

ANALYZING POLICE ACADEMY TRAINING

Through Cadet Feedback

A DATA-DRIVEN ASSESSMENT

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Citizens Police Oversight Commission** (CPOC), in partnership with the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD), launched a collaborative initiative to systematically gather recruit feedback on the academy training experience, providing a clear, data-informed view of strengths and areas for enhancement in instructional delivery and preparedness for real-world policing.

This report summarizes findings from the first full cycle of academy survey data, collected from recruit classes 401 - 408 that graduated between March 2024 and March 2025. The analysis integrates quantitative ratings with qualitative written feedback to increase transparency into how recruits experienced their academy training.

Together, this data provides a comprehensive view of training strengths and areas where recruits identified opportunities for improvement. Key terms used throughout this report are defined in the Appendix's Glossary section.

Survey Findings

The chart below shows how cadets felt about whether each lesson prepared them for their job. The chart is ordered by the lessons that made them feel most prepared (top) down to least prepared (bottom). Note that overall, most cadets strongly agreed the lessons prepared them for real-world policing, but there is some variation across the lessons.

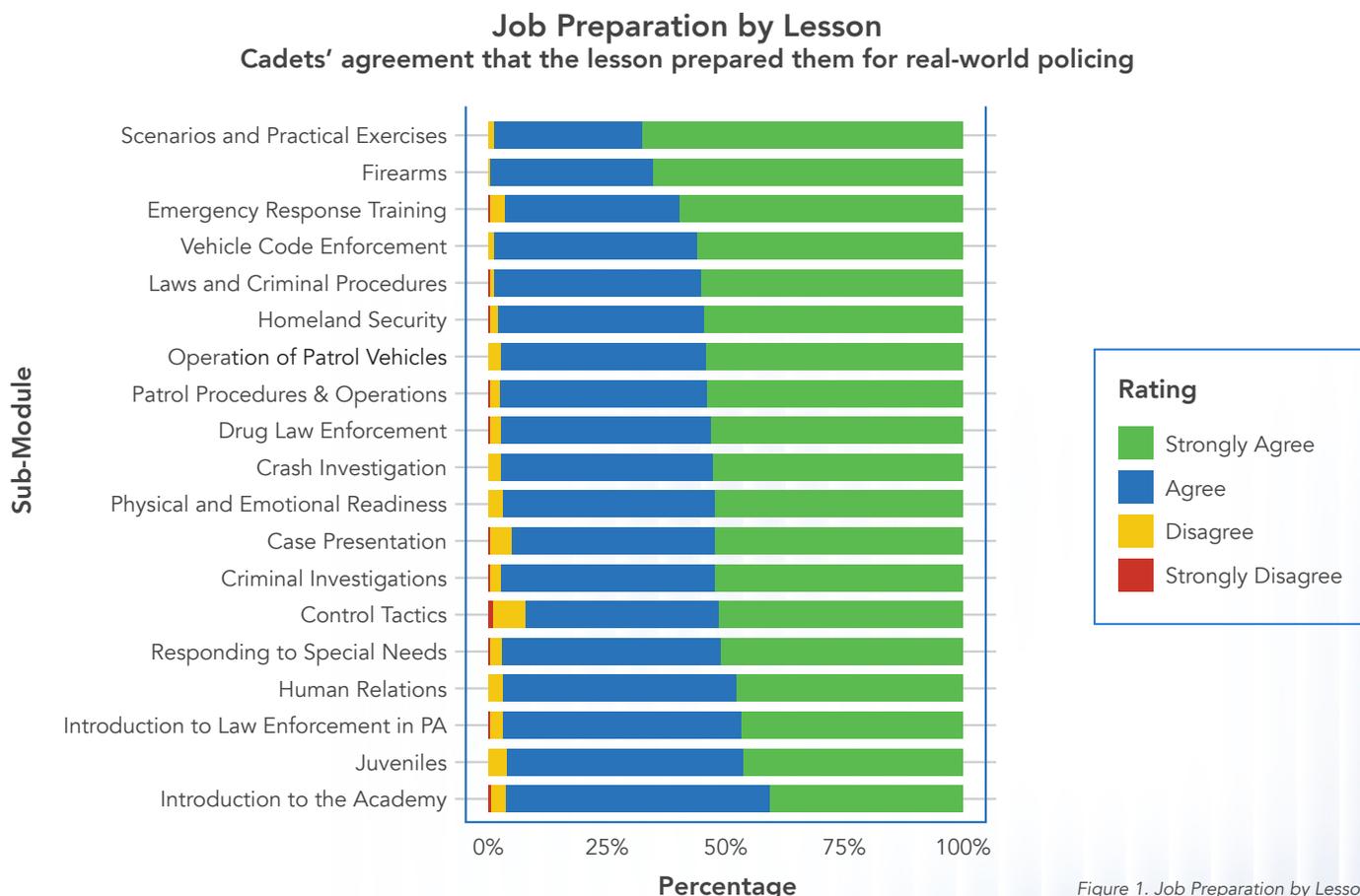


Figure 1. Job Preparation by Lesson

After analyzing the survey results, including open-ended responses, the data reveals that overall cadets felt the training prepared them for real-world policing. On average across all modules **53%** of recruits said they “strongly agree” the lessons prepared them for their job. Recruits also felt that certain lessons were too limited or needed modernization. However, it is important to note that the findings below reflect recruits’ self-reported perceptions of preparedness rather than independently validated performance, and high or low ratings should not be interpreted as definitive measures of training effectiveness.

