

TRANSPARENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF MUSIC THERAPY MASTER'S  
EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMS: A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY STUDY OF RECENT  
GRADUATES

A THESIS

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BY

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## DEDICATION

For my wife, Olivia. Your dedication and love have made this all possible. Thank you for all you do.

## ABSTRACT

LANDON WHITWORTH

### TRANSPARENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF MUSIC THERAPY MASTER'S EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMS: A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY STUDY OF RECENT GRADUATES

DECEMBER 2023

This descriptive survey reports trends in student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency programs. Thirteen current or recent music therapy master's equivalency students gave perceptions of their programs' transparency regarding length of program, transfer credits, and dual role status. Respondents also gave perceptions of responsiveness to their unique and non-traditional needs in this dual role. The results indicate that while students generally feel well-informed about graduation requirements and transfer credits in their programs, they don't have the same level of clarity when it comes to understanding how long the program will take. Respondents generally perceived their programs were responsive to their needs, and their courses were appropriately challenging, but information about prior experiences in music and related careers informed some of the negative experiences shared. This study highlights the need for transparency in music therapy master's equivalency programs, and gives some recommendations for practices to maintain, improve consistency and change in music therapy master's equivalency education.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A History of Music Therapy Education**

Music therapy education has changed since its inception in the 1940s when universities and hospitals began offering courses for music therapy under the umbrella of music education (Lloyd et al., 2018). In 1958, the National Association for Schools of Music (NASM) formally recognized music therapy education (NASM, n.d.). As of this writing, a music therapy education is offered at 88 different schools across the United States. The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) has set the standard for music therapy education, requiring that "a music therapist at the Professional Level of Practice has a bachelor's degree or its equivalent in music therapy and a current professional designation or credential in music therapy" (AMTA, 2013, para. 3). These standards allowed for the formation of music therapy master's equivalency programs, which offer a master's degree in music therapy and cater to students who have received a bachelor's degree in music and wish to become music therapists.

#### **Master's Equivalency**

As of this writing, 34 music therapy programs have a master's equivalency program (MEP), where graduate students take the equivalent coursework to a bachelor's degree in music therapy while becoming master's level clinicians through simultaneous graduate coursework (AMTA, 2021b). However, this dual role could have potential consequences and MEP students may have different levels of support, given that they are in two levels of education simultaneously. Thus, it is important to consider student perceptions and experiences in the variations of education. This study aims to examine student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency education.

Undergraduate courses in music therapy equivalency programs include instrumental instruction in voice, piano, percussion, and guitar, clinical skills classes, and clinical practica (AMTA, 2021b). Master's equivalency students must complete an internship at the undergraduate level, and students may take most master's level music therapy courses concurrently or prior to completion of these requirements. However, MEP programs must designate 12 credits of coursework that come after the undergraduate internship (AMTA, 2021b). With 34 different schools across the United States offering music therapy master's equivalency programs (AMTA, 2021a), it is crucial to understand the variations of education and clinical training offered to students in these programs.

### **American Music Therapy Association**

AMTA is the governing body that accredits music therapy programs in the United States (AMTA, 2022). They have set guidelines for music therapy training at the undergraduate and graduate levels (AMTA, 2021b). These guidelines allow for the creation of equivalency coursework and MEPs. These guidelines also state that AMTA reviews institutions every 10 years to ensure that programs follow these guidelines. Guidelines are different for graduate and undergraduate practice. Undergraduate education includes a minimum of 1200 hours of clinical training, including an internship, and meets the Standards for Education and Clinical Training (AMTA, 2021b). Graduate clinicians must have met or be working toward undergraduate education requirements. In addition, they also need to meet AMTA's Advanced Competencies (AMTA, 2009).

### **The Academic Program Approval Committee**

The Academic Program Approval Committee (APAC) is the governing body of AMTA in charge of creating requirements for music therapy programs. This body has the following

goals: “1. To support the establishment and maintenance of standards for education and clinical training in the field through collaboration with appropriate association bodies (e.g. other national committees). 2. To utilize these standards as evaluative criteria for recommending approval for academic institutions upon initial application and review every ten years thereafter in conjunction with the NASM accreditation/affirmation review” (AMTA, n.d.).

### **Certification Board for Music Therapists**

The Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) is the organization responsible for credentialing music therapists following undergraduate education (CBMT, 2023a). They have domains for music therapists who receive the Music Therapist-Board Certification (MT-BC) credential that are tested on the board certification exam, which is taken following the completion of all undergraduate coursework. This organization is also in charge of continuing education for all music therapists (CBMT, 2023b). While AMTA sets guidelines for accrediting programs, CBMT sets guidelines for the music therapy credential.

### **University Discrepancies**

Although AMTA sets the competencies and standards of educational training, each university is able to implement the curriculum in unique ways based on their university’s requirements, personal philosophy, or understanding of music therapy practice (AMTA, 2021b). For example, Texas Woman’s University requires six practicum experiences for their undergraduate degree (Texas Woman’s University, 2023), while AMTA only requires that “three different populations should be included in pre-internship training” (AMTA, 2021b). Additionally, the National Association of Schools of Music requires music therapy students to enroll in music theory and music history as well as participate in ensembles and receive private

instruction on an instrument (National Association of School of Music, 2023). This can lead to differing experiences for music therapy students.

### **Problem Statement**

The popularity of music therapy master's equivalency programs is increasing as is the demand for qualified music therapists. As a result, it is important to ensure that students receive adequate education and training. This survey sought to explore whether students in music therapy master's equivalency programs felt that their unique education meets the needs of dual-level education.

### **Purpose of Current Study**

The purpose of this descriptive survey was to examine student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency programs.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. To what extent do students perceive their programs to be transparent regarding length of program, transfer credits, and dual role status?
2. To what extent do students perceive their programs to be responsive to their unique and non-traditional needs in this dual role?

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Relevant Literature**

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no published research exists surrounding student perceptions of education in music therapy master's equivalency programs. Although similar certification programs exist in other countries, specifically in Europe, this research specifically studies music therapy master's equivalency programs in the United States. As such, articles addressing challenges, competency issues, and ethics in music therapy education were used as a basis for research. Research regarding challenges in music therapy education, competency problems in music therapy students, music therapy education, other health professions' education, and ethical dilemmas is explored here.

#### **Examples from Related Health Professions**

In an occupational therapy program in the United Kingdom, the University of Cumbria offered a Pre-registration Master's Degree, where graduate students take the equivalent of bachelor's degree coursework (Bell et al., 2014). Bell et al. (2014) reported the following:

Many educators have higher expectations of master's level students than they do of undergraduate students, due to perceptions of maturity and previous education, life, and work experience. These expectations were contradicted, however, by concerns that master's level students achieve less academic and clinical competence in the shorter time frame for study. (p. 181)

These findings grew from a concern that "(some educators) would find offering placements to master's level students more challenging, which could result in either difficulty in attracting placements for the university or, conversely, higher expectations being placed on

master's students whilst on a placement” (Bell et al., 2014, p. 182). The authors posited benefits may exist to having master’s level students, but that perceptions of these students are often inaccurate from placement educators who have no experience with master’s level students. Greater education prior to placement may lead to improved experiences for educator and student, as well as university staff.

Cole and Wessel (2006), in a Canadian study of physical therapists, explored student perceptions in their clinical placements. They found that several behaviors can lead to enhanced experiences for students. They noted that “physical therapy students value (instructors) who involve them in patient care; confirm, challenge and prepare them for learning; respect their input and model professional behavior” (p. 163).

Another study on receiving a Master’s of Health Professions noted financial challenges including lack of transparency, educators not being responsive to differences in master’s level students, ethical issues, and finances. Master of Health Professions Education programs, for example, had largely varying finances (Lai et al., 2023). “For instance, tuition (for Masters of Health Professions Education programs) in the United States ranges from \$0 —through the Uniformed Services for health professions educators who serve in the U.S. active military— to \$89,632” (pp. 11-12). The U.S. average tuition for this 2-year degree was \$26,751, the highest of any nation in the study. They also included a significant lack of transparency as a challenge, as 65 out of 121 international programs required email correspondence to glean transparent tuition information. In music therapy, financial implications do not have as clear of data, but each of these challenges informed this study and are commented on further in the discussion section.

## **Challenges in Music Therapy Education**

Two articles directly address challenges in music therapy education. First, Clements-Cortes (2019) identified several challenges as they arose in music therapy internship: lack of clarity, limited opportunities, time constraints, and inadequate supervision. Second, Lloyd et al. (2018) examined the experiences of music therapy educators in meeting different educational standards while also providing a complete education for their students. Some of the identified challenges were large class sizes, adapting to a growing number of competencies, and a lack of available resources. Both articles emphasized a need for further research into challenges in music therapy education.

## **Competency Problems in Music Therapy Students**

Hsiao (2014) and Jenkins (2013) both examined the competence of music therapy students. Hsiao (2014) explored how students with "severe professional competency problems" (p. 192) are dealt with and assisted to remedy these competency problems. Jenkins (2013) examined internship director's perceptions of intern competence upon entrance into internship. Both researchers showed that a significant number of students in music therapy were not competent in the guidelines set forth by AMTA. In 93.8% percent of academic programs and 66.2% of internships, educators encountered one or more students with severe professional competency problems (Hsiao, 2014). Similarly, internship directors reported internship students as unprepared for internship in every musical skill except singing (Jenkins, 2013).

## **Music Therapy Educator Perspectives**

Both Jenkins (2013) and Hsiao (2014) addressed issues related to music therapy master's equivalency programs (MEP) and posited important points to consider regarding perceived importance and mastery of functional music skills and gatekeeping practices in music therapy.

These articles, however, cannot replace the need for a study directly focused on student perceptions of experiences in their own education. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no published literature exists surrounding perceptions of master's equivalency music therapy students. Similarly, researchers of related studies primarily sought perspectives from educators and internship supervisors when addressing challenges in music therapy education. These studies (Petrie, 1989; Vega, 2010), addressed music therapists' concerns and their recommendations for changes in music therapy education but did not include student perceptions.

