

## EMPLOYER FEEDBACK ON GRADUATES AND SUMMARIES OF THE RESULTS:

In December 2010, FSEHD initiated efforts to gather employer feedback on the preparation and performance of recent initial teacher preparation and advanced program graduates via electronic survey. Electronic surveys were sent to all current school and district administrators in RI (n=346). Half of these respondents were randomly selected to receive the survey soliciting feedback on initial teacher preparation program graduates; the other half were randomly selected to receive the advanced programs employer survey.

Following a survey pre-notice letter, survey invitation, and two emailed reminders, the response rate for the initial programs employer survey was 20% (n=35). The response rate for the advanced programs employer survey was 17% (n=29). The first question on each survey asked, "Since 2008, have you hired one or more recent Rhode Island College (RIC) graduates of initial teacher preparation programs (BA, BS, MAT)/advanced programs (graduate level endorsement, MA, MS, MEd, CAGS, or PhD degree or Certificate of Graduate Study) to (teaching) positions at your school/organization?" If the respondent answered "no," s/he was thanked and brought to the exit screen of the survey. If the respondent answered "yes," s/he was presented with a series of items on the survey. Of the 35 initial program employers, 14 (41%) responded that they had hired a FSEHD graduate since 2008. Of the 29 advanced program employer respondents, just 12 (41%) indicated that they had hired a FSEHD graduate in the last three years. For each group of FSEHD graduates, 59% of respondents reported that they had NOT recently employed a FSEHD graduate.<sup>1</sup>

Due to low survey response rates, the reader of this report should bear in mind that the views expressed by employer survey respondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all employers of FSEHD graduates.

## Results

### Overall Feedback

When asked to rate the preparation of FSEHD graduates for their professional roles, the majority of initial graduate employers (72%) rated FSEHD initial teacher preparation as well, very well, or excellent (see Figure 1). In contrast, 100% of advanced graduate employers gave the same ratings to advanced program graduates. Twenty-nine percent of initial graduate employers (n=4) rated graduates' preparation as "fair."

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<sup>1</sup> Several other potential survey respondents emailed the Director of Assessment personally, reporting that they would like to respond to the survey but could not because they had not hired FSEHD graduates in recent years. For this reason, it is hypothesized that one of the reasons for the low survey response rates was the fact that targeted employers had not hired FSEHD graduates and therefore did not think they needed to respond. Future employer surveys will be reworded in such a way that it is clear that the survey should be accessed even if respondents had not recently hired a FSEHD graduate.

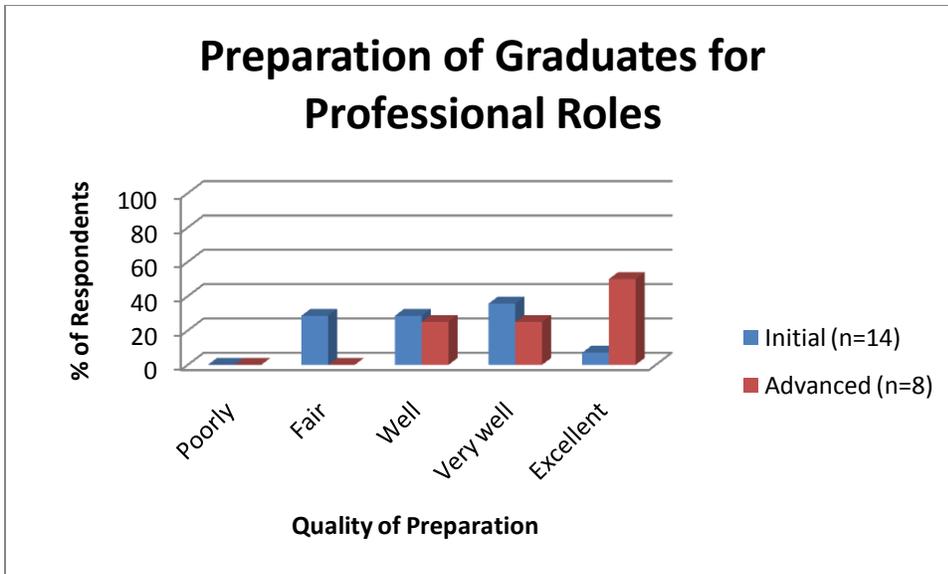


Figure 1

As displayed in Figure 2, 64% of initial graduate employers indicated that graduates had met or exceeded their expectations for beginning teachers. Eighty-nine percent of advanced graduate employers responded that advanced graduates met or exceeded their expectations. In no cases did employers indicate that FSEHD graduates did not meet their expectations at all.