1. Reality Based Training (RBT): Most Critical Gap Identified

Reality-Based Training is part of the Scenario and Practical Based Exercises Lesson. RBT consists of high-stress, scenario-driven training that simulates real-world police encounters. Officers practice applying policies, communication, judgment, and tactics in realistic but controlled settings. Scenario and Practical Based Exercises received the highest level of agreement on job preparedness, with 67% of cadet lesson ratings selecting “Strongly Agree,” the highest concentration across the academy. However, cadets consistently noted that the RBT was concentrated at the end of the academy, limiting opportunities to reinforce earlier legal and tactical instruction. This concern was reflected in written feedback, where 135 of 279 recruits (48%) indicated a desire for more RBT integrated throughout training.

2. Defensive Tactics (DT): Needs Modernization

Defensive Tactics, taught within the Control Tactics lesson, are hands-on techniques used to manage and restrain resistant individuals while prioritizing officer safety and the use of non-lethal, proportionate force to safely gain compliance using the minimum force necessary. Defensive Tactics showed the highest level of disagreement on job preparedness among academy lessons, with 8% of cadet lesson ratings indicating Disagree or Strongly Disagree. While most ratings were positive, written feedback provides important context for the elevated disagreement. Although recruits often praised DT instructors, they frequently described DT techniques as outdated or insufficiently realistic, citing limited resistance-based training and challenges translating DT instruction into real-life encounters and scenario-based application; 25 recruits (9%) raised DT-related concerns in written comments.

3. Physical Training (PT): Infrequent and Undervalued

Physical Training (PT) is structured fitness training designed to build strength, endurance, and conditioning needed for the physical demands of police work. Within the Physical and Emotional Readiness course, recruits consistently emphasized the importance of physical training for officer safety, wellness, and professionalism. While overall ratings for the course were positive (52.3% Strongly Agree and 44.4% Agree that the lesson prepared them for the job), written feedback suggests that the physical training component itself is underemphasized. Twenty recruits (7%) referenced PT-related concerns, most often describing infrequent sessions and uneven integration into the academy schedule.

4. Firearms Training: Limited Time Undermines Preparedness

Firearms training shows the lowest level of disagreement on job preparedness across academy lessons, with only 0.4% of cadet lesson ratings indicating Disagree and no responses indicating “Strongly Disagree.” However, written feedback highlights concern about limited instructional time and insufficient practice under stress, movement, or dynamic conditions. Seventeen recruits (6%) referenced a desire for additional firearms training or more time at the range in their written feedback, despite positive ratings for feelings of preparedness overall.

5. Academy Structure and Length: Perceived as Inefficient

Cadets described the academy as overly long, heavily administrative, and poorly scheduled, particularly in the final weeks. Feedback emphasized excessive mandated and administrative hours during this period and called for streamlining the program by reducing redundancies. Forty-three recruits (15%) raised concerns related to academy length or structure and suggested reallocating downtime toward applied skills, physical training, and scenario-based instruction.

Areas for Further Review

Based on our findings, CPOC identified five areas for further review. Since this is a state-mandated curriculum, PPD may need to review any recommended changes with the Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission (MPOETC).

- 1 **Examine opportunities to integrate scenario-based training across all modules, rather than concentrating scenarios only at the end of the academy.**
- 2 **Review Defensive Tactics instruction with academy instructors and MPOETC partners to evaluate cadet feedback on realism and real-world application within state training requirements.**
- 3 **Review the frequency and scheduling of Physical Training to assess whether it can be scheduled and delivered consistently throughout the academy, with planned transitions that build recruits’ capacity for self-directed fitness, wellness, and self-discipline after graduation.**
- 4 **Review the structure and time allocation of firearms training to determine whether additional opportunities for dynamic, decision-based practice can be incorporated within existing requirements.**
- 5 **Examine opportunities to better allocate academy time to support applied skill development and reinforce foundational training, including through the Field Development (Officer in Training) phase, with flexibility to address cadet-specific training needs.**

PPD Department Actions and Updates

Several improvements have already been implemented in response to survey findings, demonstrating a responsive and iterative approach to training improvement:

Scenario-based training is incorporated across multiple modules throughout the academy (e.g., vehicle stops, radio communications, active shooter response), allowing recruits to apply skills and legal concepts prior to the formal Reality-Based Training phase.