### **Ethical Dilemmas in Music Therapy Education**

Finally, Salyer (2022) examined ethical dilemmas that occur during MEP's. Salyer identified issues regarding ethical dilemmas, specifically confidentiality, professional boundaries, and professional behavior. Furthermore, Salyer found that while most students felt they had received adequate education and training in ethics, they believed that further training and education were necessary to address the complex ethical dilemmas they may encounter in their professional practice. This information was used in the formation of this study as these ethical concerns may also become issues for the effectiveness of these programs.

### **Summary of Literature**

Identifying trends in the perceptions of MEP students can benefit all music therapists, but specifically two groups. The first is the Academic Program Approval Committee (APAC). APAC is the governing body of AMTA in charge of creating requirements for music therapy programs. The second group is music therapy educators. Current educators can benefit by examining the perceptions of students and addressing issues of need related to the MEP status, such as the challenges addressed in the article by Lloyd et al. (2018). Ultimately, there is a need

for further research in gaining the perspectives of master's equivalency students to inform future programs, improve student experiences, and ensure quality education.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Survey**

##### **Participants**

Participants were those who met the following inclusion criteria: currently enrolled in a Music Therapy master's equivalency program and Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC) or having graduated from a master's equivalency program within the last five years and Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC), able to read and write in English, and having access to a device that can access the internet. These criteria were due to the five-year cycle of certification, a desire to study recent and current experiences in master's equivalency programs, and the use of the internet to gather responses. The study includes only perceptions of education in current students and recent graduates.

##### **Design**

The design for this study was a cross-sectional online descriptive survey. This design was chosen to gain a wide variety of descriptions of people's perceptions who met the inclusion criteria. The survey design was based on personal experiences, existing literature, and consultation with thesis committee members. The survey (See Appendix A) was approved by the Institutional Review Board from the researcher's university. This design was chosen to reach a diverse group of respondents and examine perceived issues in music therapy master's equivalency programs.

There were three sections in the survey representing the different research questions and inclusion criteria: demographics of participants, transparency of institutions about their music therapy master's equivalency program with applicants and current students, and responsiveness

of music therapy master's equivalency programs to the unique needs of master's equivalency students. Survey questions included nine Likert-type questions, 11 multiple-choice questions, and four open-ended response questions.

Demographic questions included:

- Are you a current student or a recent graduate?
- Have you passed the CBMT Exam?
- Graduation date or anticipated graduation date?
- How many semesters did it take to complete your degree?
- AMTA region you attended school.

Transparency questions included:

- My university clearly stated the typical length of time expected to complete their master's equivalency program. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My university was transparent in how my undergraduate credits from my previous degree would be counted toward equivalency. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My university clearly outlined which courses were required for equivalency. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My university clearly outlined which courses were required to receive a master's degree. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My advisors made me aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently. (Likert-type agreement level)
- I had a master's level student as a supervisor.
- \*(if yes to previous question) When was I informed that I would have a master's level student as a supervisor.

- My graduate program clearly delineated the AMTA Advanced Competencies it is focused on. (Likert-type agreement level)

Responsiveness questions included:

- Did you have experience in another career previous to becoming a music therapy master's equivalency student?
- \*(if yes to previous question) If so, what was your previous career?
- I entered the program with formal experience with [list instrument]
- I entered the program with informal experience with [list instrument]
- My equivalency courses consisted mostly of [type of student]
- My master's level courses consisted mostly of [type of student]
- The content of my undergraduate equivalency courses expanded my skill level at the time. (Likert-type agreement level)
- The content of my graduate courses followed a developmental trajectory that made sense and was easy to comprehend as an equivalency student. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My school eliminated redundancy from coursework by offering opportunities to test out of classes. (Likert-type agreement level)
- My school accounted for my unique needs as a non-traditional student. (Likert-type agreement level)

\*Indicates that the previous

## **Research Procedures**

A link to the survey was posted using the "Music Therapists Unite!" Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/353969121289000>) on August 8, 2023, and on August 22,

2023. Recruitment also occurred via emails to directors of Music Therapy programs offering master's equivalency programs as found on the American Music Therapy Association website. Initial emails were sent on August 8, 2023, to the directors of thirty-seven music therapy master's equivalency programs. One email was found to have a typo and was re-sent with success. Six accounts sent an automatic reply due to being out of the office for summer, and two directors identified their department as not having a music therapy master's equivalency program.

Follow-up emails were sent on August 22, 2023, to the remaining thirty-five directors of master's equivalency programs. Five of the six accounts that initially sent out-of-office emails received the second email, and one additional director identified their program as not including music therapy master's equivalency. Lastly, snowball sampling was used on the follow-up email and Facebook post by requesting that participants share this survey with others they believed would meet the inclusion criteria. The survey was on Qualtrics and remained open for a month total, closing on September 8, 2023.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected from Qualtrics following the close of the survey. All participants were required to sign the consent form at the beginning and confirm that they met the inclusion criteria. Participants could skip all other questions, and completing the survey was not a requirement for including their data. See Appendix A for the full consent form and survey.

### **Data Analysis**

All data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically focusing on the mean and percentages of responses. The researcher attended special training offered by Texas Woman's University for the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and consulted the

University's research center for support in analyzing the results. The two open answer questions were analyzed using frequency and inductive coding. The researcher's coding process was checked for quality and integrity by their thesis chair.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Results of Descriptive Study**

Out of 21 respondents, a total of 13 individuals who took the survey met all inclusion criteria including: being currently enrolled in a music therapy master's equivalency program and have the Music Therapist-Board Certification (MT-BC) credential or having graduated from a master's equivalency program within the last five years and have the Music Therapist-Board Certification (MT-BC) credential, being able to read and write in English, and having access to a device that can access the internet. Results were based solely on those individuals who met the inclusion criteria and completed the demographics section. The sample size was relatively small, with 13 respondents meeting all requirements. Twelve respondents completed the transparency and responsiveness sections, and eight of them completed the final two open-ended questions.

#### **Demographic Results**

Based on the demographic questions, all 13 respondents completed the demographics section. Most respondents (69%) were recent graduates, with the remainder identifying as current students (31%). Per the inclusion criteria, all the respondents had passed the CBMT exam. Respondents indicated a range of graduation and anticipated graduation dates, from Fall 2018 to Fall 2024, with two respondents indicating the same graduation date in Fall 2021, Spring 2023, Summer 2023, and Fall 2023. Respondents also indicated a range of semesters required for degree completion: one respondent completed their degree in five semesters while four required 10 or more semesters for degree completion. Additionally, two respondents reported the number of semesters to degree completion was six, three reported seven semesters, and three reported nine semesters. No respondents indicated fewer than five semesters to degree completion. Eight

respondents attended school in the Southwestern AMTA region, but one respondent attended school in the Midwestern region, three in the Southeastern region, and one in the Mid-Atlantic region. Refer to Table 1 for a comprehensive analysis of all demographic data.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Demographic question	<i>n</i>	%
Are you a current student or a recent graduate?		
Recent Graduate	9	69.2%
Current Student	4	30.8%
Have you passed the CBMT Exam?		
Yes	13	100.0%
No	0	0.0%
Graduation date or anticipated graduation date? (Please indicate Fall, Spring, or Summer, e.g., Fall, 2023)		
Fall 2018	1	7.7%
Summer 2020	1	7.7%
Fall 2021	2	15.4%
Fall 2022	1	7.7%
Spring 2023	2	7.7%
Summer 2023	2	15.0%
Fall 2023	2	15.4%
Spring 2024	1	7.7%
Fall 2024	1	7.7%
How many semesters did it take to complete your degree?		
5	1	7.7%
6	2	15.4%
7	3	23.1%
9	3	23.1%
10+	4	30.8%
AMTA region you attended school.		
Midwestern Region	1	7.7%
Southwestern Region	8	61.5%
Southeastern Region	3	23.1%
Mid-Atlantic Region	1	7.7%

## **Transparency**

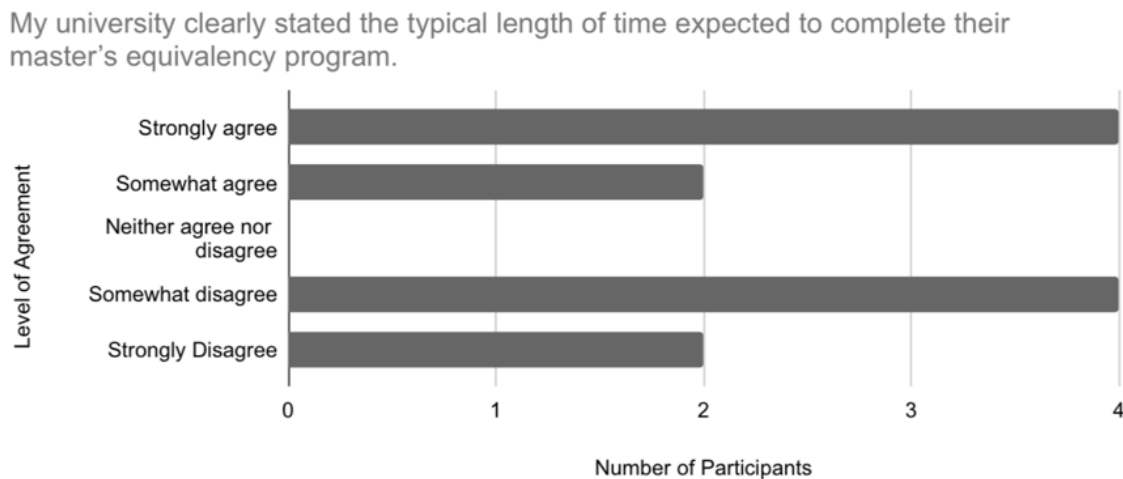
To measure university transparency in length of time to graduation, application of previous undergraduate credits, courses required for equivalency, courses required for a master's degree, and potential challenges of taking graduate and undergraduate coursework concurrently, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with a series statements using a Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Additionally, respondents were asked about their university's transparency in assigning a master's level student as a supervisor. Twelve respondents completed this section of the survey.

