illegal and scared of seeking assistance. My seminar experience was also very positive and helped me learn skills that my agency couldn’t offer me.”

“The agency was flexible with me in creating a learning experience tailored to my individual needs.”

“Because school social work is broad and covers many areas I often didn’t feel that I developed social work skills to the depth I could in other placements.”

“Great supervision--allowed me to figure things out on my own, but gave me great tools, advice, and experience.”

“The practicum instructor was always available when needed and willing to give advice.”

“My agency tried to assist me, but I often did menial tasks where I felt like I should be given more challenging opportunities.”

“I think that I have been surrounded by professionals who value the client and respect them. I think there have been many opportunities for professional growth at the clinic and hospital.”

Table 8.10. Mean Scores Student Evaluation of Practicum Agency & Faculty (SW 6400-6450) Foundation Placement

Rating Criterion	All Students N= 75*	Full-Time Students N= 46	Part-time Students N= 29
Social Work Training Experience	3.73	3.75	3.67
Professional Atmosphere	3.95	4.00	3.86
Supervision	4.01	4.09	3.90
Facilities	3.56	3.63	3.45
Social Work Opportunities	3.89	3.94	3.83
OVERALL RATING OF AGENCY EXPERIENCE	4.07	4.01	3.86
OVERALL RATING OF PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR/SUPERVISOR	3.89	4.20	3.86

*Students are not required to complete this instrument. 75% of students are represented.