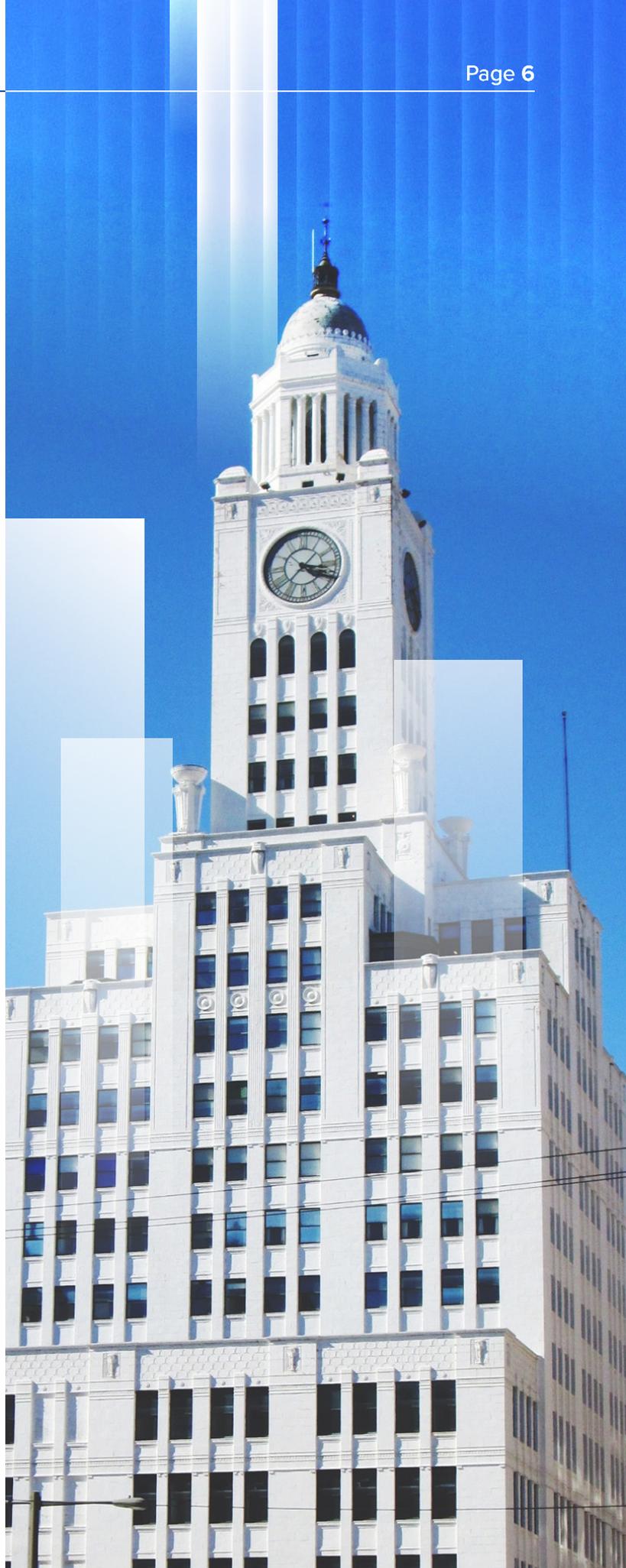
Reality-Based Training (RBT) continues to be delivered during Module 5 at the end of the academy, with PPD exceeding the state standard by providing two consecutive weeks of RBT instruction.

Training environments have been expanded beyond the RBT facility to include the driving course, gym, and indoor simulation spaces, supporting skill application across varied operational settings.

Applied legal simulations are used to assess recruits' understanding of reasonable suspicion, probable cause, and de-escalation in controlled, scenario-based exercises.

The academy was reduced from 38 weeks to 35 weeks. No state-mandated training hours were removed.

We believe that continued review of the areas listed above in addition to a continued data-driven approach to receiving cadet feedback will strengthen the police academy training experience and better ensure that new officers feel prepared for real-life policing in Philadelphia.



II. COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

The **Citizens Police Oversight Commission (CPOC)**, in partnership with the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD), launched an initiative to strengthen the police academy training experience for recruits. This collaborative project is designed to ensure that new officers feel prepared for the demands of real-life policing in Philadelphia.

Working closely with **Captain Stephen Clark**, the Commanding Officer for the Recruit Training Unit, who previously oversaw the PPD academy, CPOC developed a comprehensive feedback survey administered to recruits upon completion of their academy training. **The survey collected evaluations on four key aspects of instruction and asked cadets:**

- To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The module's lessons were organized and taught in a logical manner.
- To what degree do you agree with the following statement: There was enough time in each individual class to teach the subject.
- Overall, please indicate the overall level of quality of the teaching for each lesson.
- To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The information provided in the following lessons prepared me for my job.



Recruits provided feedback on all five modules that make up the PPD academy curriculum. Recruits were also invited to share written recommendations on how to improve the curriculum. The analysis includes 279 surveys, representing approximately 91 percent of the 305 recruits from classes 401–408 who completed academy training between March 2024 and March 2025. The survey was designed to gather feedback from graduating recruits about their academy experience. Specifically, how well the cadets felt the training prepared them for real-life duties as police officers.

CPOC has provided each batch of survey results to the Commanding Officer of the Recruit Training Unit on a rolling basis, which has allowed for some adjustments to the academy curriculum, which are discussed on [page twelve](#). CPOC continues to help administer the survey, collect results, and provide real-time analysis to PPD.

As the civilian oversight agency for PPD, one of CPOC's functions is to bring transparency to aspects of policing that the public may not understand. This report is intended to provide a summary of the survey methodology and share the key findings based on the survey results in the sample. It is also intended to shed light on how cadets feel about their experiences at the PPD academy and present some of themes that emerged from the qualitative feedback. At times, the feedback provided in the survey lacked detail that would allow a clear understanding of what exactly the respondent meant. We attempted to make fair interpretations of the open-ended feedback we received.