### ***Length of Time Expected to Complete Master's Equivalency Program***

The first statement was "My university clearly stated the typical length of time expected to complete their master's equivalency program." Figure 1 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Respondents gave responses varying from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Exactly half of respondents indicated some level of agreement (four selected strongly agree and two selected somewhat agree) while the other half indicated some level of disagreement (four selected somewhat disagree and two selected strongly disagree). There were no respondents who selected neither agree nor disagree. Overall, responses were divided on whether the respondents' universities clearly stated the typical length of time expected to complete their master's equivalency programs, with half expressing agreement and half expressing disagreement. A summary of these results is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

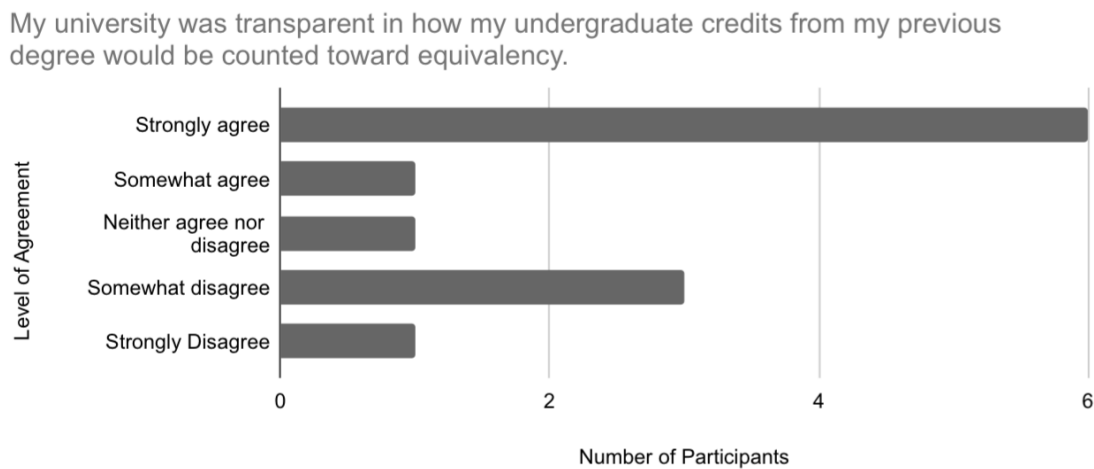
*Length of Time Expected to Complete Master's Equivalency Program*



*Application of Undergraduate Credits from a Previous Degree*

The second statement was “My university was transparent in how my undergraduate credits from my previous degree would be counted toward equivalency.” Figure 2 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by each bar in the figure. The labels on the left indicate the level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Respondents gave differing responses. Half of the respondents strongly agreed that their university was transparent in how their undergraduate credits from their previous degree would be counted toward equivalency. Four respondents disagreed (three somewhat disagreed and one strongly disagreed). One respondent indicated they somewhat agreed, and one indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed that their university was transparent in this regard. Overall, most respondents agreed that their university was transparent in how their undergraduate credits from their previous degree would be counted toward equivalency, while some disagreed with that statement. Refer to Figure 2 for a summary of these statistics.

**Figure 2**



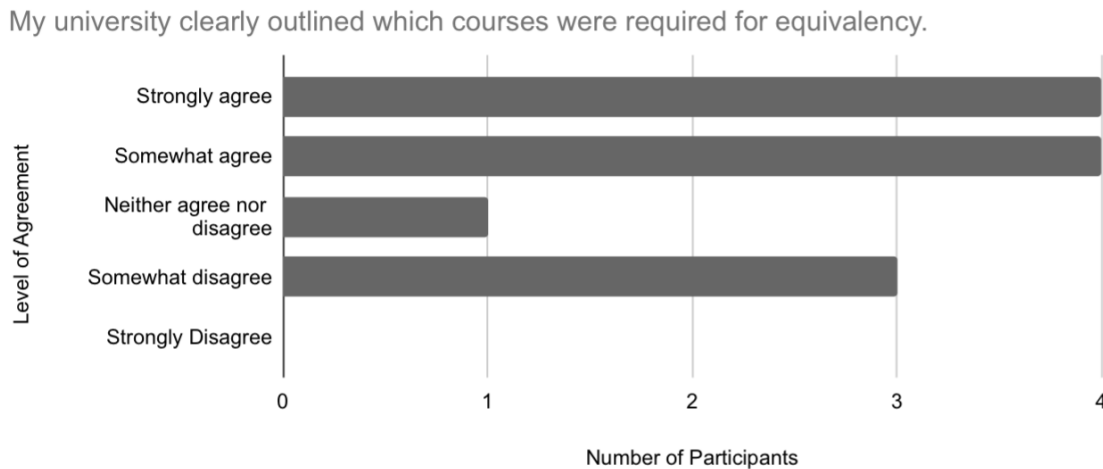
*Transparency in Application of Undergraduate Credits Toward Equivalency*

***Outline of Courses Required for Equivalency***

The third statement was “My university clearly outlined which courses were required for equivalency.” Figure 3 shows the distributions of the level of agreement with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by each bar in the figure. The labels on the left indicate the level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses ranged from somewhat disagree to strongly agree. Two-thirds of respondents signified agreement that their university was transparent in course requirements for equivalency, with four selecting strongly agree and four selecting somewhat agree. One respondent gave a neutral response of neither agree nor disagree, and the remaining three selected somewhat disagree. No respondents selected strongly disagree for this statement. In summary, most respondents agree that their university clearly outlined which courses were required for equivalency, with one-fourth of respondents indicating disagreement with this statement. Refer to Figure 3 to view all responses.

**Figure 3**

*Outlining Courses Required for Equivalency*

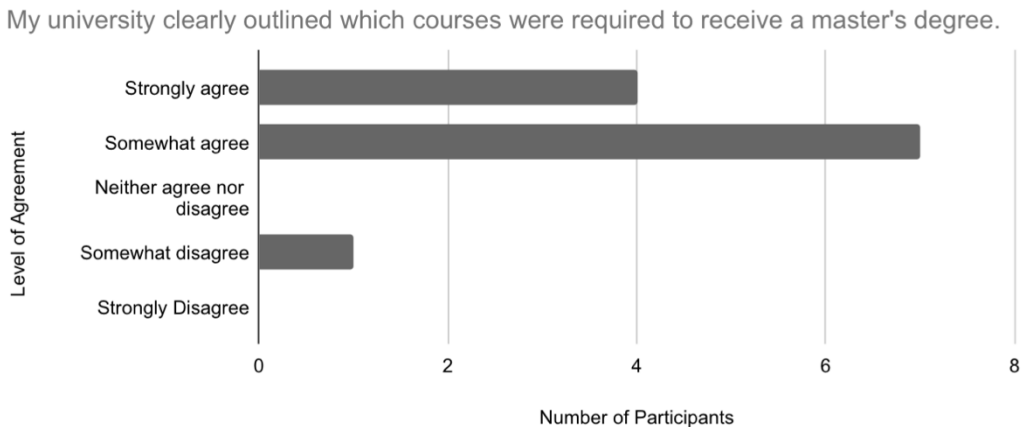


***Outline of Courses Required to Receive a Master's Degree***

The fourth statement in the transparency section of the survey was “My university clearly outlined which courses were required to receive a master's degree.” Figure 4 shows the distributions of the level of agreement with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by each bar in the figure. The labels on the left indicate the level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As shown in the Figure 4, almost all respondents (92%) showed agreement with this statement. Four respondents indicated they strongly agree and seven respondents indicated they somewhat agree that their university was transparent in this regard. One respondent selected somewhat disagree, while no respondents selected strongly disagree and none remained neutral in response to this statement. In summary, nearly all survey respondents agreed that their university clearly outlined which courses were required to receive a master's degree; one respondent disagreed with this statement. Refer to Figure 4 for a summary of these statistics.

**Figure 4**

*Outlining Courses Required to Receive a Master's Degree*



*Potential Challenges Taking Graduate and Undergraduate Coursework Concurrently*

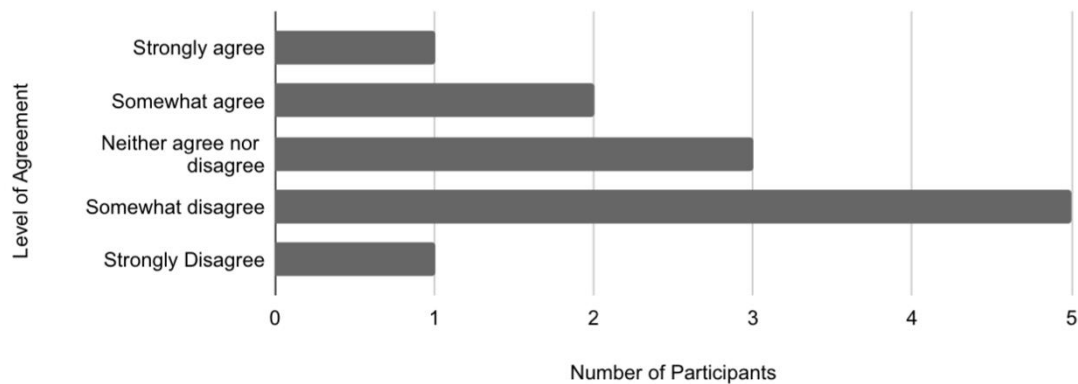
The fifth statement was “My advisors made me aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently.” Figure 5 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Half of respondents indicated they disagree that their advisors made them aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently, with five selecting somewhat disagree and one selecting strongly disagree. One-fourth of respondents agreed with this statement and one-fourth of respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. In summary, respondents displayed a diverse range of opinions on whether their advisors made them aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently, with more respondents expressing disagreement than agreement and some remaining neutral. A summary of these results is given in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Informing of Potential Challenges Taking Graduate and Undergraduate Equivalency*

*Coursework Concurrently*

My advisors made me aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently.



*Assignment of a Master's Level Student as a Supervisor*

Survey respondents were asked whether they had a master's level student as a faculty supervisor during practicum with a follow up question asking when they were informed that they would have a master's level student as a supervisor to measure university transparency in this regard. Twelve respondents responded to the first of these questions and five (42%) indicated they were assigned a master's level student as a supervisor. In summary, although it was common for respondents to have a master's level student as a supervisor, most respondents did not have a master's level student as supervisor. Figure 6 indicates the percentage of respondents ( $n=12$ ) who had a master's level student as supervisor.