Figure 8.7. Student Evaluation of Agency Ratings--Foundation Practicum

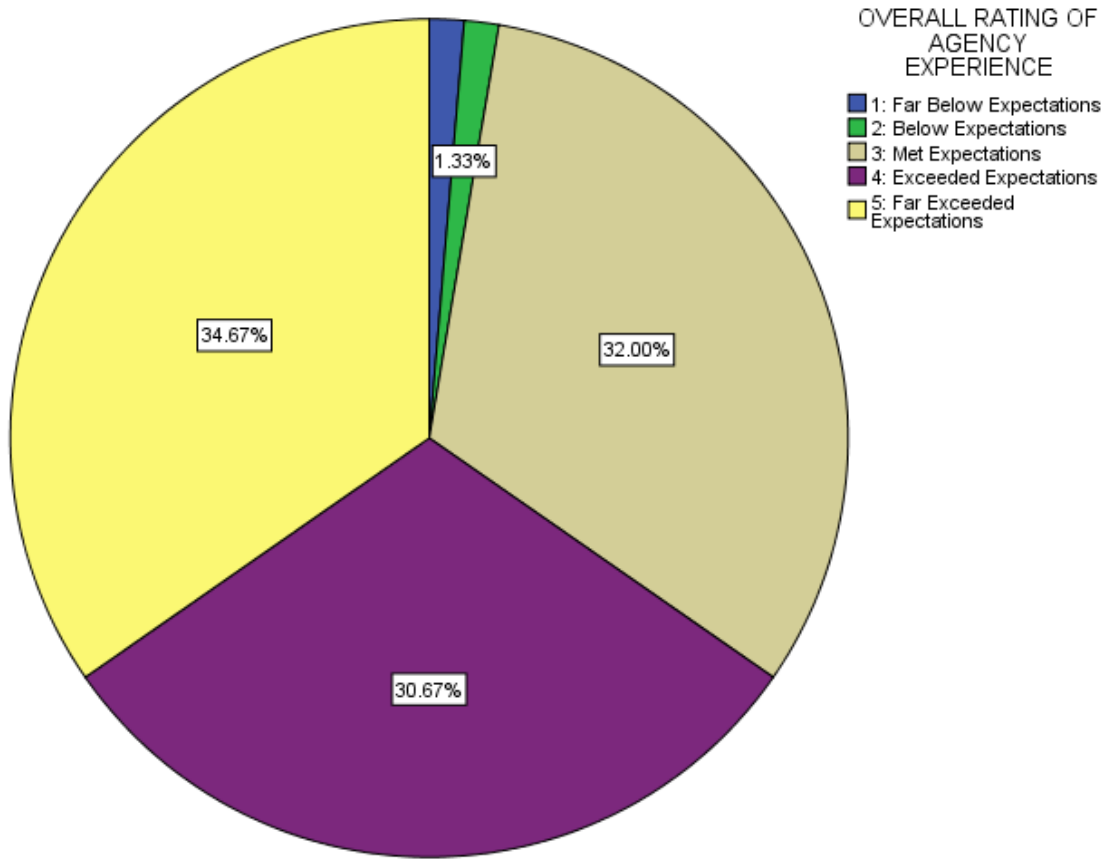
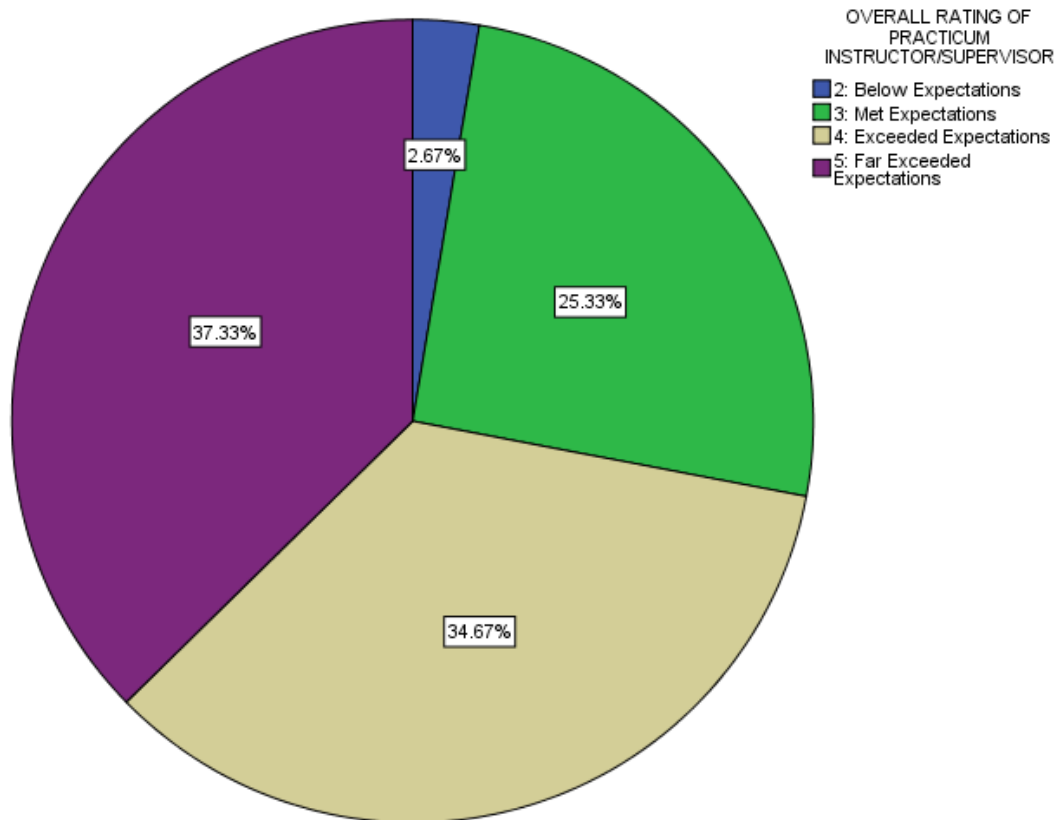


Figure 8.8. Student Evaluation of Field Instructor Ratings- Foundation Practicum



Results from the first round of 6900/6950 (advanced placement) Student Evaluation of Practicum Agency and Faculty (SEPAF) evaluations reflect positively on the advanced field experience (see Table 8.11 and Figures 8.9 & 8.10). All but four students (93%) rated their advanced field experience as meeting or exceeding expectations and all but two students (3.6%) rated their field instructors as meeting or exceeding expectations. Over 90% of students rated 4 of the 5 individual SEPAF items as meeting or exceeding expectations. That percentage fell to 82% on the 5th item (facilities) and 85%, which suggests we may have some work to do in these areas. Responses to open-ended questions, while mostly positive, do offer a few suggestions as to how their field experience could be improved. Similar to the foundation SEPAF comments, suggestions include improving the workspace allotted to them by the agencies. A few students also expressed frustration that the agencies they worked in did not have adequate assessment tools and intake forms. A representative selection of student comments is provided below.

