

# A Comparative Study of Curricular Models in English Teacher Training in International Contexts



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# Background



- We train TESOL professionals at the Master's level
- MA-TESOL/Applied Linguistics is a widely recognized degree offered in many countries for credentialing prospective English teachers
- Yet, curricula of this degree vary at different institutions across different countries
- Hence, we are curious about how they differ and whether they prepare prospective teachers equally effectively?
- We picked three institutions, each from the UK, the US, and China “to take a look”!

# Impetus of the study



- Given the same disciplinary goal of training qualified TESOL professionals, it makes sense to examine how different curricular setups achieve this goal where “different curricular setups” mean
  - Classes students take that prepare them for the disciplinary knowledge and skills
  - Length of time students take to complete their degree program
  - The overall readiness with which students enter the teaching profession

# Overarching question



- Are the curricula under the same program name equally effective in training English teachers for the kinds of English learning populations they serve given the variables across the curricula?
  - Courses/modules
  - Delivery
  - Length of time (UK: 1 year, US: 2 years, and China: 3 years)
  - Graduation requirements

# Institutions under study



- **MA in Applied Linguistics for TESOL, Kingston University, UK**
- **MA in Applied Linguistics, Grand Valley State University, US**
- **MA in Foreign and Applied Linguistics, Xi'an International Studies University, China**

# Five areas of preparedness



- **Theory of language**
  - Morphology, phonetics, phonology, grammar/syntax
- **Theory of learning**
  - Child language, L1 vs. L2 development, SLA theory, compare and contrast L1 and L2 theories
- **Pedagogy**
  - Methods & techniques, needs analysis, classroom management, education/digital technology
- **Curriculum/syllabus design**
  - Lesson planning, material selection and adaptation
- **Assessment and evaluation**
  - Test techniques, CATS, test design & evaluation, score interpretation

# Data source (students)

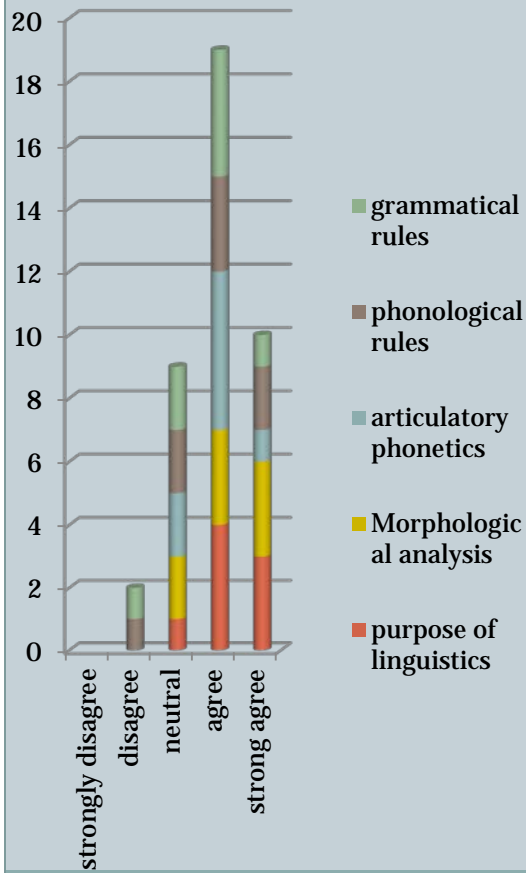


- A questionnaire containing 22 questions addressing the five areas of study administered to MA students at the three institutions.
- Interviews conducted with students at the three institutions.

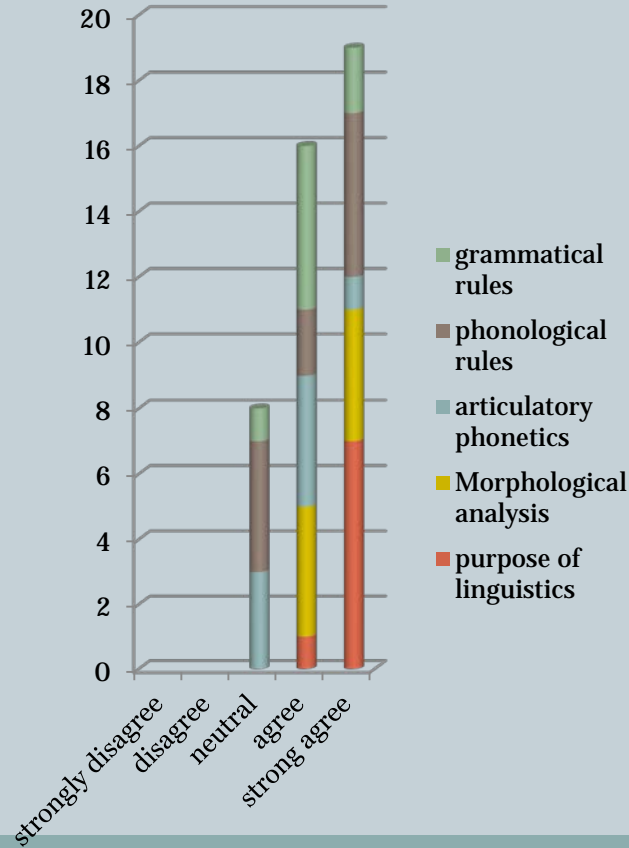
# Theory of language



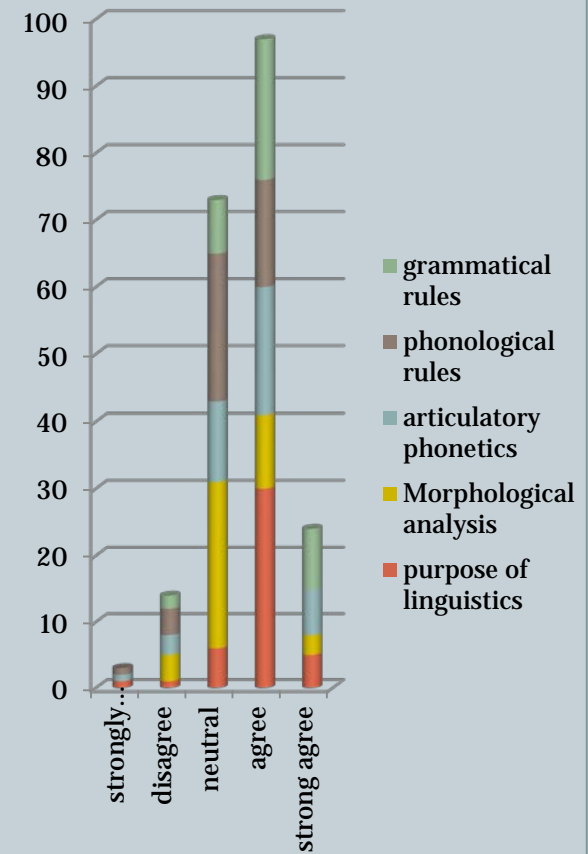
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU





# Initial findings

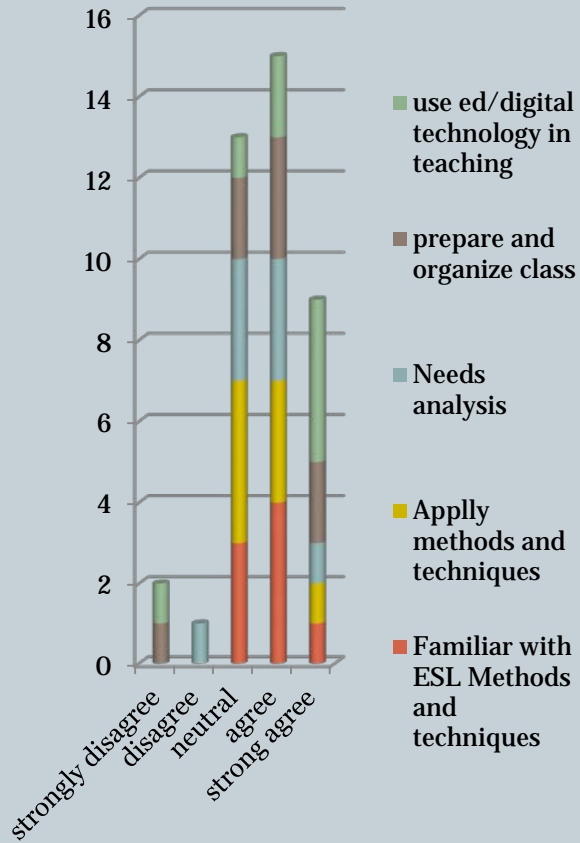


- **KU and GVSU students are roughly comparable in their sentiments about their preparedness in talking about linguistic theory while XISU students are more spread out in their confidence.**
- **Between KU and GVSU, GVSU students appears slightly more confident than KU students.**

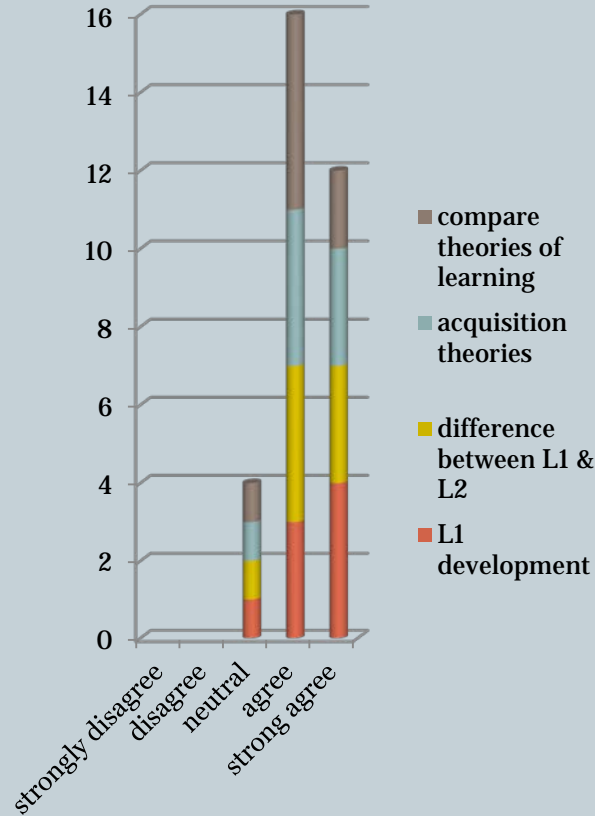
# Theory of learning



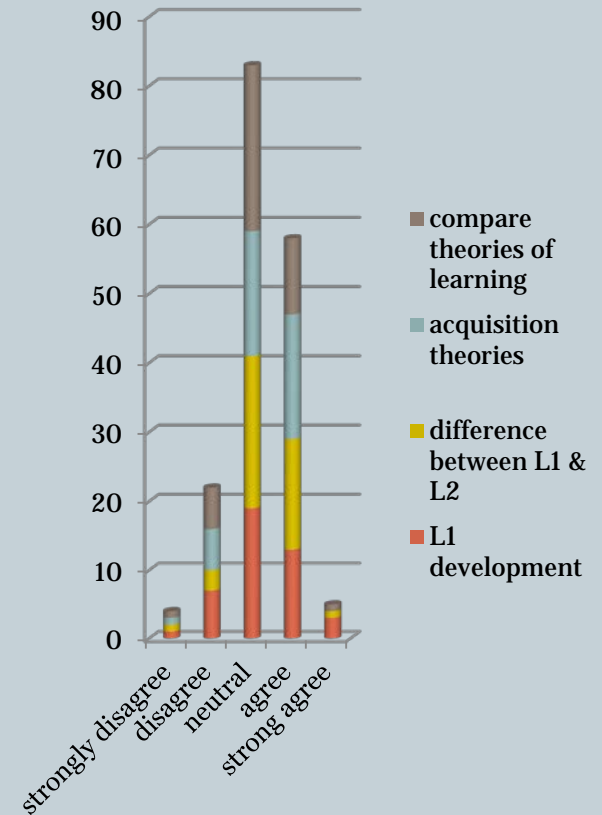
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU



# Initial findings

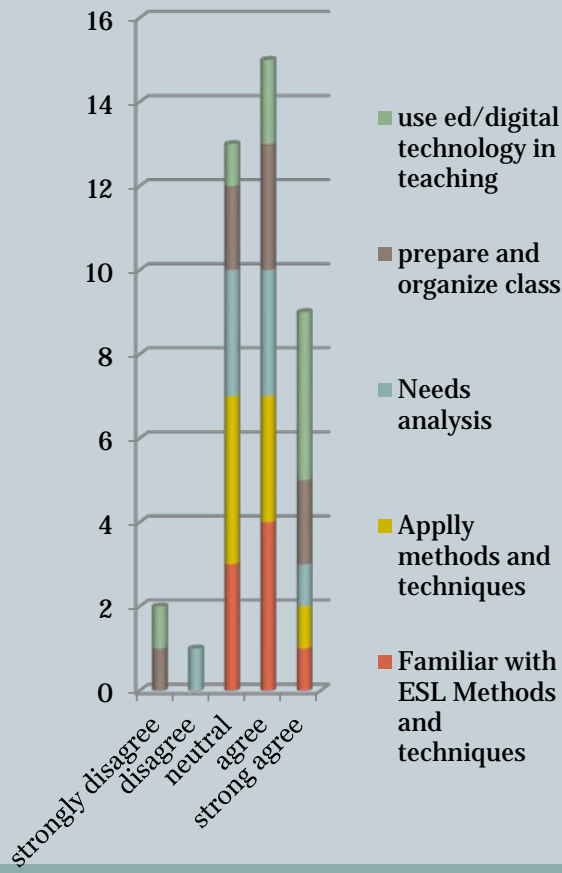


- **GVSU students show higher confidence than KU students, who in turn show higher confidence than XISU students in their knowledge of learning theories.**

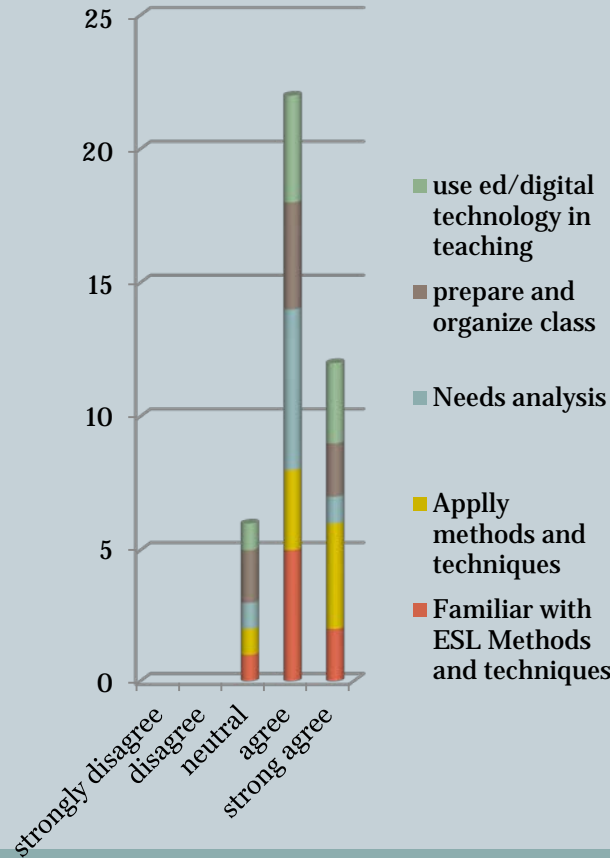
# Pedagogy



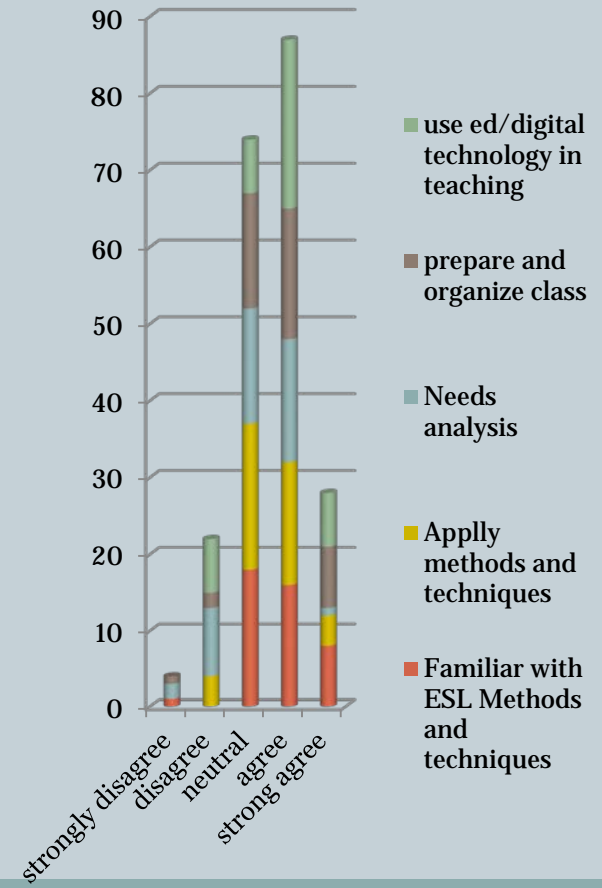
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU



# Initial findings

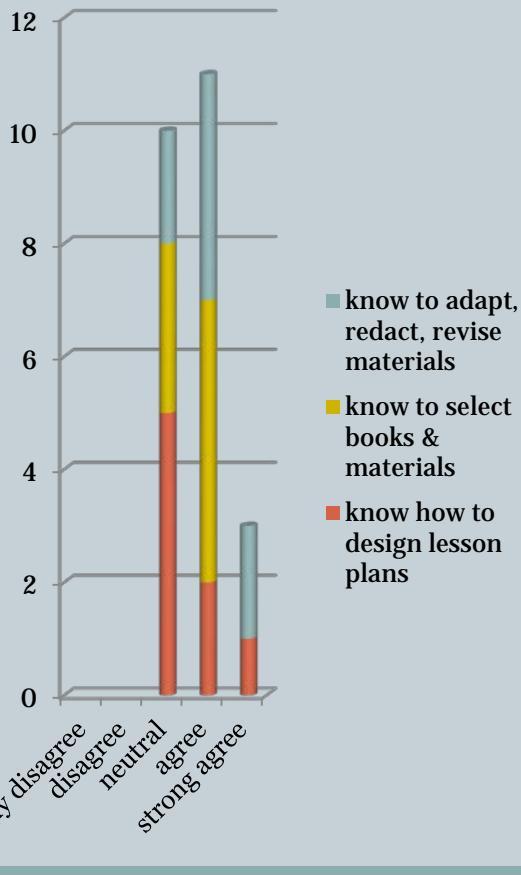


- **KU students show higher confidence in their ability to tackle pedagogical aspects of language teaching than GVSU students, while XISU students are moderately or neutral about their ability to handle pedagogical aspects of language teaching.**
- **However, GVSU students seem more familiar with the use of educational technology than the students at the other two institutions.**