**Figure 6**

*Assignment of Supervisor*

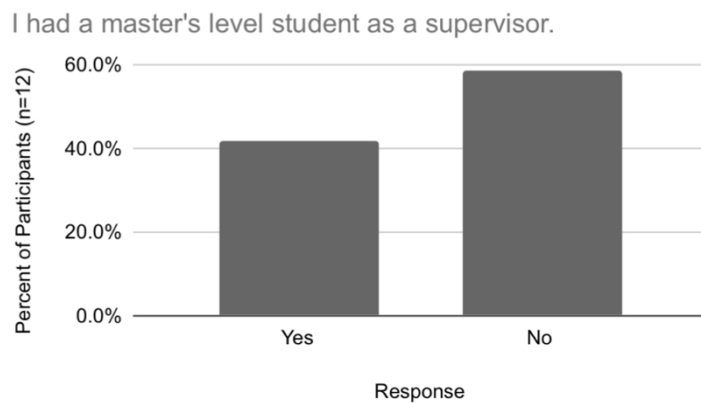
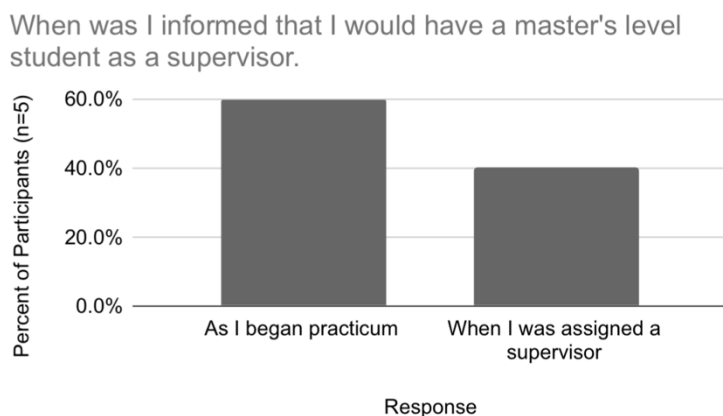


Figure 7 indicates the percentage of those respondents who were informed of this as they began practicum vs. when they were assigned a supervisor. Of the respondents that indicated they were assigned a master's level student as a supervisor, three indicated they were informed they would have a master's level student as a supervisor as they began practicum and two indicated they were informed they would have a master's level student as a supervisor when the supervisor was assigned. Overall, the majority of respondents were informed they would have a supervisor as they began their practicum rather than when this assignment occurred.

**Figure 7**

*Informing of Supervisor Assignment*

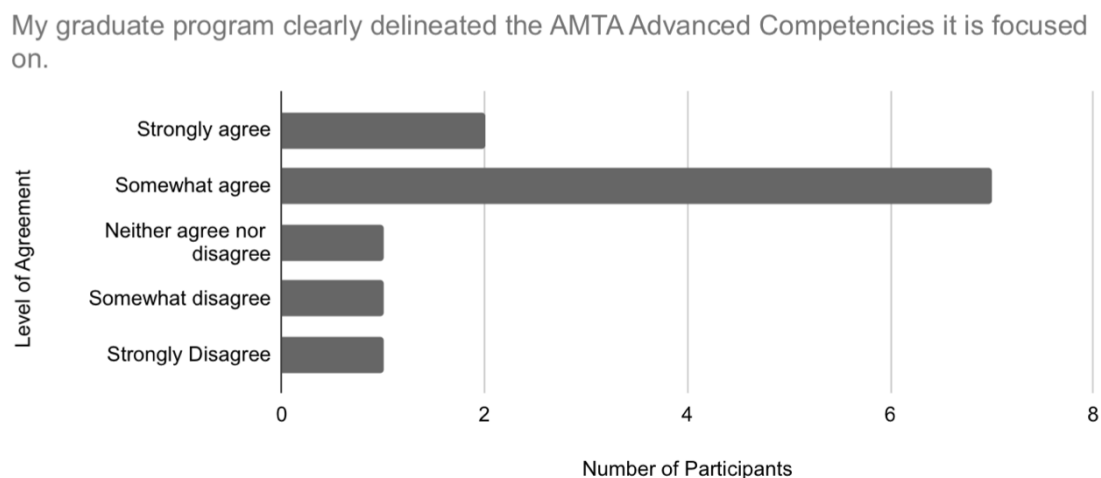


### ***Clear Delineation of AMTA Advanced Competencies***

The final statement was “My graduate program clearly delineated the AMTA Advanced Competencies it is focused on.” Figure 8 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Most respondents (75%) indicated some level of agreement that their graduate program clearly delineated the AMTA Advanced Competencies it focused on, with seven (58%) selecting somewhat agree and two (17%) selecting strongly agree. One respondent each chose the remaining options: neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. In summary, respondents mainly agree that their graduate program clearly delineated the AMTA Advanced Competencies it focused on, with two respondents expressing disagreement and one remaining neutral. A summary of these results is given in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*Delineation of AMTA Advanced Competencies*



## Responsiveness

Following the transparency questions, respondents were asked to answer questions related to their program's responsiveness to different student needs and demographics. The participant information identified includes previous career, formal and informal experience with specific instruments, and the composition of their equivalency and graduate courses (made up of undergraduate vs. graduate students). Respondents were also asked to rate several questions based on program responsiveness on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### *Previous Career*

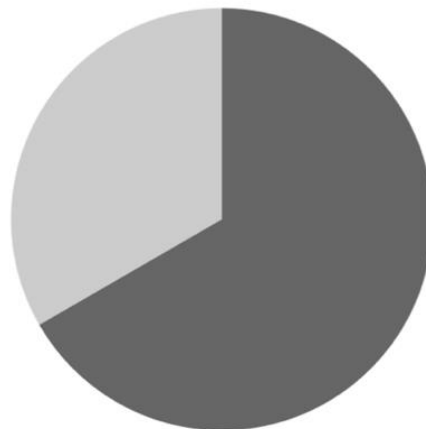
Respondents were asked to describe their career experience prior to enrolling as a master's equivalency student. The majority of respondents (67%) had experience in a previous career before beginning a master's equivalency program, while the rest (33%) did not have experience in a previous career. See Figure 9 for a breakdown of these responses.

**Figure 9**

### *Previous Career Experience*

Did you have experience in another career previous to becoming a music therapy master's equivalency student?

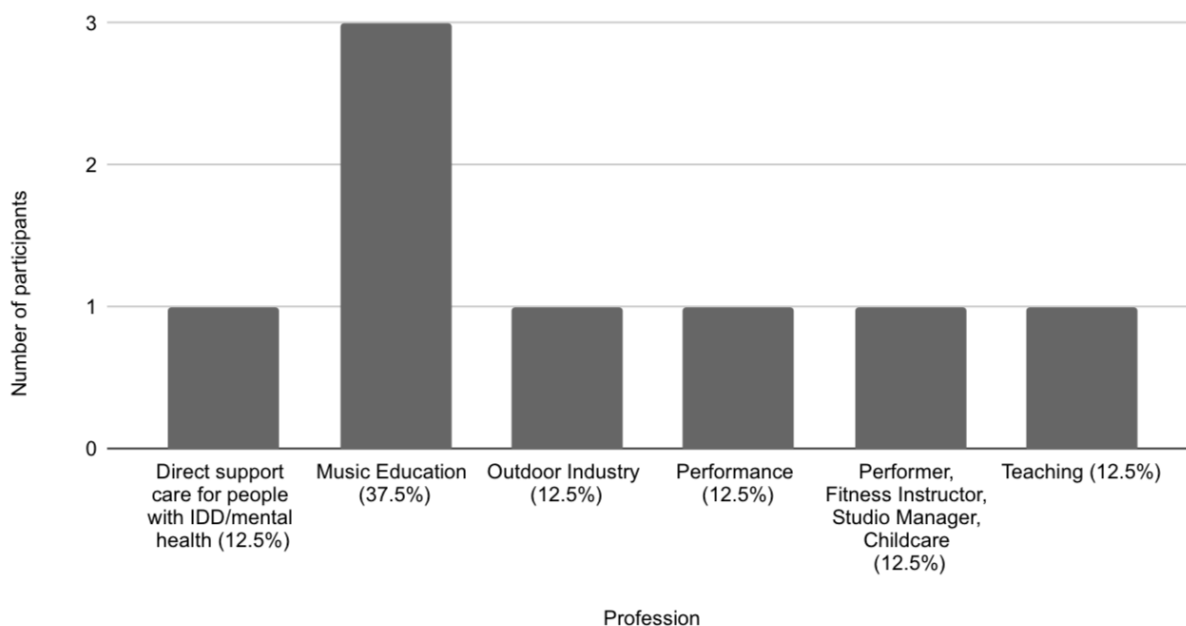
- Yes (66.7%)
- No (33.3%)



Of the respondents that reported experience in a previous career, three indicated experience in music education. The others indicated experience in direct support care for people with IDD/mental health, the outdoor industry, performance, fitness instruction, studio management, childcare, and teaching. Refer to Figure 10 for specific responses.

**Figure 10**

*Distribution of Previous Careers*



### ***Experience***

Respondents were asked to indicate their formal and informal experience with music prior to beginning their master's equivalency program. Figure 11 displays the formal instrument experience of the twelve respondents. Respondents were able to select multiple answers to this question. Two respondents gave specific responses outside of the multiple-choice answers on the

survey (Woodwinds and Clarinet). The majority of respondents had formal experience in piano (58%) and voice (58%). Respondents also indicated formal experience in guitar (25%), music technology (17%), percussion (17%), woodwinds (8%) and clarinet (8%). See Figure 11 for a complete representation of responses.