In collecting the data for analysis, CPOC identified aspects of the survey to update and improve. Still, CPOC wanted to share the results of this first group of surveys and translate what we could into areas for further review for PPD based on cadet feedback. The areas of further review highlight aspects of the academy that PPD can take a closer look at if they find the cadet feedback is relevant or actionable.

Key Findings and Areas for Further Review

The findings below capture the key patterns that emerged across both the quantitative data and written feedback. Written comments were optional, and not all recruits provided open-ended responses; as a result, counts and percentages drawn from written feedback reflect the share of the full sample (n = 279) that raised a given issue, rather than the proportion of respondents who submitted comments. These figures should be interpreted as indicators of relative salience across themes. Even where percentages appear modest, recurring mentions highlight areas that were consistently identified by recruits who chose to elaborate on their experience.

1. Reality Based Training (RBT): Most Critical Gap Identified (Module 5)

Reality-Based Training (RBT) consists of immersive, high-stress simulations conducted during dedicated training periods to replicate real-world policing encounters and test decision-making, communication, and tactical responses. Reality-Based Training was consistently described by cadets as the most effective and valuable component of academy training, while also being identified as the area most in need of expansion. This concern was reflected in written feedback, where 135 of 279 recruits (48%) explicitly indicated a desire for more RBT integrated throughout training, making it the most frequently cited theme among open-ended responses. Cadets reported that critical legal and tactical knowledge faded between classroom instruction and the delayed RBT schedule. Many noted that RBT occurred late in the academy, requiring them to recall material taught five to seven months earlier, which they felt limited retention and confidence. Others described fragmented or reset scenarios that did not reflect the full complexity of real encounters. Collectively, recruits viewed this disconnect as a missed opportunity to reinforce learning and build operational readiness.

- **Area for Further Review:** *Cadet feedback suggests an opportunity to examine the timing, frequency, and structure of RBT within the academy. Research on police training and adult learning supports this observation. A prior study from Canada on scenario-based instruction find that training is most effective when realistic scenarios are embedded throughout a program rather than treated as a capstone or final assessment, allowing officers to repeatedly apply skills under increasingly complex conditions.¹ This approach aligns with national guidance outlined in *The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*, which emphasizes scenario-based and technology-enhanced training as key components of effective police training to support skill transfer, decision-making, and performance under stress. For example, Recommendation 5.12 calls for supporting the development of technology that enhances scenario-based training, social interaction skills, and interactive learning to improve training effectiveness.²*

2. Defensive Tactics (DT): Needs Modernization (Module 4)

Defensive Tactics, taught within the Control Tactics lesson, are hands-on techniques used to manage and restrain resistant individuals while prioritizing officer safety and applying non-lethal, proportionate measures to gain compliance using the minimum force necessary. Defensive Tactics received more detailed criticism than any other specific instructional area aside from RBT. While cadets frequently praised their instructors' professionalism and effort, the curriculum itself was seen as ineffective or impractical for live scenarios. Several cadets, some of whom claimed to have combat sports or military backgrounds, also noted that the techniques taught were outdated or unrealistic for field application. Others expressed concern that most DT drills were performed on compliant partners with no real resistance, giving a false sense of effectiveness. Cadets also highlighted a lack of integration between DT instruction and scenario-based training, describing a disconnect between technique and application. In written comments, 25 of 279 recruits (9%) raised concerns related to Defensive Tactics.

- **Area for Further Review:** *Cadet feedback suggests an opportunity to examine how Defensive Tactics instruction incorporates realistic, resistance-based, and scenario-driven applications, including whether techniques are practiced under conditions that reflect real encounters faced by PPD officers. Research on police training indicates that instruction aligned with operational realities supports stronger skill transfer and decision-making under stress.³*
- *Cadet responses also point to the value of reviewing current Defensive Tactics methods in coordination with academy instructors and Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) partners to assess whether existing approaches adequately prepare recruits for dynamic field conditions. Prior research cautions that techniques effective in controlled or compliant settings may not generalize well to real-world encounters, while stress-congruent training better supports officer and public safety.⁴*

¹ Bryce Jenkins, Tori Semple, Jeff Quail, and Craig Bennell, "Optimizing Scenario-Based Training for Law Enforcement," in *Interventions, Training, and Technologies for Improved Police Well-Being and Performance* (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2021), 18–37, at 21, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-6820-0.ch002>.

² President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2015), 60.

³ Jenkins et al., "Optimizing Scenario-Based Training," 21–26.

⁴ Jenkins et al., "Optimizing Scenario-Based Training," 25–26.