“Expectations were definitely met for “experience in all avenues of social work, although the position had definite obstacles.”

“I have enjoyed overall the time I have spent in this agency. I like the administrative and counseling staff and will miss my associations with many of them.”

“It was great, everything I needed, and wanted.”

“The agency has many students. There were times when it was very cramped and hard to get computer access when needed.”

“Orientation was great, weekly staff meetings occurred, doctors are available for crisis supervision 24 hours per day, outstanding knowledge of theory and practice, lots of opportunities for growth. However, if someone needed a lot of validation for their work, this would be a tough placement. Interns are expected to do the work of creating groups, making them happen, and doing a lot of self-evaluation. It's a great opportunity to develop one's own internal senses about practice.”

Table 8.11. Student Evaluation of Practicum Agency & Faculty (SW 6900-6950) Advanced Placement

Rating Criterion	All Students N= 55*	Full-Time Students N= 24	Part-time Students N= 31
Social Work Training Experience	3.84	4.08	3.65
Professional Atmosphere	3.89	4.13	3.71
Supervision	3.96	3.96	3.97
Facilities	3.51	3.54	3.48
Social Work Opportunities	3.95	3.96	3.94
OVERALL RATING OF AGENCY EXPERIENCE	4.07	4.25	3.94
OVERALL RATING OF PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR/SUPERVISOR	4.22	4.08	4.32

*Students are not required to complete this instrument. 55% of students are represented.