**Figure 11**

*Formal Experience*

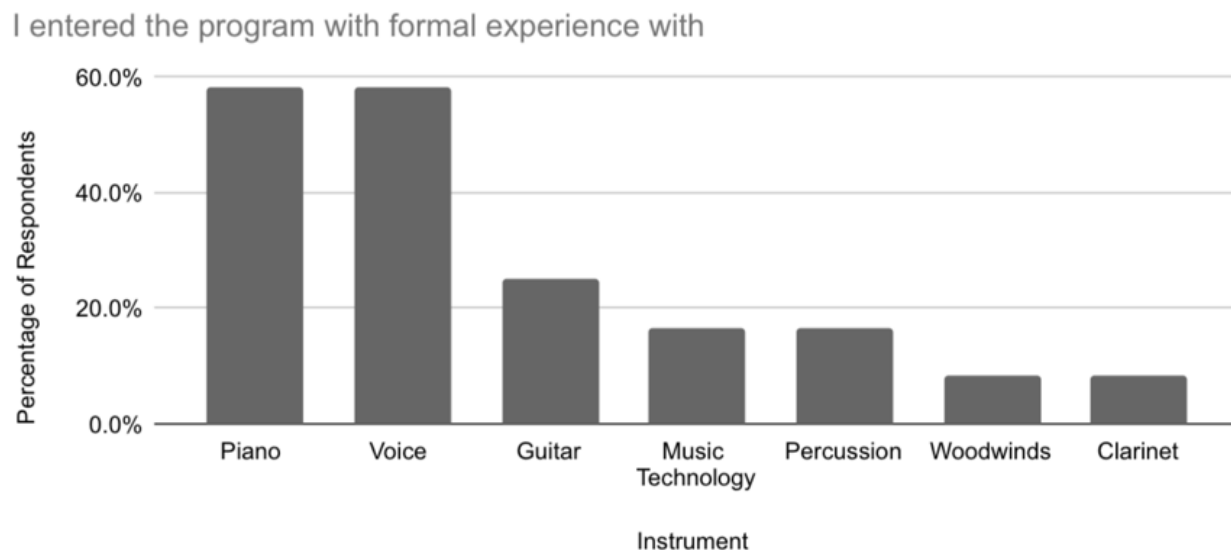
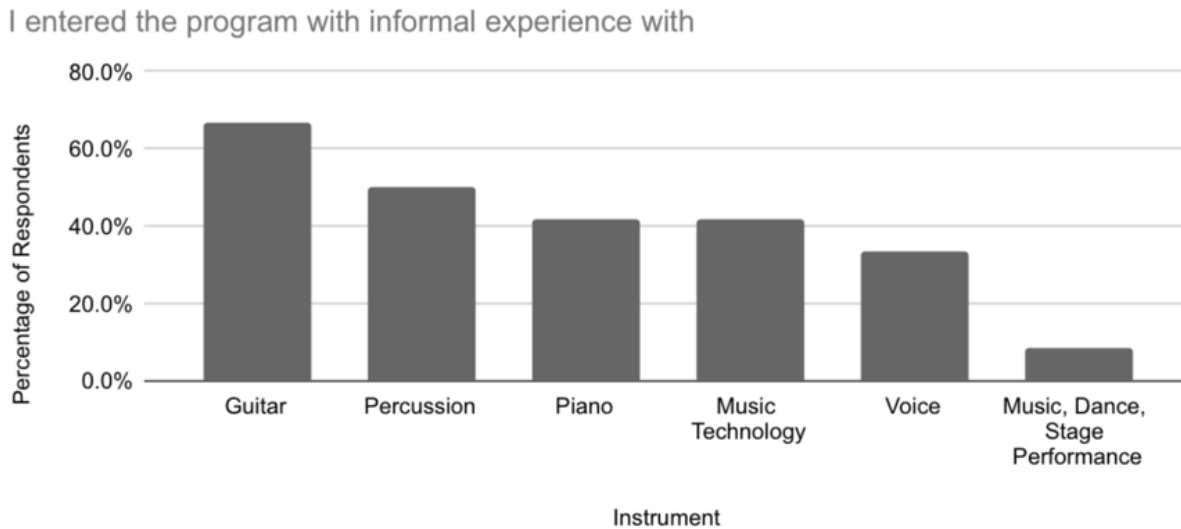


Figure 12 displays the formal instrument experience of the 12 respondents. Respondents were also able to select multiple answers to this question. One respondent gave specific responses outside of the multiple-choice answers on the survey (Music, Dance, Stage Performance). The majority of respondents entered the program with informal experience with guitar (67%). Respondents also indicated informal experience with percussion (50%), piano (42%), music technology (42%), voice (33%), and music, dance, and stage performance (8%). See Figure 12 for the complete set of responses.

**Figure 12**

*Informal Experience*

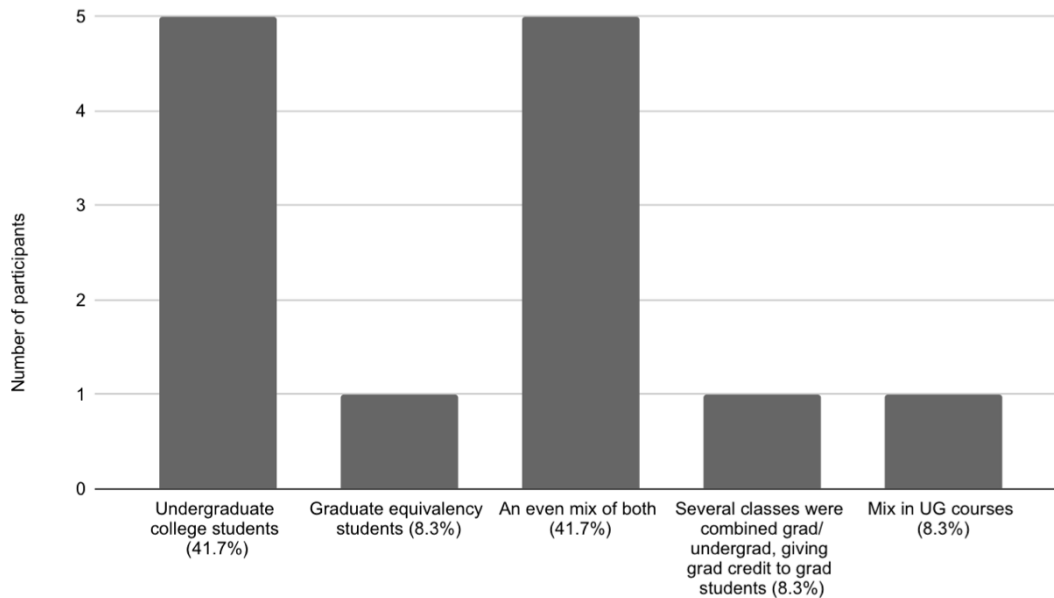


*Composition of Equivalency and Graduate Courses*

Respondents were asked whether students in their equivalency courses were mostly undergraduate college students, graduate equivalency students, or a mix. Figure 13 shows the composition of equivalency courses for the twelve respondents. Two respondents gave specific responses outside of the multiple-choice answers on the survey (Several classes were combined grad/undergrad, giving grad credit to grad students, mix in UG courses). Respondents were able to select multiple answers. Results were divided mostly between undergraduate college students (42%) and an even mix of both graduate equivalency and undergraduate college students (42%). Results also included mostly graduate equivalency students (8%), combined undergraduate and graduate (8%), and a mix in undergraduate courses (8%). See Figure 13 for full responses.

**Figure 13**

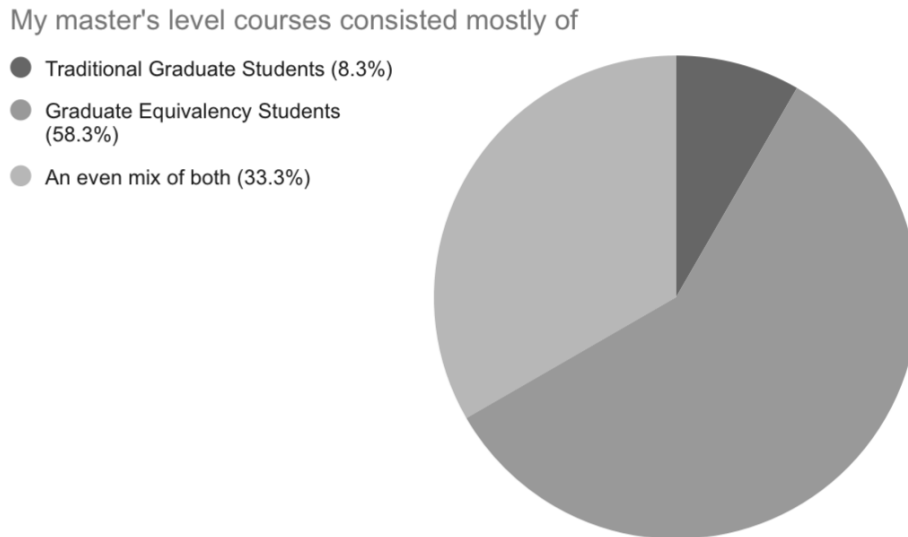
*Composition of Equivalency Courses*



Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their graduate courses were made up of traditional graduate students, graduate equivalency students, or an even mix of both. Figure 14 shows the composition of master's level courses for respondents. The majority of respondents reported their graduate courses were comprised of mostly graduate equivalency students (58%) while many reported courses made up of an even mix of graduate equivalency students and traditional graduate students (33%). One person reported classes made up of mostly traditional graduate students.

**Figure 14**

*Composition of Graduate Courses*



***Rating Program Responsiveness on a Likert Scale***

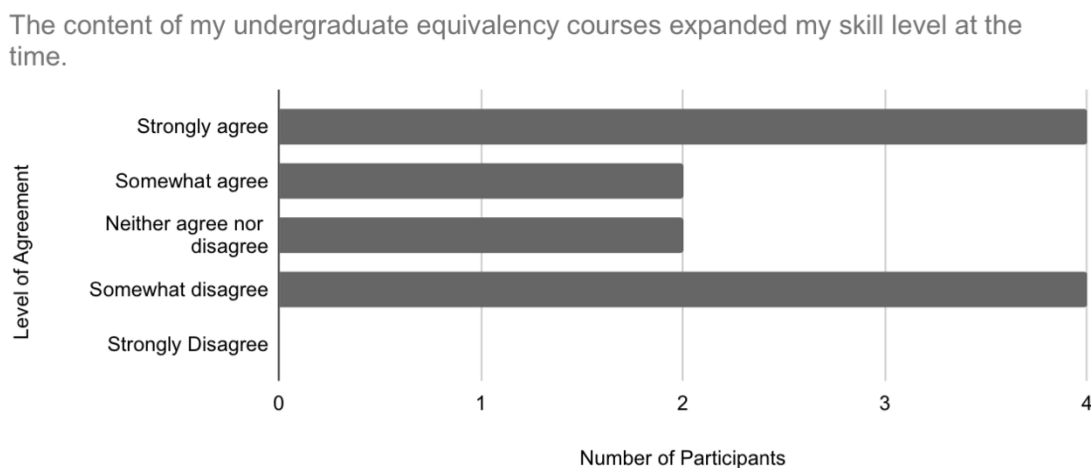
Respondents were given several statements about their program's responsiveness. Respondents were directed to rate their agreement with these statements as strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree. Twelve respondents completed this portion of the survey.