3. Physical Training (PT): Infrequent and Undervalued (Module 4)

Physical Training (PT) is structured fitness training designed to build the strength, endurance, and conditioning needed for the physical demands of police work. Within the Physical and Emotional Readiness course, recruits consistently emphasized the role of physical training in officer safety, wellness, and professionalism, viewing it as central to both physical fitness and the development of discipline. However, they described PT as inconsistent, infrequent, and underemphasized. Written feedback highlighted that irregular scheduling sent mixed signals about expected fitness standards, and that periods described as “downtime,” particularly in the later months of the academy, could have been used to reinforce physical readiness. Twenty recruits (7%) raised PT-related concerns in written comments, most often referencing infrequent sessions and uneven integration into the academy schedule. Recruits also noted that physical training supports discipline, accountability, and group cohesion.

- **Area for Further Review:** Cadet feedback suggests an opportunity to review the frequency and scheduling of Physical Training to assess whether it can be delivered more consistently throughout the academy, with planned transitions that support recruits’ capacity for self-directed fitness, wellness, and discipline after graduation. Research on police training and adult learning indicates that exposure to physiological stressors, such as elevated heart rate and physical exertion, is essential for building resilience and preparing officers for real-world encounters. Embedding physical training across the curriculum may help reinforce these demands while also supporting long-term officer wellness.⁵

4. Firearms Training: Limited Time Undermines Preparedness (Module 4)

Compared to other academy lessons, firearms training received the fewest negative ratings on job preparedness, with 0.4% of responses indicating “Disagree” and no responses indicating “Strongly Disagree.” At the module level, cadets largely reported feeling prepared with respect to basic firearm handling and safety protocols. However, written feedback highlights a narrower but meaningful set of concerns related to instructional time and realism. Seventeen recruits (6%) referenced a desire for additional firearms training or more time at the range, most often noting limited opportunities to practice under stress, while moving, or in dynamic decision-making contexts. Although this represents a relatively small share of the full sample, written feedback was optional, and recurring mentions among those who chose to comment suggest this issue warrants consideration. These findings suggest that while foundational firearms instruction is generally viewed as effective, some recruits identified gaps in applied, stress-based practice that may affect confidence prior to entering patrol assignments. Given the importance of firearm decision-making to both officer and public safety, ensuring opportunities to reinforce these skills before field deployment remains a critical consideration.

- *Cadet feedback suggests an opportunity to review the structure and time allocation of firearms training to assess whether additional opportunities for dynamic, decision-based practice can be incorporated within existing requirements. Research on police training indicates that firearms instruction is most effective when it extends beyond technical proficiency to include realistic conditions that reflect the cognitive and physiological demands of fieldwork.⁶ One potential approach is to integrate firearm accuracy and decision-making into reality-based training scenarios, including the use of video review of firearm use during scenario exercises. These strategies could reinforce applied firearm skills while remaining mindful of range capacity, certification requirements, and the number of recruit classes requiring access.*

⁵ Jenkins et al., “Optimizing Scenario-Based Training,” 21.

⁶ Jenkins et al., “Optimizing Scenario-Based Training,” 25-29.

5. Academy Structure and Length: Perceived as Inefficient

Cadets described the academy as overly long, heavily administrative, and poorly scheduled, particularly in the final weeks. Written feedback emphasized excessive mandated and administrative hours during this period and called for streamlining the program.⁷ Concerns related to academy structure or length were raised by 43 recruits (15%), making this the second most frequently cited theme after Reality-Based Training. Cadets commonly suggested reallocating this time toward applied skills, physical training, and scenario-based instruction. In particular, cadets emphasized the need for more opportunities to apply classroom instruction in practical settings to build confidence under realistic conditions.

- **Area for Further Review:** *Although the term “downtime” appeared frequently in written responses, it was not consistently defined by respondents, limiting the ability to identify specific scheduling concerns. Nonetheless, the pattern of feedback points to a broader concern about how instructional time is structured and sequenced across the academy. Cadet feedback suggests an opportunity to examine whether the academy’s structure supports progressive, applied skill development within existing state-mandated requirements. Because portions of the curriculum and training hours are governed by MPOETC standards, any adjustments would require coordination with state partners. Even within these constraints, feedback consistently calling for more DT, PT, and RBT highlights potential opportunities to better sequence instruction using a crawl–walk–run approach that reinforces skills under increasing levels of complexity and stress, consistent with adult learning principles and national guidance on effective police training. That is, the Task Force’s Pillar 5 on training and education also emphasizes that police training is grounded in adult learning theory to encourage new officers to cultivate a problem-solving and proactive mindset.⁸*

CPOC acknowledges that the curriculum of the PPD Academy is state mandated to ensure consistency across police departments. This may limit the adjustments that PPD is able to make. Cadet feedback is nonetheless valuable in that it highlights topics that PPD leadership can examine in order to enhance any training and implement more opportunities for hands-on learning to increase the recruit’s confidence and proficiency in standard police work.

⁷ “City hours” refer to classroom instruction hours required by the City or Department, which are in addition to state-mandated training hours. For example, the CPOC presentation about oversight that is given to recruits is categorized under City hours. “Administrative hours” include non-instructional time such as lunch breaks or independent study.

⁸ President’s Task Force, Final Report, 51-60.