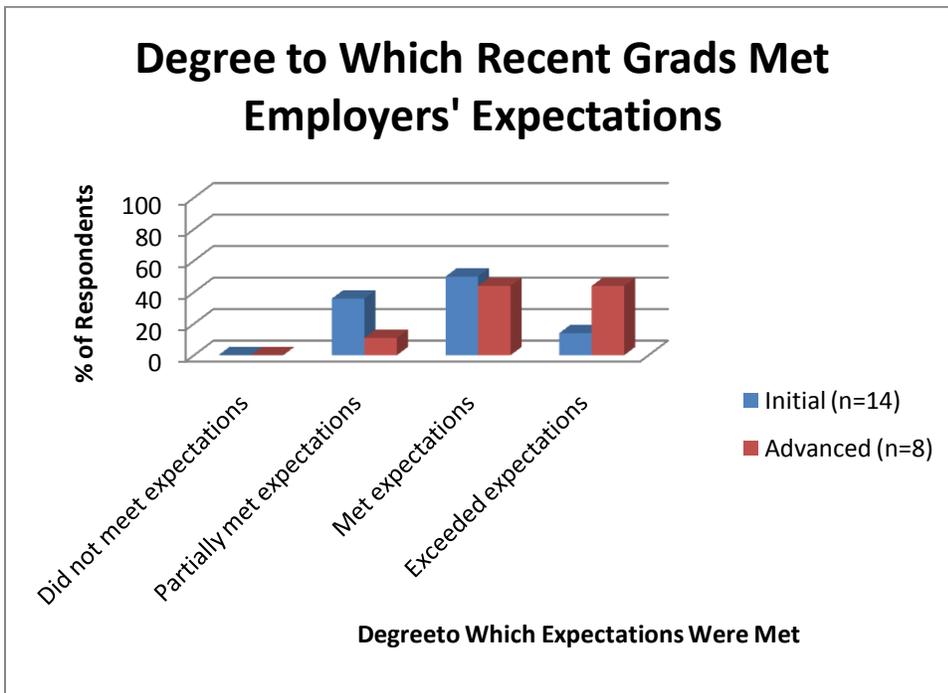


Figure 2

Most initial graduate employers (57%) indicated that FSEHD graduates were about as well prepared academically as teachers with the same level of education from other institutions (see Figure 3).

Furthermore, 21% reported that FSEHD initial programs graduates were “better prepared than most.” In contrast, 44% of advanced program employers reported that FSEHD advanced graduates were “among the best prepared.” Thirty-three percent responded that FSEHD advanced graduates were “better prepared than most,” and 22% indicated that FSEHD advanced graduates were about as well prepared as graduates of other institutions.