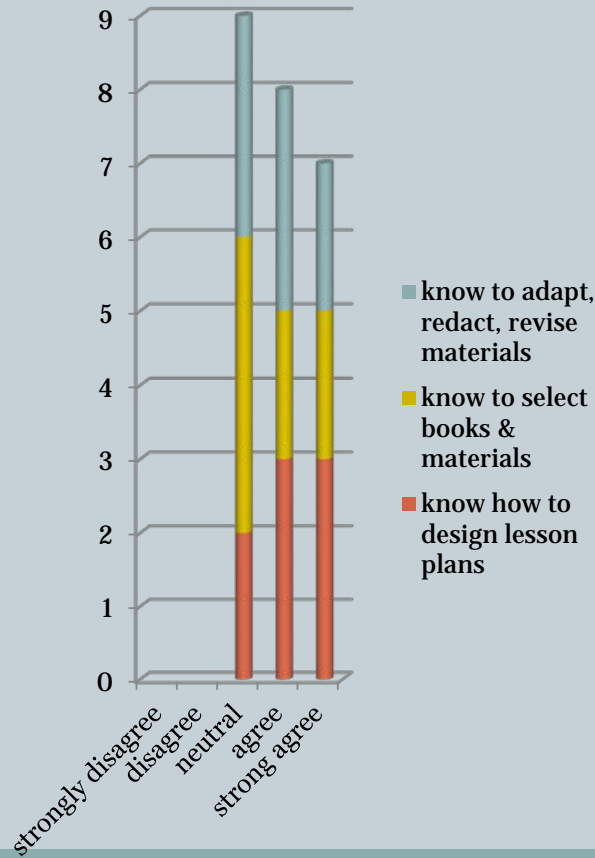
# Curriculum/syllabus design



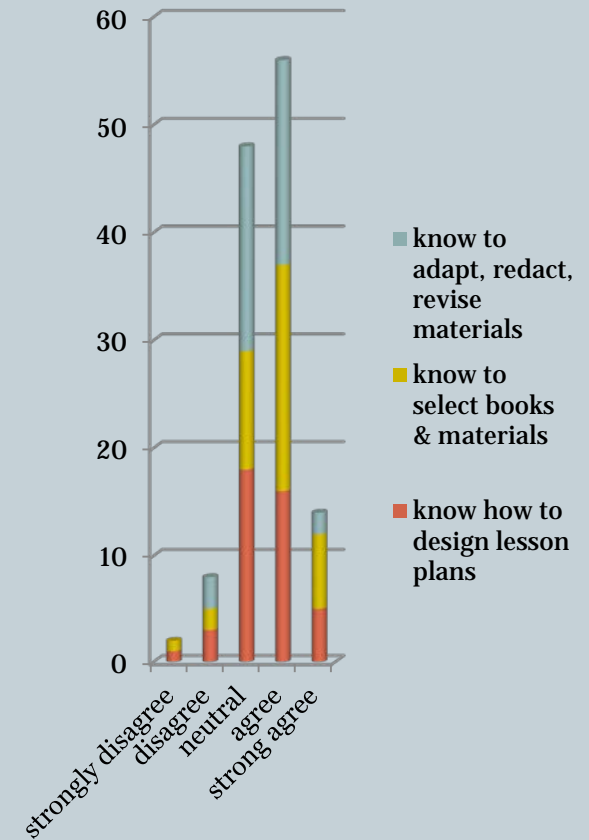
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU



# Initial findings

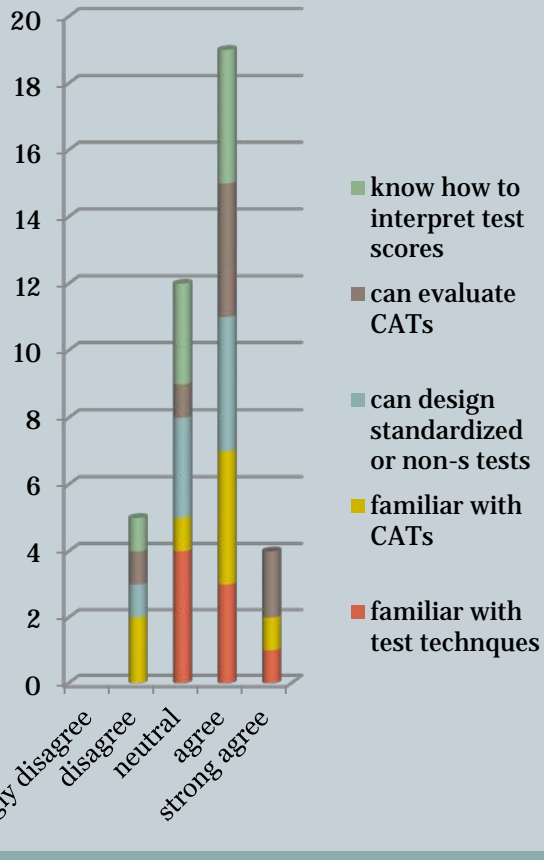


- There is no clear difference among KU, GVSU, and XISU students in their confidence in curriculum/syllabus design, although some XISU students chose “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to express their lack of confidence/ability in this regard.