Updates Since Survey Implementation: Department Response and Instructional Improvements

Since the launch of this feedback initiative, the Philadelphia Police Department has taken steps to enhance the academy experience based on class-by-class survey results. Captain Stephen Clark shared several instructional updates that have been implemented since the survey period. While some of these updates directly address specific feedback themes, others reflect an ongoing, iterative process of refining instruction based on broader trends and cumulative input from multiple classes. PPD shared several key instructional updates that have been implemented since the implementation of the survey:



- Scenario-based training is incorporated across multiple modules throughout the academy (e.g., vehicle stops, radio communications, active shooter response), allowing recruits to apply skills and legal concepts prior to the formal Reality-Based Training phase.
- Reality-Based Training (RBT) continues to be delivered at the end of the academy, with PPD exceeding the state standard by providing two consecutive weeks of RBT instruction.
- Training environments have been expanded beyond the RBT facility to include the driving course, gym, and indoor simulation spaces, supporting skill application across varied operational settings.
- Applied legal simulations are used to assess recruits' understanding of reasonable suspicion, probable cause, and de-escalation in controlled, scenario-based exercises.
- The academy was reduced from 38 weeks to 35 weeks. No state-mandated training hours were removed.

These early adjustments reflect PPD leadership's responsiveness to cadet feedback and a shared commitment to continuously strengthening academy instruction within existing state and local requirements. They also underscore the value of CPOC's survey initiative as a mechanism for elevating cadet perspectives and informing data-driven discussions about training delivery. CPOC will continue to track these developments, monitor outcomes, and support ongoing collaboration with PPD and training leadership in future reports to help ensure academy instruction remains responsive, effective, and aligned with governing standards.



III.

CADET SURVEY RESULTS

The present analysis examines cadet perceptions of job preparedness as an early indicator within the broader training-to-practice continuum. It does not evaluate post-graduation outcomes, field performance, or misconduct, nor does it establish a causal relationship between academy training and officer behavior in the field. At present, the relationship between cadets' experiences during training and their subsequent preparedness or performance is not known.

As a result, the findings presented here should be understood as descriptive and preliminary. Both the presence and absence of disagreement with job preparedness may carry different implications depending on lesson context and should not be interpreted as measures of instructional quality or effectiveness. Rather, these results provide a structured overview of how training is perceived at the point of delivery and underscore the need for further research linking academy training, officer confidence, and field outcomes over time.

Quantitative Survey Analysis

MODULE 1

01. Introduction to the Academy

- Academy Mission
- Academy Objectives
- Academy Rules and Regulations
- Learning and Study Skills
- Role and Function of MPOETC

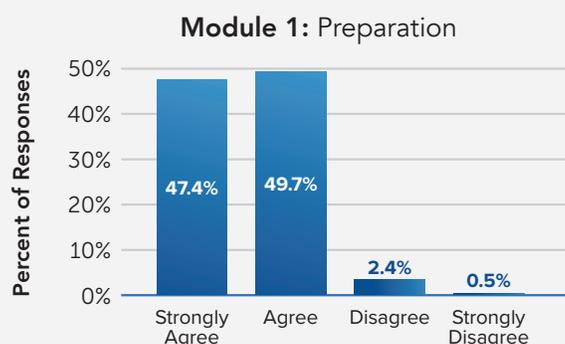
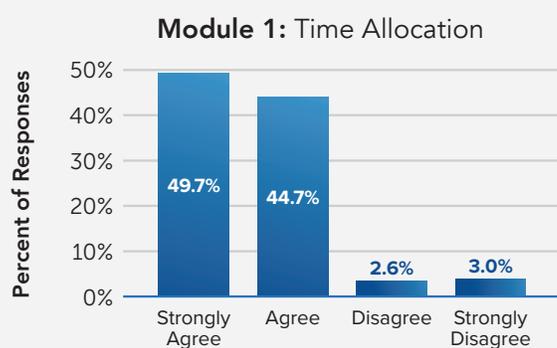
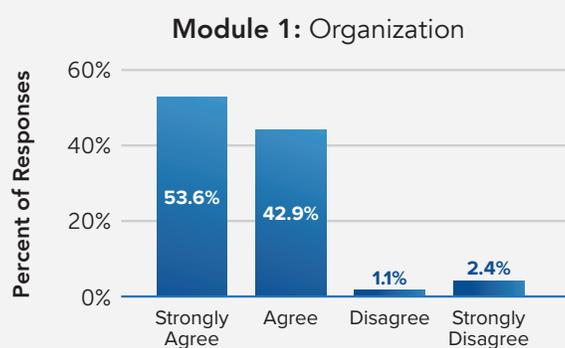
02. Introduction to Law Enforcement in PA

- History and Principles of Law Enforcement
- Ethics and Moral Issues
- Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving
- PA Criminal Justice System
- Report Writing and Notes

03. Laws and Criminal Procedures

- Constitutional Law
- Authority and Jurisdiction
- Criminal Law
- Criminal Procedure and Laws of Arrest
- Search and Seizure
- Admissions and Confessions
- Civil Laws
- Liquor Laws
- Use of Force in Law Enforcement

Figure 2. Module 1 Responses



Overall, most respondents gave positive ratings across all four areas of Module 1. Over 96.5% of respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the module was well-organized. Similarly, 94.4% responded positively, indicating that time was used effectively and 97.1% of respondents reported overall satisfaction with preparedness. A majority of cadets rated the quality of the module as Excellent or Above Average. However, quality ratings showed greater dispersion than other measures, with 16.3% selecting Average.