Figure 8.9. Student Evaluation of Agency Ratings- Advanced Practicum

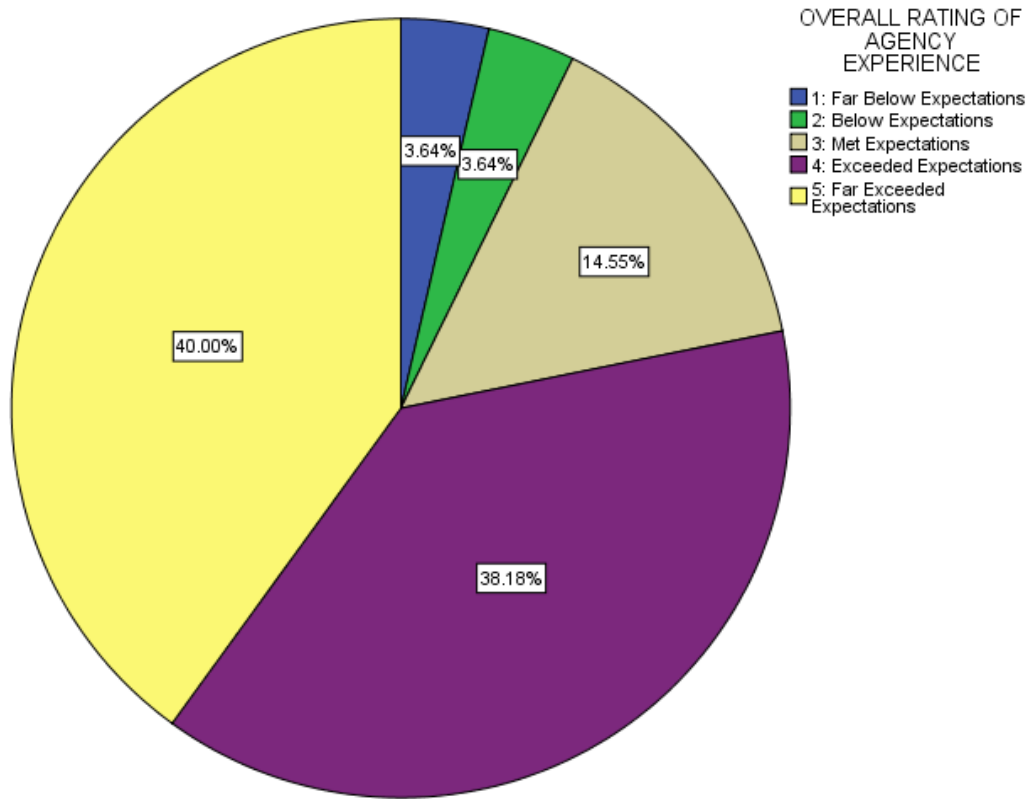
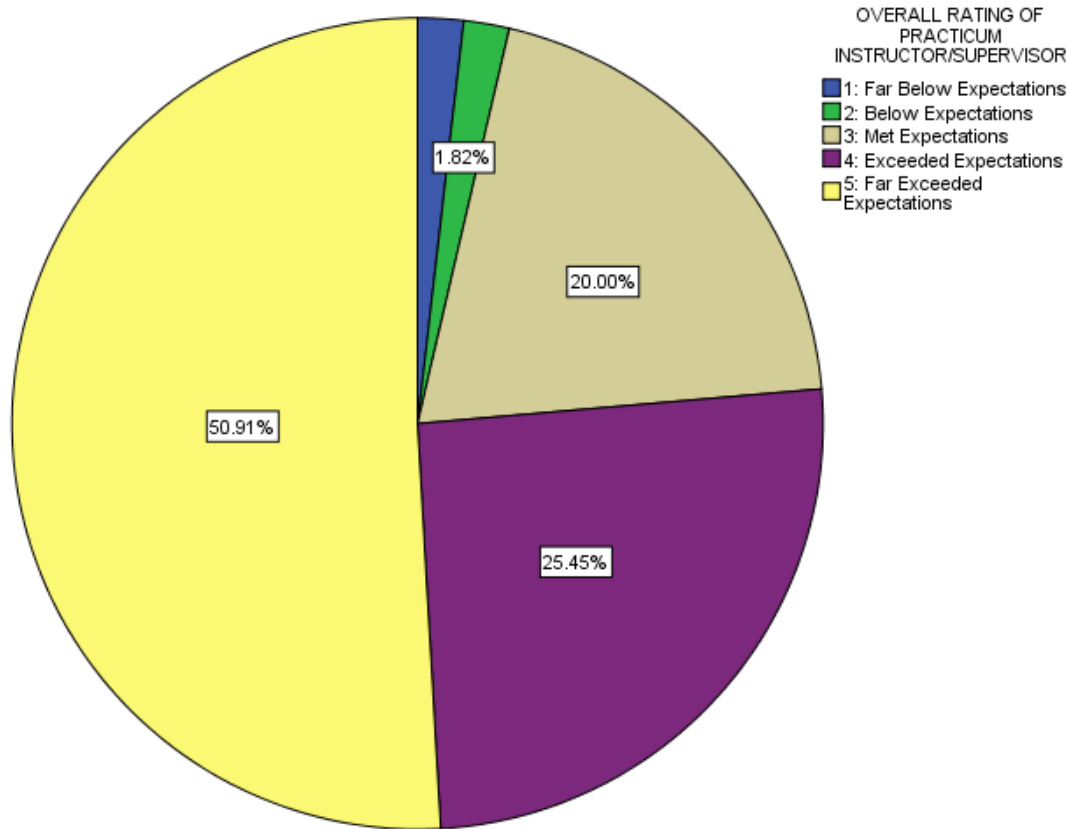


Figure 8.10. Student Evaluation of Field Instructor Ratings--Advanced Practicum



Students also use the SEPAF to evaluate their faculty liaisons. Ninety-three percent of the 54 students who completed this instrument section in connection with their foundation placement rated their faculty liaison as meeting or exceeding their expectations while 94% rated their liaison’s contributions to their professional development as meeting or exceeding expectations. A very small minority felt like they needed more interaction with the liaison. Ratings given in connection with the advanced practicum are nearly identical to the foundation ratings. Ninety-six percent of the 55 students who completed this section rated their faculty liaison as meeting or exceeding their expectations; 94.5% rated their liaison’s contributions to their professional development as meeting or exceeding expectations.