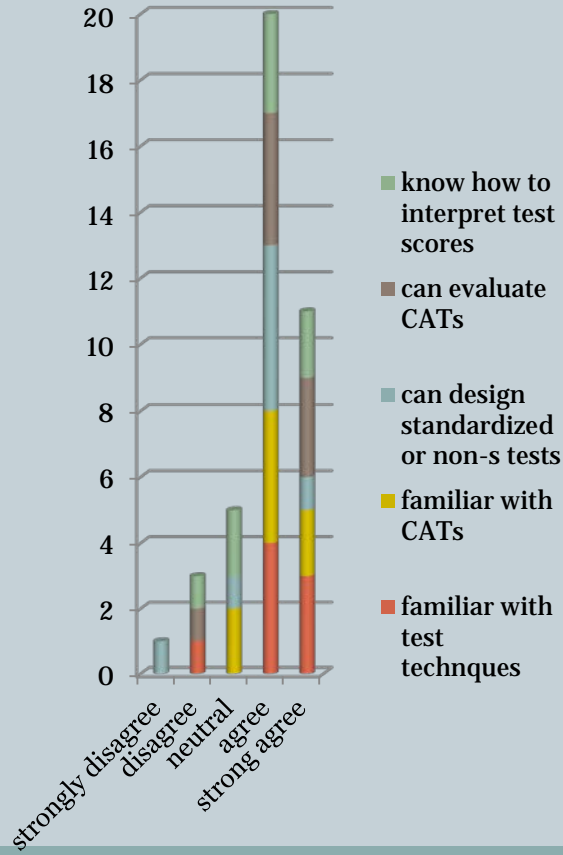
# Assessment



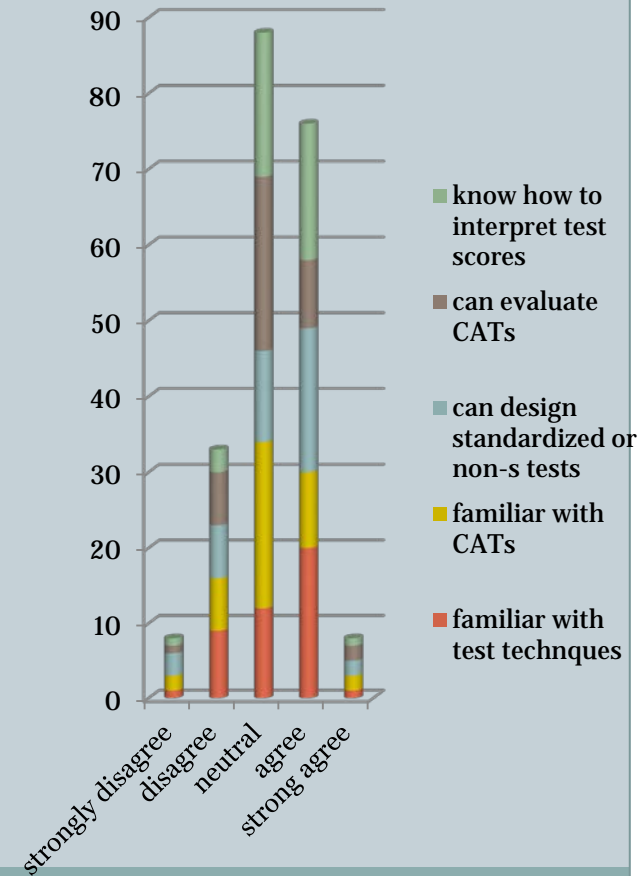
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU





# Initial findings



- GVSU students are slightly more confident than KU students in the area of language assessment and evaluation.
- By contrast, XISU students show this area of knowledge and skill as being the weakest among the three institutions.

# Overall readiness to enter profession

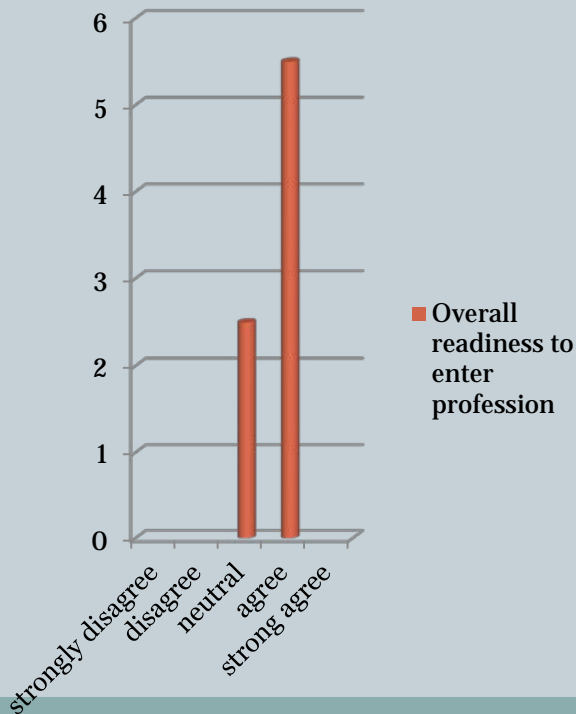


KU

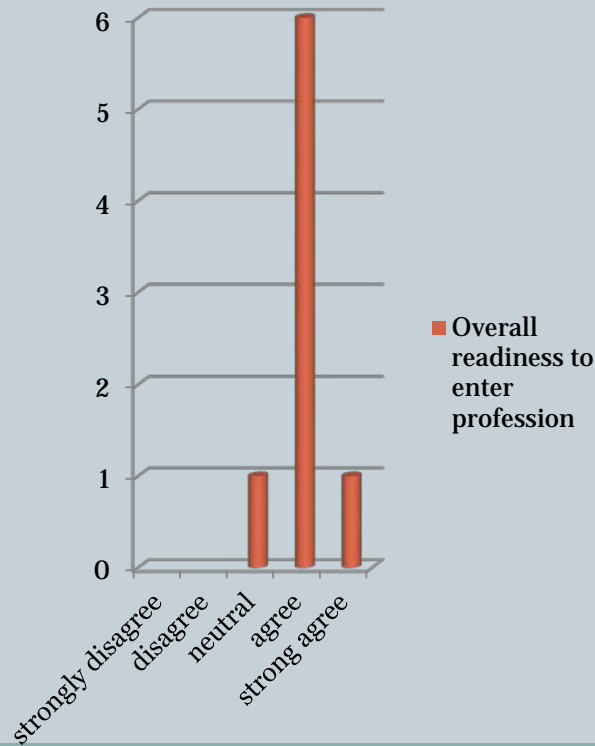
GVSU

XISU

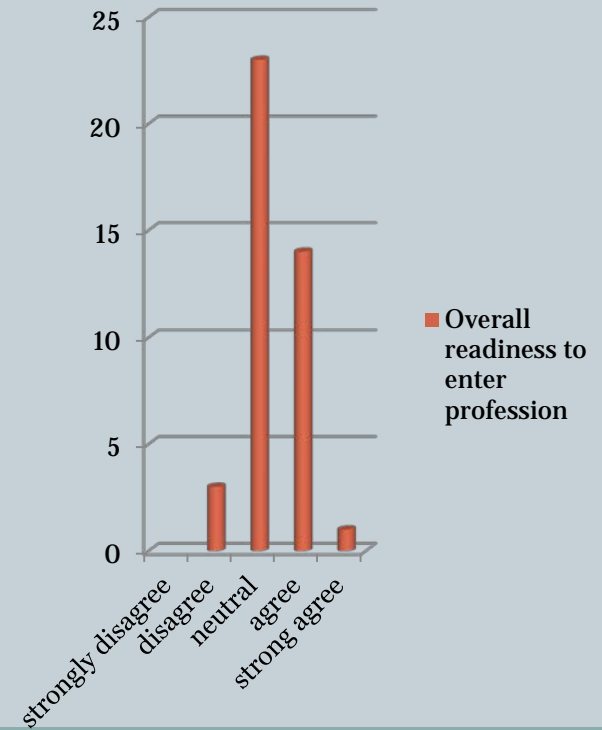
**Overall readiness to enter profession**