Lesson-level results show variation within Module 1 that is not apparent from aggregate module ratings. While disagreement or negative ratings on job preparedness remained limited overall, certain submodules accounted for a higher share of disagreement on job preparedness relative to others. In particular, introductory lessons such as Introduction to the Academy and Introduction to Law Enforcement in Pennsylvania showed low, but still notable, levels of disagreement with job preparedness. Introduction to the Academy (3.94%) and Introduction to Law Enforcement in Pennsylvania (3.23%) were among the lessons with the highest levels of disagreement across the academy. Taken together, these findings indicate that Module 1 performed strongly at the aggregate level, while lesson-level analysis highlights modest variation in perceived preparedness within foundational coursework.

MODULE 2

04. Juveniles

- a. Juvenile Law and Justice

05. Human Relations

- a. Perceptions of Human Behavior and Communications
- b. Cultural and Religious Considerations
- c. Personal Bias and Procedural Justice

06. Responding to Special Needs

- a. Behavior Management and Crisis Intervention
- b. Recognizing Special Needs
- c. Mental Illness

07. Homeland Security

- a. Overview of Homeland Security
- b. Citizenship Issues
- c. Assessing and Responding to Threats of Terrorism
- d. Incident Command System (ICS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS)

08. Vehicle Code Enforcement

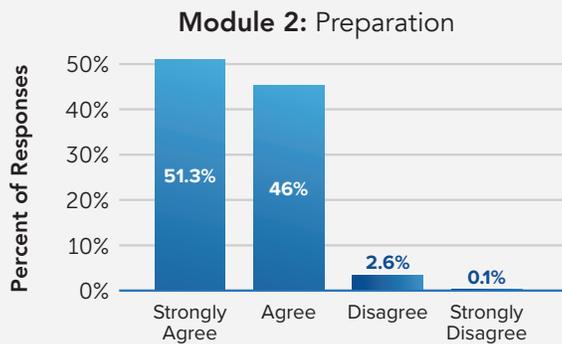
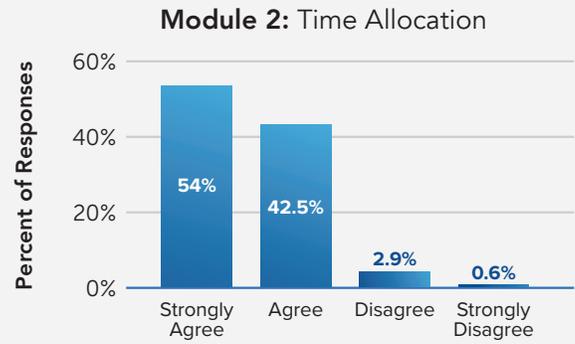
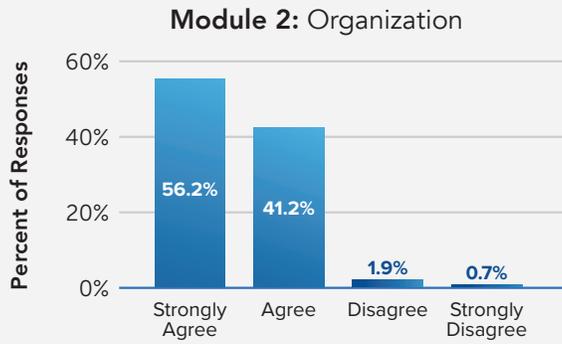
- a. Vehicle Code and Enforcement
- b. DUI Enforcement and Prosecution

09. Crash Investigation

- a. Crash Investigation and Scene Management
- b. Hazardous material and Environmental Crimes

Module 2 received predominantly positive ratings across all evaluation categories. More than 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that sessions were well organized, appropriately timed, and prepared them for their work. Ratings for instructional quality also remained strong, though with slightly greater dispersion than other measures: approximately 80% of cadets rated the module's quality as Excellent or Above Average, while 19.1% rated it as Average. Only 1% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, selecting Below Average or Very Poor.

Figure 3. Module 2 Responses



While module-level results indicate consistently positive perceptions overall, lesson-level analysis reveals limited variation within Module 2. In particular, the Juveniles submodule accounted for 3.94% of Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses on job preparedness, the fourth-highest percentage of disagreement across all lessons analyzed. Although this represents a small proportion of responses in absolute terms, it is notable relative to other lessons within the Academy.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Module 2 had very high ratings, but that individual lessons had more mixed results. Further research is needed to understand the lesson-level patterns.