A cross-section of comments (see below) associated with student ratings of liaisons generally reflect the positive quantitative ratings while a minority are more critical.

“Both Dr. Calloway-Graham and Prof. Browne have been excellent. They have great communication skills and understand our role in these agency settings. They have both been very helpful and available for me.”

“Derrick was very helpful and responsive. Texts, emails, site visits, setting up meetings. I always felt he was attentive and mindful of how things were going for me.”

“I did not feel that we were able to connect, did not really know him, would have been better to have the faculty member and supervisor one and the same.”

“For a new student coming into the MSW program, I was left to initiate too much of the introductory and set-up work for the practicum, on my own. Already overwhelmed by the whirlwind of beginning the first semester of a completely new program, loaded with high credit hours... the practicum got off on a slow, rocky start.”

“I appreciated Shannon's comments and support during our two meetings. I feel he listened to my concerns and didn't brush me off. Shannon gave me some ideas which I tried to implement, some with success, others without, but I did learn some things.”

“I felt a learning curve and was unclear about some expectations at the beginning of my summer practicum. However, when I have met with LaShawn she has been very supportive, informative, and kind. Our meetings accomplished our goals and were enjoyable. I appreciate the clarification and opportunity given to improve upon assignments when necessary. I appreciate LaShawn's encouragement, which has been very helpful to me.”

“I felt Susan was very supportive and a good advocate for my disability issues.”

“I received support when needed or requested.”

“My field liaison was an excellent support. I was able to talk with him throughout this entire year.”

“Sean was available when difficult situations arose and was helpful in communicating with my instructor.”

“There were problems from the beginning and while I do claim some responsibility, I didn't feel like anyone was willing to advocate for me. I felt like everyone was more concerned with what I was doing wrong. I felt this way even when I acknowledged what I needed to improve on.”

“Support and information was convenient and always available. Willingness to provide extra time for training was greatly appreciated.”

At our faculty meetings we discuss the PIESI and SEPAF results to determine what, if any, adjustments need to be made. Results are also reviewed and discussed with our field instructors at the fall orientation and with our Advisory Board during its fall meeting. Feedback from our agency partners is also incorporated into faculty discussions during the year. We have made some adjustments along the way. Most notably the Practicum Director has held trainings with faculty liaisons to ensure that they understand their role and are prepared to carry out their role effectively. We have also determined that faculty liaisons or a student's faculty advisor will serve as his/her field liaison whenever possible as this improves the connection between liaisons and students. We also have emphasized the need for liaisons to make sure that students are getting adequate

supervision and to provide additional training and guidance to field instructors in this regard.

Ongoing Assessment: MSW Student Self-Efficacy Scale Assessment Results and Utilization

The instrument was used for the first time Spring 2010 and again Spring 2011. Fifty-eight graduating students have completed the instrument. The results suggest that the vast majority of our graduating students feel they are able to practice effectively in each program objective/competency area (see Table 8.12). Results do not vary significantly between the full and part-time groups. The 80% benchmark referred to above was exceeded in all areas. Only PO 3 (*I am able to understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues*) stands out as a possible area of focus, particularly since this same program objective has been identified as potentially problematic in other aspects of our program assessment activities. In this case, 15% of respondents selected “neutral” or “disagree” in their response to this item. Faculty discussed this issue and other SSEA results at the fall retreat in August 2010 and determined that additional attention would be paid to the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues in our Principles and Philosophy of Social Work course.