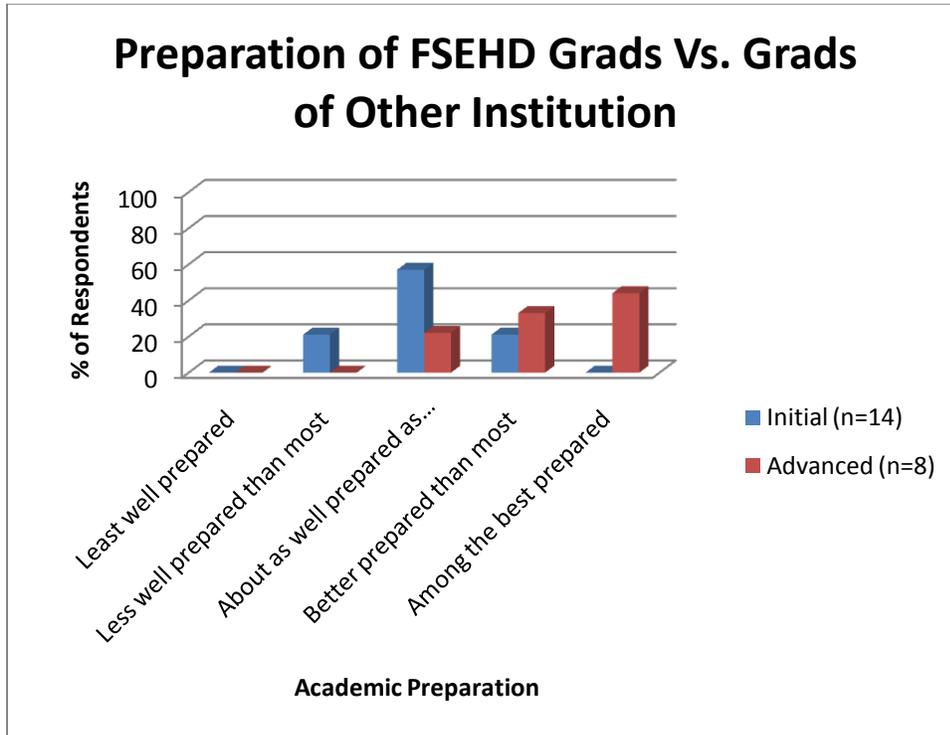


Figure 3

Sixty-four percent of initial graduate employers indicated that they would recommend their school hire graduates of FSEHD initial teacher preparation programs “with confidence” (see Figure 4). Twenty-one percent reported that they would recommend FSEHD graduates “with high confidence.” Among employers of advanced program graduates, the vast majority would recommend FSEHD graduates “with high confidence” (44%) or “absolutely, without reservation” (33%).

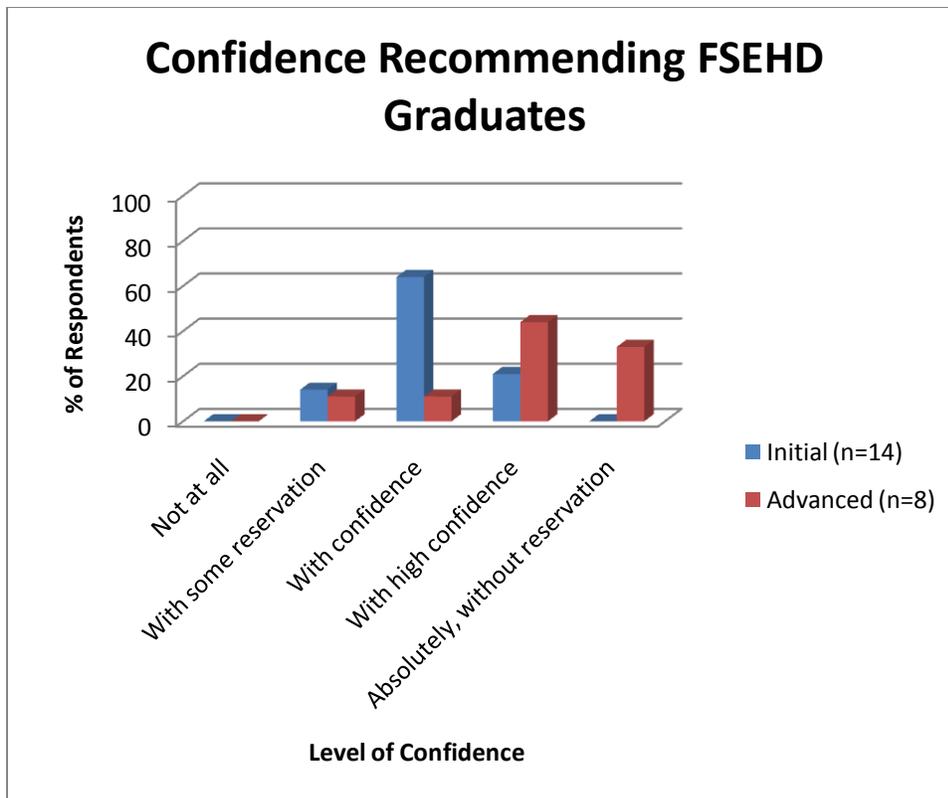


Figure 4

#### Detailed Feedback on Initial Programs Preparation

The employer survey asked respondents to evaluate initial teacher preparation graduates' level of preparation in several areas, using the following scale: 1=Not at all prepared; 2=Somewhat prepared; 3=Adequately prepared; 4=Very well prepared. Table 1 displays these results in descending order according to mean rating on each question. Ratings ranged from 2.31 to 3.08. In general, initial programs graduates were rated highest in areas pertaining to Professionalism: working collaboratively, maintaining professional standards, assuming responsibility for their own professional growth, and reflecting on their practice), with mean ratings hovering around "3" or "adequate." Other areas in the "adequate" range included using a broad base of knowledge, reflecting respect for the diversity of learners, and incorporating digital tools/resources into teaching.