**Overall readiness to enter profession**



**Overall readiness to enter profession**



# Initial findings



- XISU students are least sure if they are ready to enter their chosen profession (mostly teaching).
- KU and GVSU students are moderately confident in their readiness to enter their chosen profession (again, mostly teaching)

# Data source (instructors)

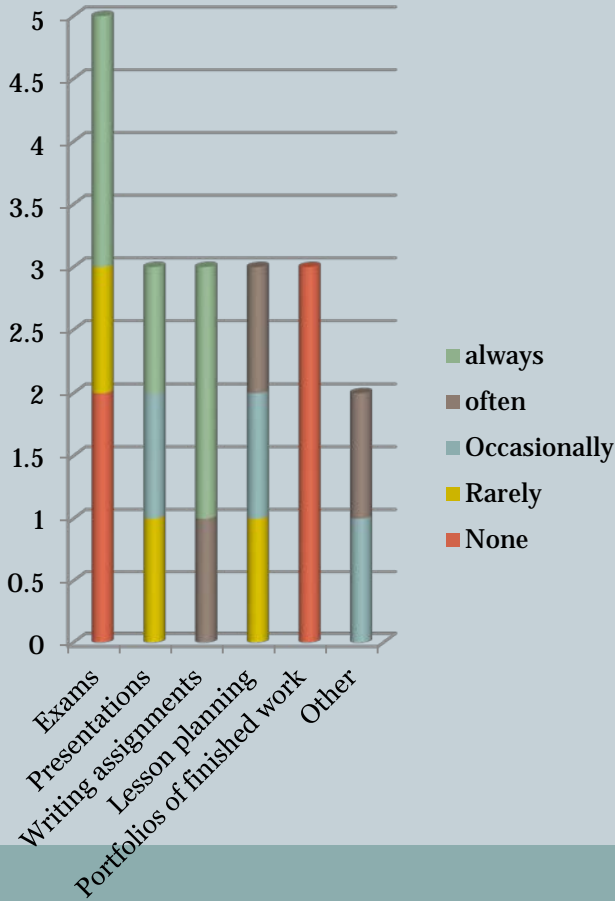


- A 10-item questionnaire on curricular coverage and expectations for students administered to program instructors at two institutions (Kingston University and Xi'an International Studies University).
- Interviews conducted with program instructors at three institutions.