The first statement was "The content of my undergraduate equivalency courses expanded my skill level at the time." Figure 15 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Respondents gave varied responses, from somewhat disagree to strongly agree. Half of respondents indicated some level of agreement (four selected strongly agree and two selected somewhat agree). There were four respondents that indicated they somewhat disagree with this statement and two that indicated they neither agree nor disagree. In

summary, respondents indicated a wide range of opinions on whether the content of my undergraduate equivalency courses expanded their skill level at the time, with half expressing varying degrees of agreement, while a third of respondents disagreed and the remainder were neutral. A summary of these results is given in Figure 15.

**Figure 15**

*Content of Equivalency Courses Expanded Skill Level*

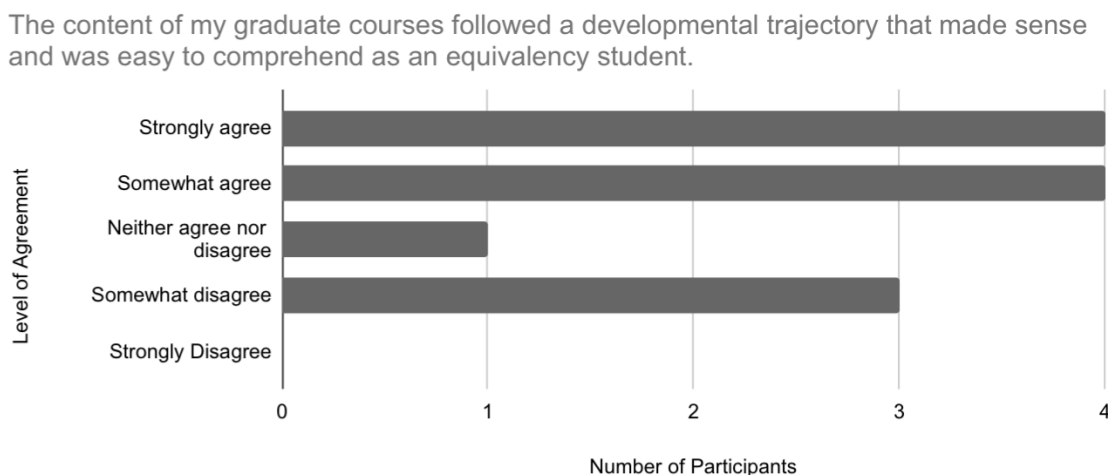


The second statement was “The content of my graduate courses followed a developmental trajectory that made sense and was easy to comprehend as an equivalency student.” Figure 16 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Responses to this statement also varied from somewhat disagree to strongly agree. The majority of respondents indicated agreement (four selected strongly agree and four selected somewhat agree) that the content of their graduate courses followed a developmental trajectory that made

sense and was easy to comprehend as an equivalency student. There were three respondents that indicated they somewhat disagree with this statement and one that indicated they neither agree nor disagree. On average, respondents somewhat agree that the content of their graduate courses followed a developmental trajectory that made sense and was easy to comprehend as an equivalency student. Additionally, there was moderate variance in responses. A summary of these results is given in Figure 16.

**Figure 16**

*Courses Followed an Easy-to-Understand Developmental Trajectory*

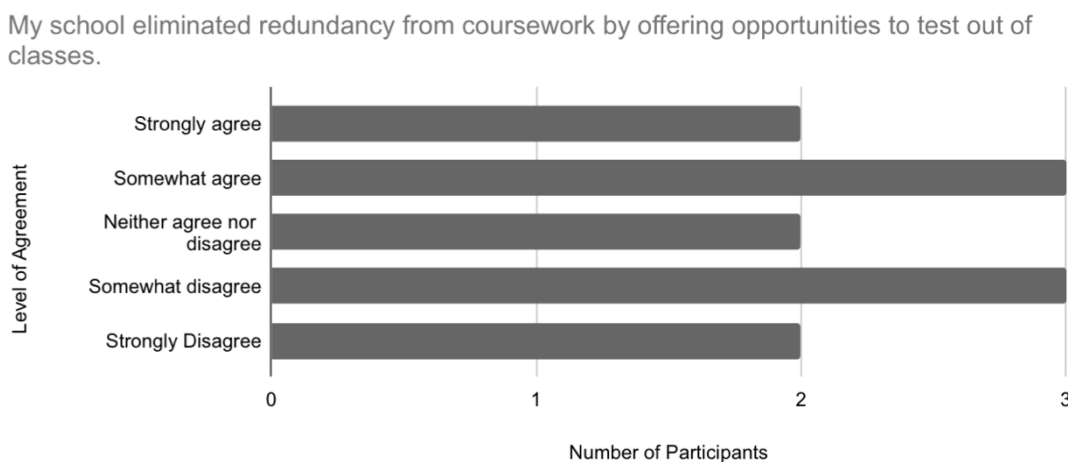


The third statement was “My school eliminated redundancy from coursework by offering opportunities to test out of classes.” Figure 17 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Respondents gave a wide range of responses, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses given were split evenly. Two respondents selected strongly

agree and two selected strongly disagree. Three respondents selected somewhat agree and three selected somewhat disagree. The remaining two respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. The average response was that respondents neither agree nor disagree that their school eliminated redundancy from coursework by offering opportunities to test out of classes; however, respondents displayed significant variance in their responses. A summary of these results is given in Figure 17.

**Figure 17**

*School Eliminated Redundancy from Coursework by Offering Opportunities to Test Out of Classes*

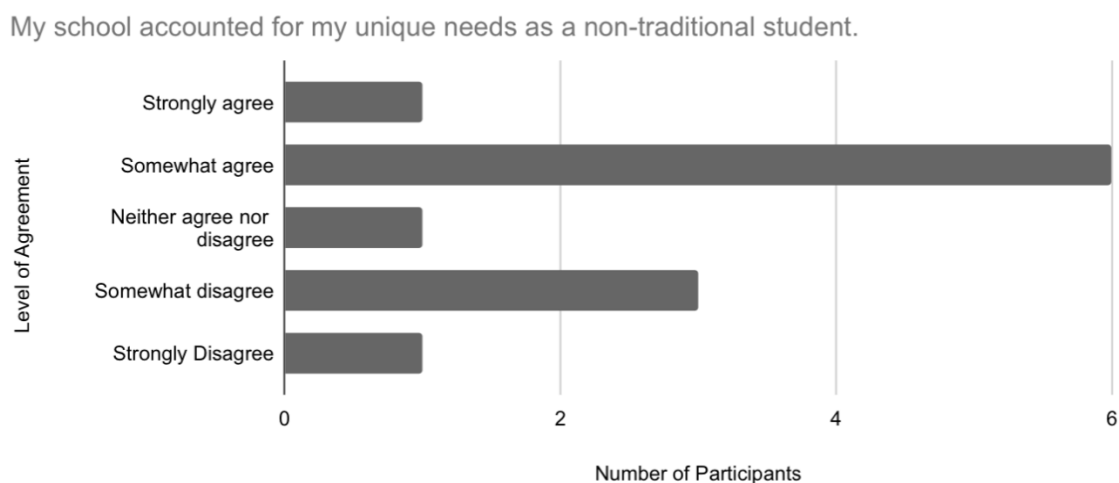


The final statement was “My school accounted for my unique needs as a non-traditional student.” Figure 18 shows the distribution of agreement level with this statement. The number of respondents who selected each level of agreement is indicated by the bars in the graph. The level of agreement rated on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree is shown on the left. Again, responses varied widely from strongly disagree to strongly agree. More than half of

respondents indicated some level of agreement (one selected strongly agree and six selected somewhat agree) and four respondents indicated they disagree with this statement (one selected strongly disagree and three selected somewhat disagree). One respondent indicated they neither agree nor disagree. In summary, respondents displayed a diverse range of opinions on whether their school accounted for their unique needs as a non-traditional student, with a majority expressing varying degrees of agreement, while four respondents disagreed, and one remained neutral. A summary of these results is given in Figure 18.

**Figure 18**

*School Accounting for Unique Needs as Non-Traditional Student*



## **Open Answer Results: Positive and Challenging Experiences**

### ***Positive Experiences***

The last two questions of the survey were open answer, and responses were coded for relevant themes and frequency. The first of these questions was “If you are comfortable, please share a positive experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's

equivalency program. Please ensure all answers are anonymous.” Responses to this question were placed into eight relevant categories, as shown in Table 2. Five respondents shared positive experiences of staff being accommodating and kind. Four respondents shared positive experiences related to their program structure. Three respondents shared experiences of staff accounting for their needs. The other categories were experiences that kept previous degrees in mind, were clear about length, and were supportive to non-white students. Each of these has one related response. Two negative experiences emerged as well, that staff did not meet needs and lacked transparency, and these each also had one entry. Those responses were transitioned into the challenging experiences coding.

**Table 2**

*Positive Experiences*

If you are comfortable, please share a positive experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's equivalency program.		
Please ensure all answers are anonymous.		
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Accommodating and kind	5	62.5%
Program structure	4	50.0%
Accounting for needs	3	37.5%
Kept previous degree in mind	1	12.5%
Clear about length	1	12.5%
Supportive to non-white students	1	12.5%

### ***Challenging Experiences***

The second open answer question was “If you are comfortable, please share a challenging experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's equivalency program. Please ensure all answers are anonymous.” Nine categories emerged from the data, shown in Table 3 on the following page. Challenges regarding program length appeared in the experiences of four respondents. Three respondents noted experiences that included financial challenges. The thesis process was related as challenging by two respondents. Other categories of challenging experiences included: transition following internship, mental health, changes in leadership, unnecessary courses, class time of day, and barrier exams. Each of these had only one response related to it.