FSEHD graduates were rated lowest in areas related to Pedagogy, specifically as it relates to classroom management, formal and informal assessment, and differentiation, with mean ratings of ranging from 2.31 to 2.70 on a scale of one to four.

Table 1

Preparation Area (n=13)	Level of Preparation				
	Not at all	Some-what	Adequately	Very well	Mean
1. Work collaboratively with all school personnel to create a professional learning community and environment that supports the improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement. (RIPTS 7; CF: Professionalism)	1	1	7	4	3.08
2. Maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles. (RIPTS 11; CF: Professionalism)	0	2	8	3	3.08
3. Create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the communities and world in which we live. (RIPTS 1: Knowledge)	0	2	9	2	3.00
4. Create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners . (RIPTS 4; CF: Diversity)	0	3	8	2	2.92
5. Design or adapt relevant learning experiences that incorporate digital tools and resources. (RIPTS: 8; CF: Pedagogy)	0	3	8	2	2.92
6. Work collaboratively with the broader community to create a professional learning community and environment that supports the improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement. (RIPTS 7; CF: Professionalism)	1	2	7	3	2.92
7. Work collaboratively with families to create a professional learning community and environment that supports the improvement of teaching, learning and student achievement. (RIPTS 7; CF: Professionalism)	0	5	4	4	2.92
8. Assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking and participating in opportunities to learn and grow as professionals. (RIPTS 10; CF: Professionalism)	0	3	8	2	2.92
9. Reflect on their practice. (RIPTS 10; CF: Professionalism)	1	3	6	3	2.85
10. Have a deep content knowledge base sufficient to create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of central concepts, vocabulary, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines/content areas they teach. (RIPTS 2; CF: Knowledge)	0	4	8	1	2.77
11. Create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop. (RIPTS 3; CF: Pedagogy)	0	5	6	2	2.77
12. Create a supportive learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. (RIPTS 6; CF: Pedagogy)	1	4	5	3	2.77
13. Use effective communication as the vehicle through which students explore, conjecture, discuss, and	0	4	8	1	2.77

Preparation Area (n=13)	Level of Preparation				
	Not at all	Some-what	Adequately	Very well	Mean
investigate new ideas. (RIPTS 8; CF: Pedagogy)					
14. Create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning. (RIPTS 4; CF: Diversity)	0	7	3	3	2.69
15. Use appropriate informal assessment strategies with individuals and groups of students to determine the impact of instruction on learning, to provide feedback, and to plan future instruction. (RIPTS 9; CF: Pedagogy)	1	3	8	1	2.69
16. Use appropriate formal assessment strategies with individuals and groups of students to determine the impact of instruction on learning, to provide feedback, and to plan future instruction. (RIPTS 9; CF: Pedagogy)	1	3	9	0	2.62
17. Create instructional opportunities to encourage all students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, performance skills, and literacy across content areas. (RIPTS 5; CF: Pedagogy)	2	2	9	0	2.54
18. Demonstrate effective classroom management strategies. (RIPTS 6; CF: Pedagogy)	2	5	6	0	2.31

Scale: 1=Not at all prepared; 2=Somewhat prepared; 3=Adequately prepared; 4=Very well prepared

When asked to describe the greatest strengths of recent initial teacher preparation programs graduates, respondents tended to comment on graduates' willingness to work hard, learn, and reflect on their teaching. They also described strong interpersonal skills and understanding of content and pedagogy. All open-ended responses on this topic included:

- *Content knowledge*
- *"I think that RIC Student's are better prepared then other school's from the local area."*
- *understand the importance of differentiated instruction.*
- *Work ethic--recent graduates work hard to improve their practice and are very reflective about their work.*
- *Motivated, passionate about teaching, ready to work hard to meet district standards, good grasp of basic content area.*
- *Reflect and willing to hear feedback*
- *People skills...#1!*
- *Comfortable in the classroom and in front of kids*
- *Ready to transition in to the classroom, well prepared and willing to learn.*
- *Knowledge of current pedagogy*
- *Willingness to learn*

The weakness most frequently cited of recent initial teacher preparation programs graduates had to deal with classroom management. In fact, five of the eleven qualitative comments mentioned classroom management. Other areas of weakness cited included differentiated instruction and assessment. Specific responses were as follows:

- *Classroom management ,dealing with difficult students, instructional strategies and intrepreting data to improve teaching ,learning and student achievement.*
- *I believe they need more time student teaching.*
- *Preparing and delivering instruction for diverse learners (special education, ELLs, advanced).*
- *Differentiated instruction, using results of formal/informal assessments, no clear understanding of the use of formative assessments, lack strategies for improving challenging students, lack of advisory knowledge,*
- *Some managment issues*
- *Classroom management--though this can be learned as the tools RIC provides helps a great deal in applying successful classroom management practices.*
- *Knowledge of high school reform*
- *Classroom Management*
- *classroom management*
- *Initially, graduates think they already know exactly what to do.*
- *Aren't aware of --- classroom based measurement, differentiation instruction strategies, behavioral supports, guided reading and phonics instruction, formative assessment*

Employer survey respondents offered several recommendations for FSEHD to better prepare initial teacher preparation candidates. Two themes emerged from these recommendations. First, employers recommended increased field work for candidates in the form of practica, student teaching, and other experiences in schools. Improved classroom management skills were mentioned second most frequently. Suggestions included:

- *see above responses*
- *(More time in the classroom.)*
- *Graduates would benefit from expanded internship experiences and need far more preparation in special education and ELL.*
- *More time in practicum/student teaching. Consider a year long student teaching experience. Education is changing so quickly and at times, most colleges seem out of touch with their curriculum offerings. For example, in this survey several questions refer to "professional learning communities". Most candidates have no idea what a professional community is. In Barrington, we have been working hard to develop a professional learning community and it would help us tremendously if students knew the basic concepts behind PLCs. All students should be required to complete a high level DI course. All students should be required to take an assessment class that disagregates data and then what to do with that data to improve student performance.*
- *More practicum time in classrooms*
- *They need more time in front of students, leading classes.*
- *Continue to send them into the schools and serve on committees to judge projects.*
- *More time with classroom management strategies.*
- *Classroom management preparation and design of student-centered instructional strategies*
- *More field work and more problem solving experiences to develop skills with all sorts of real life situaitons would be a tremendous help to novice teachers.*
- *Expose to more current methodologies*

## Detailed Feedback on Advanced Programs Preparation

The advanced programs employer survey required respondents to rate advanced graduates' competence in areas related to FSEHD's Advanced Competencies, using the following scale: 1=Not at all competent; 2=Somewhat competent; 3=Adequately competent; 4=Very competent. Overall, ratings were quite positive, ranging from 2.89 to 3.67. Advanced programs graduates were rated highest in areas related to Technology Use and Domain Specific Knowledge (see Table 2). Lowest rated indicators included demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of diversity as it relates to field specific content (Contextual Perspective); selecting and using technology effectively in research based activities (Technology Use); creating a plan to further their own professional growth (Professional Identity Development); and incorporating considerations of other professionals and/or stakeholders when determining a plan of action (Evidence-Based Decision Making). These lowest rated indicators had means ranging from 2.89 to 3.11.