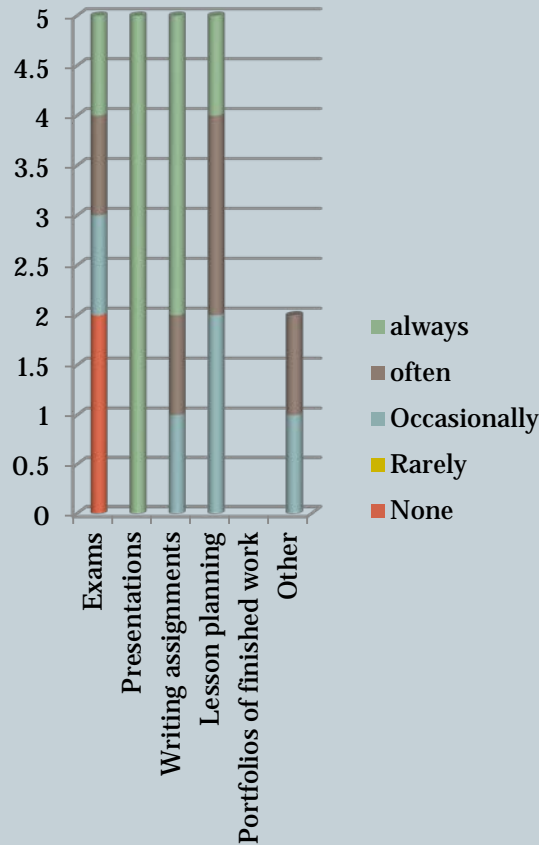
# Requirements for class completion



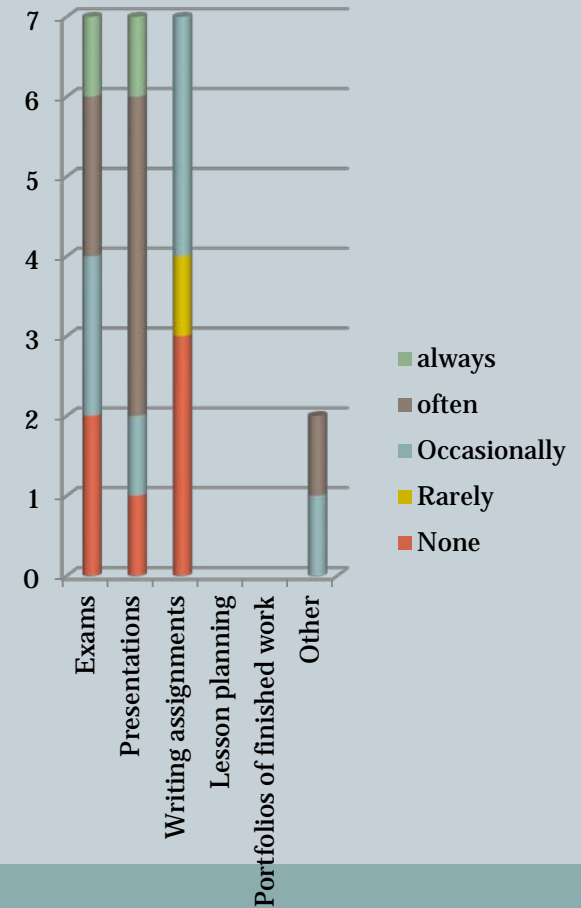
**KU**



**GVSU**



**XISU**



# Initial findings

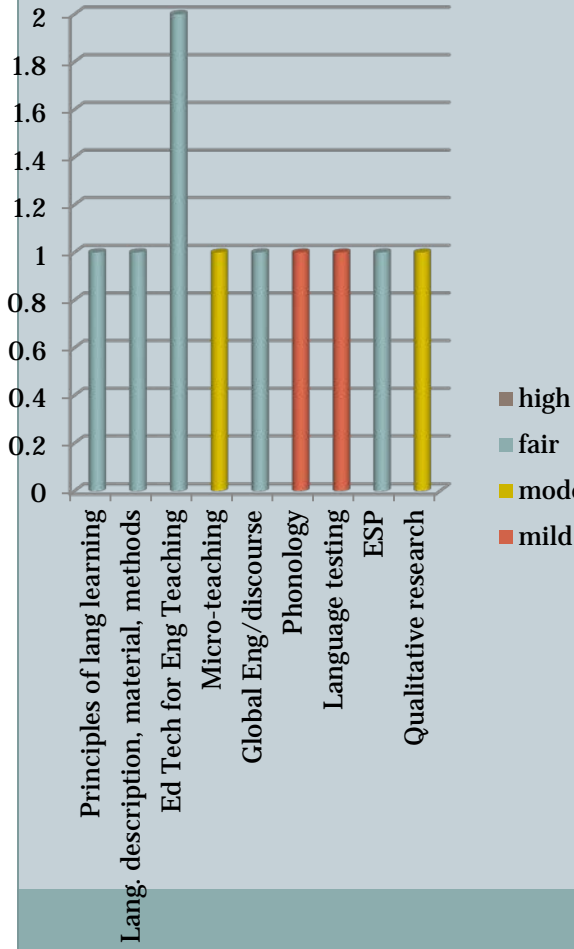


- XISU instructors use more exams as a way to gauge student learning outcomes of their classes than both KU and GVSU instructors.
- Both GVSU and XISU instructors use more class presentations as a means of gauging student learning while KU instructors use less by comparison
- Caveat: there are more instructors (7) in XISU's MA program than GVSU instructors (5) and KU instructors (4).
- KU instructors use a lot more lesson planning than GVSU (none) and XISU (some).

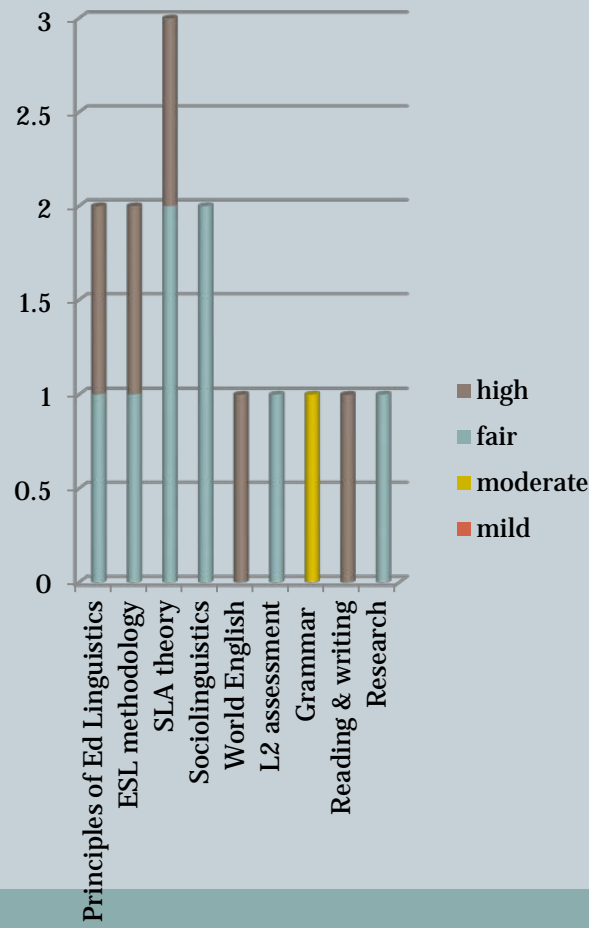
rigor



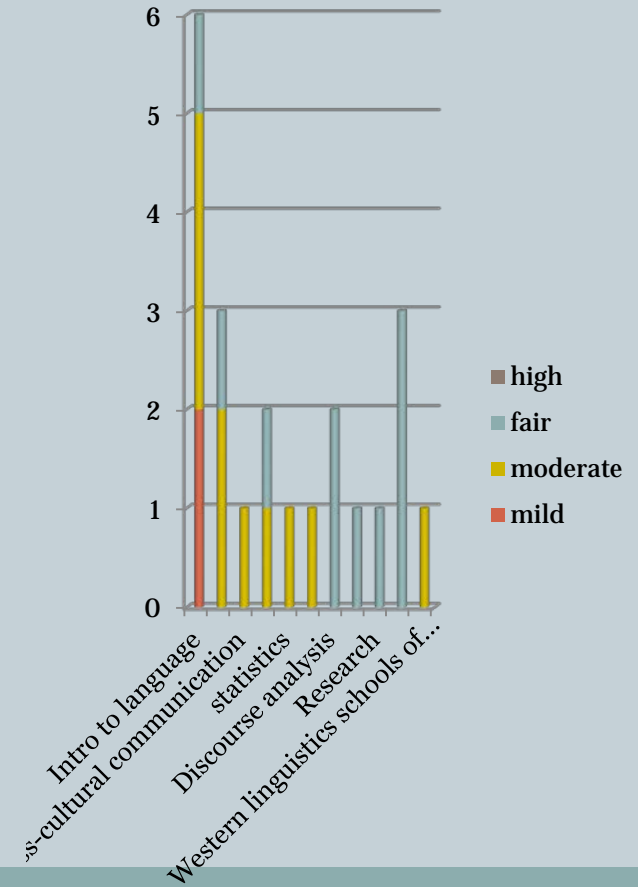
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU



# Initial findings



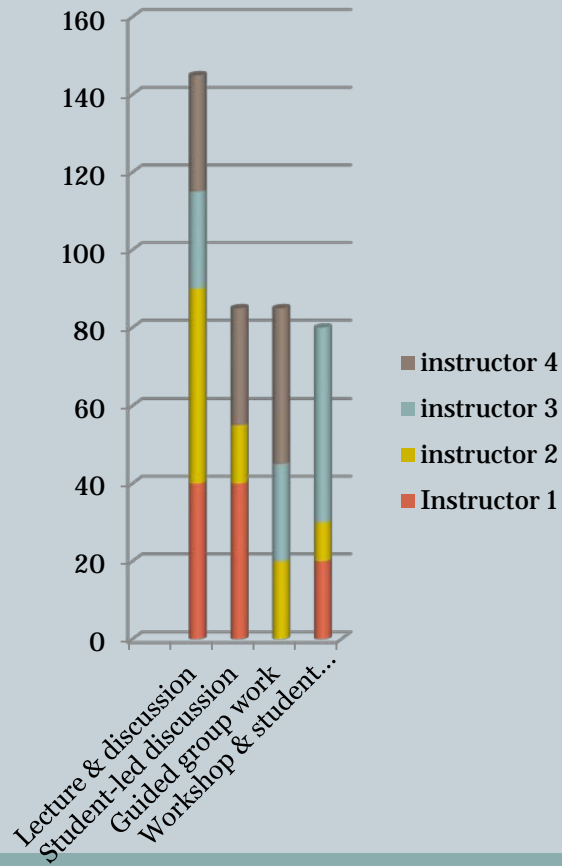
- GVSU instructors believe their classes are overall pretty rigorous while KU instructors' rating of their class rigor is more relaxed, whereas XISU instructors are somewhere in the middle: moderate to fair level of rigor.
- Caveat: The rigor indexes do not apply to identical classes as each program has its own specific class lineup, although the overall impression of rigor, regardless of class, is still useful to know.



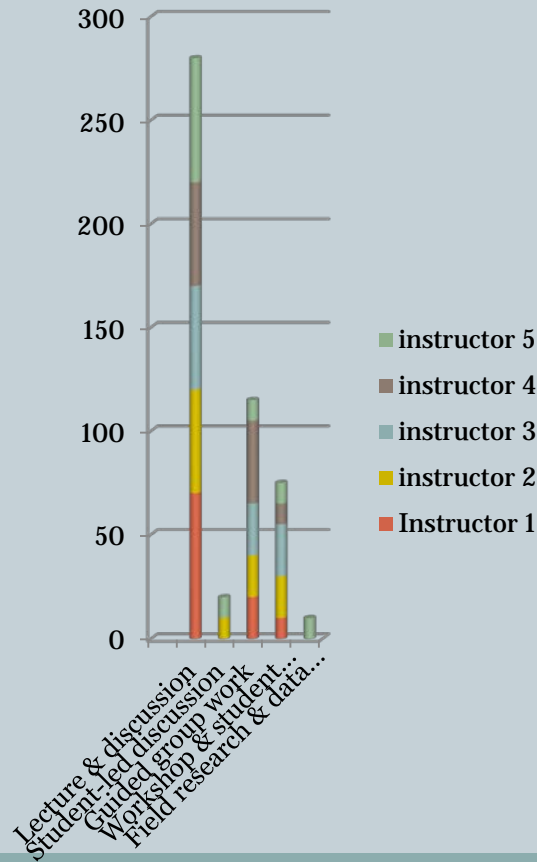
# Class delivery



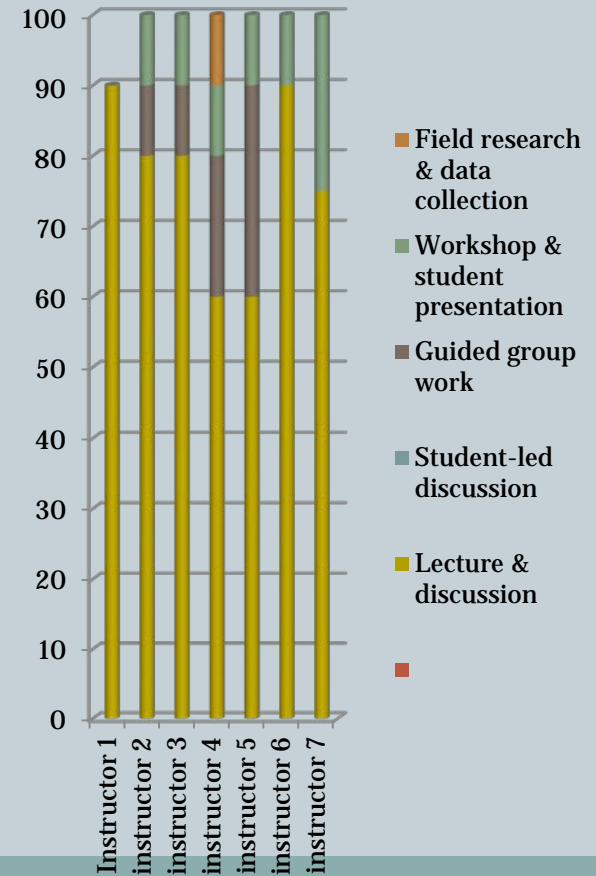
## KU



## GVSU



## XISU



# Initial findings



- Most striking is the fact that XISU instructors use “class lecture & discussion” as their predominant means of delivering content.
- KU instructors use more “student-led discussions” than GVSU (small amount) and XISU instructors (none).
- Both KU and GVSU use “guided group work” while XISU instructors use less.

# Practicum



- **Practicum-anything instructional activity (simulated or authentic) that students conduct in order to gain experience in teaching during degree program**

**Kingston University: 22 hours**

**Grand Valley State University: 45 hours**

**Xi'an International Studies U: 68 hours**

# Exit requirements



**Kingston University: Thesis/dissertation, capstone projects, portfolio assessment, exams**

**Grand Valley State University: Thesis, capstone projects**

**Xi'an International Studies U: Thesis only**

# Student interviews



- **Motivation and career goals?**
- **How challenging are class requirements and workload?**
- **Most intellectually stimulating subject?**
- **Most practical class?**
- **Most beneficial knowledge and skills learned?**
- **Gained necessary teaching skills for the real world?**
- **Gained necessary research skills for the real world?**
- **Confident in entering the work force?**

# Instructor interviews



- How challenging are class requirements and workload?
- Most intellectually stimulating subject taught?
- Most practical class students should take?
- Most beneficial knowledge and skills students must have?
- Your graduates prepared to teach in real world?
- Your graduates have gained necessary research skills?
- Your graduates have the right qualifications enter the work force?
- Your graduates confident in entering the work force?

# Observations and conclusions



- **Three MA degree programs at three institutions with three different student populations studying three different curriculums**
- **How do they do?**