Table 8.12. MSW Student Self-Efficacy Scale Results (N=58)

	% Strongly Agree	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
PO 1. I am able to apply critical thinking skills (e.g. the ability to solve problems, evaluate theories, policies, and organizational practices) within the context of professional social work practice.	69.3	38.9	1.9	0	0
PO 2. I am able to understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and behave accordingly.	75.9	22.2	1.9	0	0
PO 2a*. I am able to apply the value base and ethical standards of the profession to advanced sw practice with individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.	59.3	40.7	0	0	0
PO 3. I am able to understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues.	35.1	50.0	13.0	1.9	0
PO 4. I am able to understand, affirm, and respect people from diverse backgrounds (e.g., age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation).	83.3	16.7	0	0	0
PO 5. I am able to understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice.	55.6	42.6	1.8	0	0
PO 6. I am able to apply the knowledge and skills of advanced generalist social work practice with systems of all sizes (e.g. individual, families, groups, organizations, and communities) with particular competence in direct practice methods with individuals, families, and groups.	50.0	42.6	5.6	1.8	0
PO 6a.* I am able to synthesize and then apply the knowledge acquired in the Advanced/Concentration classes to advanced practice with individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.					

51.9	40.7	7.4	0	0
PO 7. I am able to use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the lifespan and the interactions among individuals and between individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities.				
44.4	44.4	9.3	1.9	0
PO 7a.*I am able to apply empirically supported theoretical frameworks for understanding individual, family, group and organizational development and behavior to advanced sw practice with individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.				
37.0	55.6	5.6	1.8	0
PO 8. I am able to analyze, formulate, and understand mechanisms of influence when responding to agency, state, and federal social policies.				
37.0	57.4	5.6	0	0
PO 8a.*I am able to analyze, formulate and influence policy in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.				
31.5	63.0	5.5	0	0
PO 9. I am able to evaluate research studies and understand their applicability to advanced generalist social work practice.				
35.2	57.4	7.4	0	0
PO 9a.*I am able to evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups and organizations in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.				
42.6	53.7	3.7	0	0
PO 10. I am able to use communication skills differentially (distinguishing the appropriate response) across client populations, colleagues, and communities.				
66.7	29.6	3.7	0	0
PO 11. I am able to use supervision and consultation appropriate to social work practice.				
70.4	27.8	1.8	0	0
PO 11a.* I am able to engage in supervisory and administrative roles in ways that are differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical with a high degree of autonomy and proficiency.				
40.7	50.0	9.3	0	0
PO 12. I am able to function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems.				
67.7	33.3	0	0	0
PO 12a.* I am able to function autonomously as well as collaboratively within the structure of organizations and social service delivery systems in differentiated, discriminating, and self-critical ways with a high degree of proficiency.				
61.1	35.2	3.7	0	0
PO 13. I am able to participate in professional development, inter-professional and interdisciplinary collaboration, and in and reciprocal relationships among social work professionals, groups, organizations, and communities.				
61.1	37.0	1.9	0	0

*Concentration Objective

Special and Periodic Assessment Results and Utilization

We have not yet collected special or periodic assessments. Following the graduation of our first part-time cohort, we plan to hold focus groups with practicum instructors to obtain feedback regarding the practicum, as well as their perceptions of our MSW students and the program as a whole. We plan to conduct an alumni survey one year after our first part-time cohort graduates to ascertain how our alumni are doing within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems (Program Objective 12/12a), and if they are participating in professional development, inter-professional and interdisciplinary collaboration, and in reciprocal relationships among social work professionals, groups, organizations, and communities (Program Objective 13). We will

use the alumni survey to garner their perceptions regarding how well our program prepared them for advanced generalist practice with systems of all sizes with particular competence in direct practice methods with individuals, families, and groups (Program Objective 6/6a), if they feel prepared to use supervision and consultation appropriate to social work practice (Program Objective 11/11a), and prepared to assess their practice in relation to the rest of our program objectives. Additionally, we will ask alumni to assess their efforts to incorporate the *strengths perspective*, the *empowerment approach* and a *social justice philosophy* (our program themes) into their practice.

Dissemination and Utilization of Program Evaluation Findings

As indicated throughout this section, program evaluation findings are shared with and discussed by the entire faculty, as needed, throughout the year, and annually at the program's fall retreat. Program evaluation findings are also shared and discussed with the MSW Program Advisory Board each fall. If necessary, these discussions culminate in plans of action for making program improvements during the coming academic year. Action plans are revisited during faculty meetings throughout the year to assess their implementation and effectiveness.