Table 2

Competence Area (n=9)	Level of Competence				
	Not at all	Somewhat	Adequately	Very	Mean
13. Select and use technology effectively in collaborative work environments. (Technology Use)	0	0	3	6	3.67
1. Demonstrate conceptual mastery of subject matter, literature, and theory in field of professional practice. (Domain Specific Knowledge)	0	1	2	6	3.56
3. Recognize when information is needed. (Information Literacy)	0	0	4	5	3.56
12. Select and use technology effectively in presentation of information. (Technology Use)	0	1	2	6	3.56
2. Demonstrate conceptual mastery of methods in field of professional practice. (Domain Specific Knowledge)	0	0	5	4	3.44
6. Exhibit an understanding of the standards of one's chosen profession (Professional Awareness)	0	2	2	5	3.33
7. Define problems clearly. (Evidence-Based Decision Making)	0	1	4	4	3.33
9. Use data to inform decision-making. (Evidence-Based Decision Making)	0	2	2	5	3.33
10. Address target population dynamics. (Evidence-Based Decision Making)	0	1	4	4	3.33
14. Select and use technology effectively in information collection analysis and management. (Technology Use)	0	1	4	4	3.33
17. Examine own emerging, developing or acquired professional knowledge, skills, communication, and dispositions (Professional Identity Development)	0	1	4	3	3.25
4. Locate, interpret, and evaluate relevant information. (Information Literacy)	0	1	5	3	3.22
8. Collect and analyze data. (Evidence-Based Decision Making)	0	2	3	4	3.22

Competence Area (n=9)	Level of Competence				Mean
	Not at all	Somewhat	Adequately	Very	
16. Use knowledge of diversity about self and others to design effective practice. (Diversity of Practice)	0	1	5	3	3.22
5. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of diversity as it relates to field specific content. (Contextual Perspective)	0	2	4	3	3.11
15. Select and use technology effectively in research based activities. (Technology Use)	0	2	4	3	3.11
18. Create plan to further their own professional growth. (Professional Identity Development)	0	2	4	3	3.11
11. Incorporate considerations of other professionals and/or stakeholders when determining a plan of action. (Evidence-Based Decision Making)	0	3	4	2	2.89

Scale: 1=Not at all competent; 2=Somewhat competent; 3=Adequately competent; 4=Very competent

The greatest strength attributed to recent advanced programs graduates included a willingness to learn. Advanced graduates were also described as being student-centered. Responses on this topic included:

- *Have been exposed to a broad scope of information.*
- *ability to find answers to questions*
- *They all seem to embrace best practice and are concerned with adapting their instruction to best meet their students need.*
- *willingness to continue to learn*
- *Focus on students and progress monitoring.*
- *technology, student centered learning, engaging students, creating worksheets that aren't just question and answer, but require higher-order thinking skills*
- *Most have been older grads, so maturity and a wealth of real-world experience*

Five respondents identified what they viewed as the greatest weaknesses of recent advanced programs graduates. No obvious theme was common among these responses, which focused on curriculum development, quick thinking, the RI Diploma System, classroom management, and building and school department dynamics. Responses were as follows:

- *Want to be provided with a "canned curriculum" rather than developing a curriculum.*
- *inability to think quickly in situations which demand a fast response*
- *Many graduates do not have a clear grasp of RI Diploma system requirements and multiple measures.*
- *N/A*
- *none*
- *Classroom management*
- *Just understanding building dynamics / school dept. politics & budgets*

The six recommendations to better prepare advanced candidates were quite variable, ranging from continued work with field based professionals on real world problems, mentoring, classroom management skills, and curriculum development.

- *More work with curriculum development.*
- *Continue working on real world problems*
- *Try to bring in more professionals from the field to discuss the fast paced changes at RIDE.*
- *N/A*
- *provide mentoring or next steps for continued professional development*
- *More work with classroom management*
- *Doing a fine job. Continue to use professors who have experience in the field vs academia*

### **Conclusions**

Overall, employers of initial teacher preparation and advanced program graduates indicated that graduates were well prepared and met their expectations and that they would recommend that their school/organization hire FSEHD graduates. In general, however, employers of advanced graduates were much more positive in their ratings than initial graduates' employers.

Initial programs graduates were also evaluated highly in terms of their preparation to work collaboratively, maintain professional standards, assume responsibility for their own professional growth, reflect on their practice using a broad base of knowledge, reflect respect for the diversity of learners, and incorporate digital tools/resources into teaching. In contrast, both quantitative and qualitative feedback on initial graduates suggested a need to increase graduates' skills in classroom management, formal and informal assessment, and differentiated instruction.

Employers were generally quite positive about the competence of advanced programs graduates, rating them at least "adequate" on all indicators except for their ability to incorporate considerations of other professionals and/or stakeholders when determining a plan of action. They were evaluated highest on indicators pertaining to Technology Use and Domain Specific Knowledge.