**Table 3***Challenging Experiences*

If you are comfortable, please share a challenging experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's equivalency program. Please ensure all answers are anonymous.		
	<i>n</i>	%
Program length	4	50.0%
Thesis process	2	25.0%
Transition following internship	1	12.5%
Mental health challenges due to lack of responsiveness	1	12.5%
Changes in leadership	1	12.5%
Unnecessary courses	1	12.5%
Class time of day	1	12.5%
Barrier exams	1	12.5%
Inadequately met needs	1	12.5%
Faculty lacked transparency	1	12.5%

*Note:* The final two responses in the table above are discussed under “Positive Experiences” because they were given in response to the survey request for positive experiences.

**Summary of Results**

The purpose of this descriptive survey was to examine student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency programs. The research questions that guided this study were 1. To what extent do students perceive their programs to be transparent regarding length of program, transfer credits, and dual role status? and 2. To what extent do students perceive their programs to be responsive to their unique and

non-traditional needs in this dual role? Results were varied, but some common themes emerged. Regarding transparency, many students perceive their programs to have clear requirements to receive their degree and clear guidelines for transferring previously earned credits from another university or degree. Transparency about length of the program, however, was divided evenly between those who agreed and those who disagreed, and respondents shared several challenging experiences related to the length of the program.

Regarding responsiveness, respondents generally found the content of their courses appropriately challenging. Responses on the open ended questions also generally reflected positive perceptions of responsiveness, with only one respondent noting negative experiences related to responsiveness. Other interesting data included information about many students having prior careers and significant experience with voice, guitar, percussion, and piano. Generally, responses varied from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with some answers skewing toward agree and others skewing toward disagree.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency programs. Several trends emerged from the data: practices that educators should maintain, a need to increase consistency in some program operations, program practices to change, and notable points to consider. Following these trends, there also is a discussion regarding additional research.

“Maintain” means the data showed that the respondents generally considered these areas as strengths that current and future programs should maintain. The term “Increase Consistency” indicates that results were mixed or that relevant issues came up that would benefit from educators’ attention, even if they were not experienced by all respondents. The section on “Change” indicates areas that appear consistently negative in the data and offers potential solutions. The section labeled “Consider” demonstrates some areas of note from the data and incorporates some ideas to use this data to inform master’s equivalency programs in the future.

#### **Maintain**

##### **Clear Requirements**

As shown in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4, respondents generally found that their programs have clear requirements for what was required to receive their equivalency and that programs were often clear on how they would count transfer credits. Music therapy educators should maintain this practice of transparency, as respondents generally found their programs positively in this regard. Goodman (2011) recommended a “scheduled meeting at least once during the semester to review the study program” (p. 161), and this practice can help maintain clear requirements. Actions such as outlining degree plans early, giving clear instruction about

transfer credits, and helping with non-traditional requirement needs seem effective and should continue.

### **Good Trajectory of Classes**

Similarly, content in undergraduate and graduate courses generally appeared to expand the skill levels of respondents and followed a developmental trajectory that was appropriate and easy to follow, as shown in Figure 15 and Figure 16. There was one respondent who felt undergraduate courses seemed “unnecessary”, but generally respondents felt appropriately challenged. Music therapy educators should maintain current curricula, as respondents found that curricula were generally appropriate, challenging, and easy to comprehend. These findings lead to additional research possibilities about master’s level curricula, and this is discussed in recommendations for further research.

### **Increase Consistency**

#### **Accounting for a Previous Career**

Findings seen in Figure 9 and Figure 18 show that many individuals enter master’s equivalency programs with another career and those careers are sometimes accounted for, but not always. Music therapy master’s equivalency programs could offer opportunities to test out of courses and to account for other careers especially in music education and music performance, which accounts for 5 out the 8 respondents with previous careers. Examining transfer credits that would apply, such as advanced lessons or student teaching, may shorten the length of some programs.

#### **Transparency About Program Length**

Figure 1 and Table 3 demonstrate that there is some inconsistency about letting students know how long a master’s equivalency degree typically takes. Fifty percent of respondents gave

negative experiences included topics that were related to transparency about length of program, so this is an area of interest for those running music therapy master's equivalency programs. According to the current literature, graduate degrees typically span around three years (Goodman, 2011), but this study shows different numbers. Directors of programs could take data on their program's average length of time to complete both internship and thesis. The finding from this study shows that the average is 8.85 semesters until graduation (4.42 years if two semesters are taken per year) and that the median is nine semesters until graduation. The shortest was five semesters. Information like this will increase positive experiences, as shown by one respondent in Table 2.

In order to be transparent about the length of time required for degree completion, professors must also consider how program length may vary based on prerequisite courses already taken. The previous degree or classes the master's equivalency student has completed will impact what remaining classes they need to take to fulfill the equivalency requirements and complete the graduate work required. Academic advisors can also look into the differences that students face based on whether they began their equivalency program with little related experience (for example, a degree in a non-related field) or a significant overlap in content between their previous degree and music therapy requirements (for example, a music performance degree). They can gather data on the specific length of time for students to get their masters equivalency with different backgrounds and provide this information for prospective master's equivalency students.

### **Testing Out of Classes**

In Figure 17, responses were split regarding opportunities to test out of classes. With the average response being neither agree nor disagree and having wide variance from strongly agree

to strongly disagree, consistency in this practice is recommended. Schools may offer opportunities to test out of classes regarding certain instruments. An entrance proficiency exam might eliminate all instrument classes from the curriculum of equivalency students, which would benefit students with music performance or music education backgrounds. Half of respondents had experience in piano, voice, drums, and guitar prior to their degree. Offering entrance exams or exams to test out of instrumental courses can ensure that these students have positive experiences in their programs by accounting for their musicianship. It would also save the students money (Turner, 2023).

### **Professor Support**

In Table 2 and Table 3, mixed results indicate a need to increase consistency in support received from faculty. While many respondents reported staff being accommodating, kind, and accounting for their needs, some respondents indicated that faculty lacked transparency or inadequately met the needs of students. Some also reported issues in the thesis process due to staff, changes in leadership, and discrimination as challenging experiences. While many reports were positive, experiences with staff—including ethical issues such as discrimination—contributed to many of the challenging experiences noted by respondents (Salyer, 2022).

### **Eliminating Discrimination**

In response to the request for negative experiences regarding transparency and responsiveness in their program shown in Table 3, one respondent noted that, “Unfortunately, the experience in the program was not pleasant due to a continued lack of support from the faculty. The environment was not welcoming for non-white students and made it difficult for international students.” Ethical violations like this one arise in music therapy far too often (Salyer, 2022). Salyer (2022) posited that “through introspection, individuals in a position of

power should become critically aware of the power imbalances at play, their position in the hierarchical system, and take steps to manage the power imbalances inherent in such education contexts” (p. 44). Those in positions of power can use their power appropriately by challenging inequality and oppression and using critical reflexive processes. Music therapy educators and program directors should carefully consider their positions of power, as they can utilize this power to eliminate discrimination and other ethical issues.

## **Change**

### **Transparency about Dual Role**

In Figure 5, respondents generally found their program not transparent in the challenges of taking graduate and undergraduate courses concurrently. One solution could involve incorporating materials regarding challenges specific to graduate equivalency courses when orienting students to the program, or as part of advertising about the program. Another solution might involve equivalency mentors instructed to give this information and support. Figure 6 shows less than half (42%) of survey respondents had a master’s student as a mentor. Kuh et al. (2006) found that clear expectations are an important consideration for student retention and clear expectations about the dual role in music therapy master’s equivalency programs are no exception. These solutions may help increase retention and positive experiences for students.

### **Piano, Guitar, Percussion, and Voice Expectations**

In Figure 11 and Figure 12 more than half of respondents indicated that they had formal experience with piano and voice, and 50% or more had experience with guitar and percussion. This information coupled with inconsistent practices for testing out of classes may make programs longer and create classrooms with inconsistent skill levels. Inconsistent musicianship can also trickle down into the profession. One possible solution would be to implement

admission requirements that would increase this number, so that all master's equivalency students have informal or formal experience with each of these instruments. While this would ensure consistent musical prerequisites, this would have significant impacts on gatekeeping, which can make the field less equitable. Another option would be to consistently allow these students to test out of classes they have experience in, which may have implications for clinical musicianship if missed. One other solution would be to group classes in terms of skill level, so all students are learning at an appropriate level (Goodman, 2011).

## **Finances**

The last change to consider is regarding the financial burden of higher education and music therapy internships on the lives of respondents. Table 3 shows that financial difficulty was a major contributor to negative experiences in master's equivalency programs. Many especially noted the difficulty of completing or finding an internship due to finances. The recommendation here is to address this issue on multiple fronts. Organizations, such as the Music Therapy Access Fund, procure donations to provide scholarships for internships to help make this profession more accessible (Music Therapy Access Fund, 2023). Other organizations are working to pay their interns, recognizing their valuable contributions. University affiliated internships are often very helpful for individuals who need to stay in a local area, enabling them to save money on housing costs. Similarly, national roster internship sites can prioritize local talent to keep costs lower for all applicants. Possibilities for virtual long-distance internships via Telehealth may be an area to explore as well, although there may be concerns about gaining the necessary skills when the experience is not in person. Other solutions may come from AMTA, ensuring that degree requirements are streamlined and effective, including internship length. Finally, challenges with finances may need to be addressed at a national government level, as higher

education costs have increased (Kuh et al., 2006). Existing literature suggests that “debt is a significant factor contributing to financial anxiety and stress” (Turner, 2023, p. 55). By addressing these issues on all levels, educators and administrators can mitigate some negative experiences for music therapy master’s equivalency students.

### **Consider**

#### **Many Equivalency Students are Former Music Educators**

One observation from the data is that many equivalency students have experiences in a previous career. More than a third of respondents had experiences in music education or music performance prior to entering their program. Having programs that allow these professional musicians to test out of classes or to tailor transfer credits to help expedite the process can increase positive experiences.

#### **Equivalency Students are the Majority in their Programs**

The last area to consider comes from the data found in Table 13. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said their graduate courses consisted mainly of other equivalency students. An additional 33% of respondents noted an even mix of both. One respondent noted a majority of traditional graduate students, with a previous degree in music therapy. This large percentage of equivalency students in the graduate setting means that individuals without any professional experience in music therapy will dominate these graduate level courses, and Goodman also operates under the assumption that “the majority of students need equivalency courses” (2011, p. 162). While the courses are tailored to the AMTA advanced competencies, students may not have acquired some of the core foundational competencies yet. Music therapy professors and program directors should ensure that graduate courses are scaffolded at a level that matches

acquired skills of students. This dilemma may also lead to further research about master's level music therapy degrees.

