

# In Their Own Words: A Student-Centered Assessment of Human Rights and Policy Competency

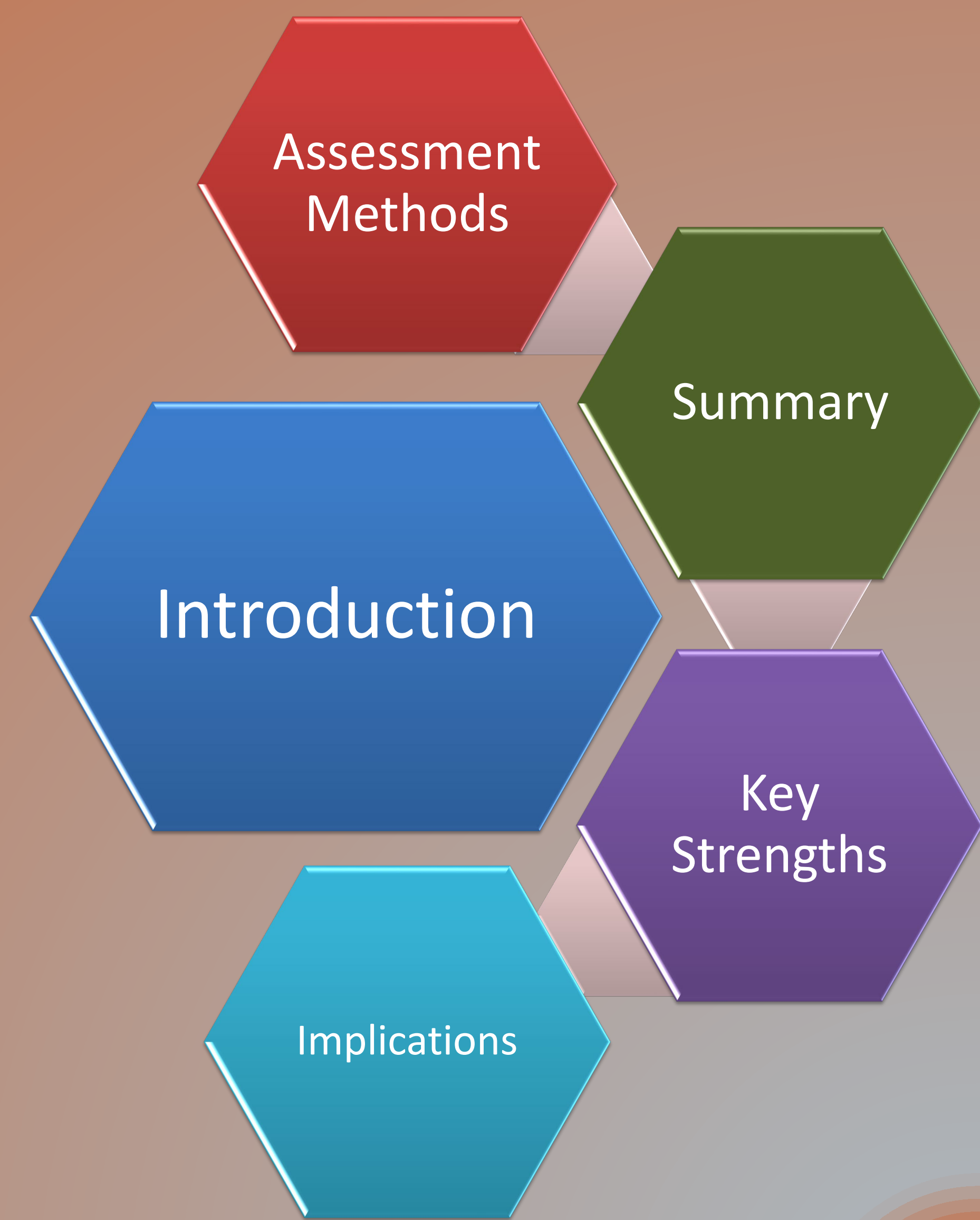
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## Introduction

This poster presents findings from student focus groups conducted in Spring 2026 to assess how MSW and BSW students understand and develop proficiency in CSWE Competencies 2 (Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice) and 5 (Engage in Policy Practice).

### Focus Group Summary

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|--------------------|--|
| <b>Group 1</b>     | Online MSW (1 participant): Positive; professors help explore biases; policy education internalizes the importance of systemic oppression<br><br>“My professors have really taken the time to help us explore biases and have centered our class experience on looking through a different lens.”<br>— Online MSW Student, Group 1 |
| <b>Group 2</b>     | Residential MSW (3 participants): Mixed; Comp. 2 feels performative in some courses; SWK 611 praised; Human Diversity seen as lacking<br><br>“....policy course was really good at addressing human rights.....”<br>— Residential MSW Student, Group 2   |
| <b>Group 3</b>     | Online MSW + BSW (2 participants): Positive on readings; field placements essential; BSW students feel underprepared for clinical work   |
| <b>Key Finding</b> | All groups: Field/internship is perceived as the primary vehicle for developing Comp. 2 & 5 proficiency  |
| <b>Growth Area</b> | Students across groups want more explicit challenges to examine and revise potentially harmful viewpoints and language   |



### Key Strengths Identified

- Professors actively challenge students to examine privilege and biases, connecting theory to real human issues
- SWK 611 consistently praised across all groups for skillful handling of human rights and policy content
- Synchronous face-to-face discussions a strong feature of online format; diverse online cohort broadens peer perspectives
- Capital Action Day and Legislative Policy Day are named as high-impact supplemental learning opportunities

### Challenges & Limitations

- Low attendance: 500 invited, very limited participation; end-of-semester timing reduced availability.
- Potential group-think in Groups 2 and 3 due to dominant voices; mitigated by allowing final individual statements.
- Team capacity limited; late start in the second semester

### Cross-Group Themes

- Engagement with Comp. 2 & 5 varies widely by professor interest, comfort, and expertise
- Field/internship placements are consistently cited as the primary site for developing real-world competency
- Students want to be challenged to examine and revise potentially harmful viewpoints critically

### Assessment Methods

#### Qualitative focus groups (3 sessions, Spring 2026)

Semi-structured discussions with Online MSW, Residential MSW, and BSW students

Conducted by student evaluators; thematic analysis of transcribed responses

Development of follow-up Qualtrics survey planned for FALL 2026 to expand data collection

### Use of Results

- Findings will inform a student survey (Qualtrics) to be refined and launched in Fall 2026
- Survey instrument drafted by student evaluators for faculty review
- Results will guide curriculum improvements for Competencies 2 and 5 across BSW and MSW programs

### Action Plans/Next Steps

- Finalize program survey in Qualtrics for FALL 2026 launch
- Share findings with faculty and curriculum committee to prompt review of course structures

Implications