### **Additional Research**

Further research may include studying measurable outcomes for master's level graduates and comparing master's equivalency students to traditional master's students. Specifically, identifying differences in pay following the degree, self-assessment on acquiring advanced competencies, and retention in the field. Some programs, such as Slippery Rock University, eliminate many dual role issues by ensuring completion of equivalency prior to beginning a master's in music therapy (Slippery Rock University, 2023). Other research could include investigating differences in requiring completion of the undergraduate requirements before taking graduate courses on length of program, finances, musical expectations, retention in the field, and elimination of role ambiguity.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations impacted the quality of this study. First, the small sample of students makes it challenging to generalize individual experiences to the broader population of master's equivalency students. Replication of this study or a follow up study may help to ensure the perceptions and experiences are more representative to this population. Another limitation is the geographic location of respondents. Since 8 of the 13 respondents identified from the Southwestern region of AMTA, which currently has only one Master's Equivalency Program at Texas Woman's University, issues and successes noted here might remain localized to a specific geographic area or program and may not necessarily apply to all MEPs throughout the United States. Additionally, 8 of the 13 respondents graduated or will graduate in Spring 2023 or later, making the data more relevant to students who are currently enrolled or have just completed their

degree. Another limitation was that Survey respondents were asked whether they had a master's level student as a faculty supervisor during practicum with a follow up question asking when they were informed that they would have a master's level student as a supervisor to measure university transparency in this regard. This question did not clarify whether this student was in the Master's equivalency program, a traditional Master's student, or a doctoral student.

### **Conclusion**

Student perceptions in music therapy master's equivalency programs are important in informing educators and administrators to increase positive experiences. In this study, students generally approved of their program courses and load, but often felt the program was "entirely too long", not transparent about the dual role of MEP students, and a financial burden. Some respondents were also affected by discrimination, lack of transparency about the length of the program, lack of support, and unresponsiveness to their previous careers. Educators, administrators, and governing bodies can use this information to inform decisions to maintain, increase consistency in, and change areas of transparency and responsiveness in their programs. Program administrators can also make considerations for students entering with significant experience. Similarly, administrators should consider that many respondents receiving their music therapy master's equivalency did so among other equivalency students rather than with typical master's students. Additional research in MEPs is needed to determine whether these master's degree programs are impacted by the influx of new professionals in graduate work. This research should also investigate programs that are implementing an equivalency-first program, ensuring master's classes consist of primarily seasoned professionals and music therapists with the MT-BC credential. This research, as well as the recommendations given, may help pave the way to ensure positive experiences for all aspiring professionals in this field.

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## APPENDIX A

### Transparency and Responsiveness of Music Therapy Master's Equivalency Programs

Start of Block: Demographics

#### Q1.1 CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### Q1.2 Transparency and Responsiveness of Music Therapy Master's Equivalency Programs: A Descriptive Survey Study of Recent Graduates

Study Principal Investigator: Landon

Whitworth.....LWhitworth1@twu.edu

#### Summary and Key Information about the Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Landon Whitworth, a music therapy graduate student at Texas Woman's University, as a part of his thesis, under the direction of Dr. Lauren DiMaio. The purpose of this descriptive survey will be to examine student perceptions of transparency and responsiveness in their music therapy master's equivalency programs.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a current or recent music therapy graduate equivalency student. As a participant, you will be asked to spend 10-15 minutes completing an online survey via Qualtrics. The greatest risks of this study include potential loss of confidentiality and emotional discomfort. We will discuss these risks and the rest of the study procedures in greater detail below. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review this consent form carefully and take your time deciding whether or not you

want to participate. Please feel free to ask Mr. Whitworth any questions you have about the study at any time at lwhitworth1@twu.edu.

### Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend 10-15 minutes completing an online survey on Qualtrics. The survey will ask you to mark your responses to statements about your experience with going through a music therapy master's equivalency program (MEP). You will be asked to mark how much you agree or disagree with the statements and up to three open answer questions. You will also be asked to answer up to 4 short answer questions and 2 long answer questions.

### Potential Risks

A possible risk in this study is emotional discomfort with the questions being asked. The researcher will ask questions about experiences in the participant's master's equivalency program. Emotional discomfort will be minimized by allowing participants to withdraw at any time. Participants may skip any question they do not feel comfortable answering or they may take breaks.

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. The survey will not ask for identifying information from participants. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. This includes keeping survey data on a locked computer and on a Qualtrics server, which is held in an isolated database that can only be accessed by a researcher with the correct username and password. Additionally,

the researcher is trained in the ethics of research involving human subjects. When information is transferred, the researcher will use a lock on their personal computer to ensure no others will access the information. Following 3 years, the information will be deleted using Permanent Eraser by Edenwaith.

An additional risk of this study is coercion. Coercion will be minimized by ensuring that the relationship with the researcher will not be affected and by allowing participants to contact the University if they feel coercion is occurring. Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Their decision on whether or not to participate in this study will have no effect on any services, or academic standing, with their current or previous Music Therapy program.

#### Inclusion Criteria

Participants will include individuals currently enrolled in a Music Therapy master's equivalency program and have completed the Music Therapy Board Certification examination and received their credential, or those who have graduated from a master's equivalency program within the last five years and are Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC). This is due to the five year cycle of certification, as well as a desire to be studying recent and current experiences in master's equivalency programs. The proposed study includes only perceptions of education in current students and recent graduates. Participants must be able to read and write in English and must have access to a device that can access the internet.

**Exclusion Criteria** Participants who are not able to read and write in English will be excluded.

This is because the survey is in English and will not be translated. Participants who do

not have access to a device that can access the internet will be excluded. This is due to the use of the Qualtrics platform as the means for performing the survey.

### Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research, your participation could help music therapy students and faculty around the US to improve programs around student experience. If you would like to see results of the study, please email the researcher.

### Q1.3 Questions Regarding the Study

You may print a copy of this consent page to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researcher; their contact information is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the TWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at [IRB@twu.edu](mailto:IRB@twu.edu).

Please indicate whether or not you consent to participate in this research study:

- ☐ I agree to participate (1)
- ☐ I do NOT agree to participate (2)

### Q1.4 Are you a current student or a recent graduate?

- ☐ Current Student (1)
- ☐ Recent Graduate (2)

Q1.5 Have you passed the CBMT exam?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q1.6 Graduation date or anticipated graduation date? (Please indicate Fall, Spring, or Summer, e.g., Fall, 2023)

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Q1.7 How many semesters did it take to complete your degree?

- ☐ 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 (7)
- ☐ 8 (8)
- ☐ 9 (9)
- ☐ 10+ (10)

Q1.8 AMTA region you attended school.

- ☐ Western Region (1)
- ☐ Midwestern Region (2)
- ☐ Southwestern Region (3)
- ☐ Southeastern Region (4)
- ☐ Great Lakes Region (5)
- ☐ Mid-Atlantic Region (6)
- ☐ New England Region (7)
- ☐ Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Transparency

Q2.1 Transparency

Do you agree with the following statements?

Q2.2 My university clearly stated the typical length of time expected to complete their master's equivalency program.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)

- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q2.3 My university was transparent in how my undergraduate credits from my previous degree would be counted toward equivalency.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q2.4 My university clearly outlined which courses were required for equivalency.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q2.5 My university clearly outlined which courses were required to receive a master's degree.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)

- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q2.6 My advisors made me aware of potential challenges taking graduate and undergraduate equivalency coursework concurrently.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q2.7 I had a master's level student as a supervisor.

- ☐ Yes (4)
- ☐ No (5)

Display This Question:

If I had a master's level student as a supervisor. = Yes

Q2.8 When was I informed that I would have a master's level student as a supervisor.

- ☐ As part of my investigation of the program (19)
- ☐ As part of orientation to the program (20)
- ☐ As I began practicum (21)
- ☐ When I was assigned a supervisor (22)
- ☐ Other (23) \_\_\_\_\_

## Q2.9 Transparency

Do you agree with the following statements?

Q2.10 My graduate program clearly delineated the AMTA Advanced Competencies it is focused on.

## Advanced Competencies

4.1.1 Music Therapy Theory

4.1.2 Advanced Clinical Skills

4.1.3 Research

4.1.4 Musical Development and Personal Growth

4.1.5 Clinical Administration

(see <https://www.musictherapy.org/members/edctstan/>)

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: Transparency

Start of Block: Responsiveness

Q3.1 Responsiveness

Q3.2 Did you have experience in another career previous to becoming a music therapy master's equivalency student?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q3.3 If so, what was your previous career?

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Q3.4 I entered the program with formal experience with

- ☐ Guitar (1)
- ☐ Piano (2)
- ☐ Percussion (3)
- ☐ Voice (4)
- ☐ Music Technology (5)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3.5 I entered the program with informal experience with

- ☐ Guitar (1)
- ☐ Piano (2)
- ☐ Percussion (3)

- ☐ Voice (4)
- ☐ Music Technology (5)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3.6 My equivalency courses consisted mostly of

- ☐ Undergraduate college students (1)
- ☐ Graduate equivalency students (2)
- ☐ An even mix of both (3)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3.7 My master's level courses consisted mostly of

- ☐ Traditional graduate students (1)
- ☐ Graduate equivalency students (2)
- ☐ An even mix of both (3)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3.8 Do you agree with the following statements?

Q3.9 The content of my undergraduate equivalency courses expanded my skill level at the time.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)

- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q3.10 The content of my graduate courses followed a developmental trajectory that made sense and was easy to comprehend as an equivalency student.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q3.11 My school eliminated redundancy from coursework by offering opportunities to test out of classes.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q3.12 My school accounted for my unique needs as a non-traditional student.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)

- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q4.25 Overall my experience as a music therapy master's equivalency program (MEP) student prepared me to be certified as an MT-BC.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q4.26 I passed the CBMT test the first attempt

- ☐ True (1)
- ☐ False (2)

Q4.27 If you are comfortable, please share a positive experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's equivalency program.

Please ensure all answers are anonymous.

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Q4.28 If you are comfortable, please share a challenging experience related to the transparency and responsiveness of your master's equivalency program below.

Please ensure all answers are anonymous.

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End of Block: Responsiveness