MODULE 3

10. Patrol Procedures and Operations

- Overview of Patrol Procedures
- Patrol Activities and Incidents
- Vehicle Stop Techniques
- Crimes in Progress
- Crowd Control and Civil Disorder
- Domestic Violence
- Gangs and Transient Criminals
- Disguised Weapons
- Active Assault
- Ethnic Intimidation & Bias Crimes
- Radio Procedures

11. Criminal Investigation

- Crime Scenes and Evidence Collection
- Interview and Interrogation
- Identification of Suspects
- Crimes Against People
- Crimes Against Property
- Injury and Death Cases
- Sexual Offenses and Human Trafficking
- Crimes Against Children
- Crimes Against the Elderly and Care-Dependent People
- Technology and Social Media
- Surveillance

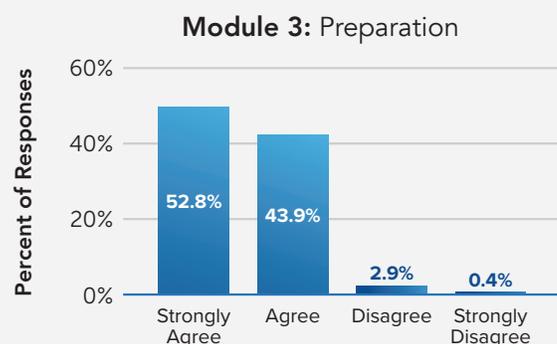
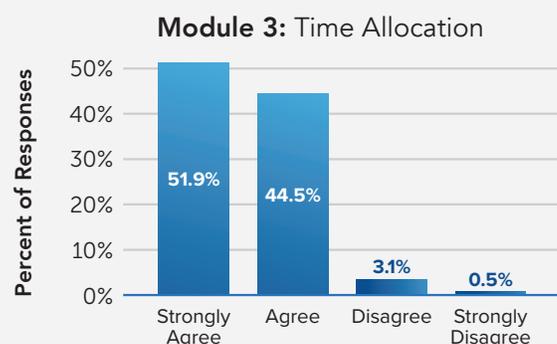
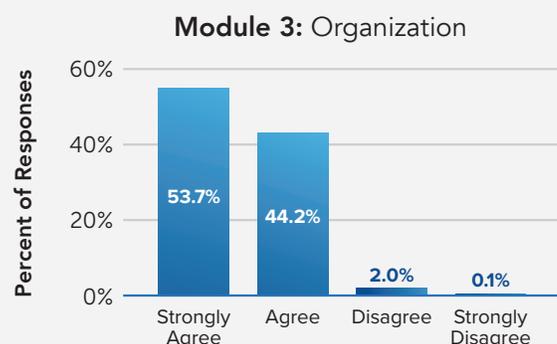
12. Drug Law Enforcement

- Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act
- Drug Identification
- Clandestine Labs

13. Case Presentation

- Courtroom Testimony and Demeanor

Figure 4. Module 3 Responses



Cadets gave overwhelmingly positive feedback on Module 3. Most respondents agreed that the instruction was well-organized and that time was appropriately allocated, with a majority selecting “Strongly Agree” in both categories. Instructor preparation was also rated highly, with 96.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing. While over half of cadets rated the overall quality of the module as “Excellent,” substantial shares selected Above Average (26.6%) and Average (19.8%), reflecting variation in perceived quality even where overall satisfaction remained high. An observable pattern across Modules is that instructional quality ratings showed more variation than other evaluation categories, even where overall module performance was strong.

Lesson-level analysis provides additional detail on perceptions of job preparedness within Module 3. While disagreement with job preparedness remained limited overall, Case Presentation accounted for 5.02% of Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses, representing the second highest rate observed across all lessons. Other Module 3 lessons showed lower and more comparable levels of disagreement. Taken together, these findings indicate that Module 3 performed strongly at the aggregate level, while lesson-level results highlight variation in perceived preparedness which was mostly concentrated in a single applied lesson.

MODULE 4

14. Operation of Patrol Vehicles

- a. Juvenile Law and Justice

15. Physical and Emotional Readiness

- a. Health and Wellness
- b. Emotional Health, Stress Management, and Resiliency Training
- c. Physical Fitness Training and Testing Requirements

16. Control Tactics

- a. Mechanics of Arrest, Restraint and Control
- b. Tactical Self Defense
- c. Less Lethal Weapon Familiarization
- d. Transporting Prisoners
- e. In-Custody Risks

17. Firearms

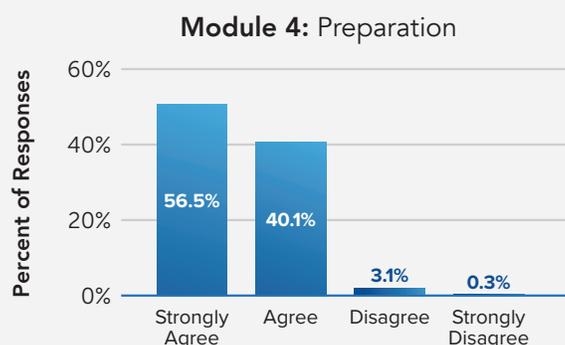
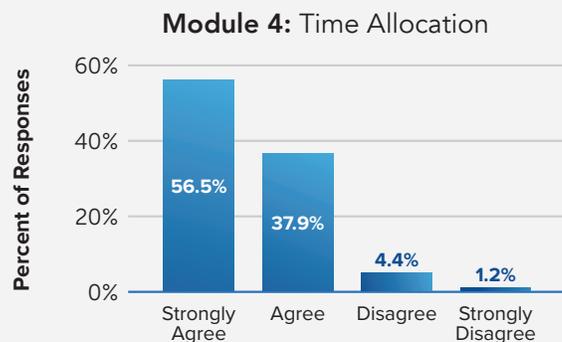
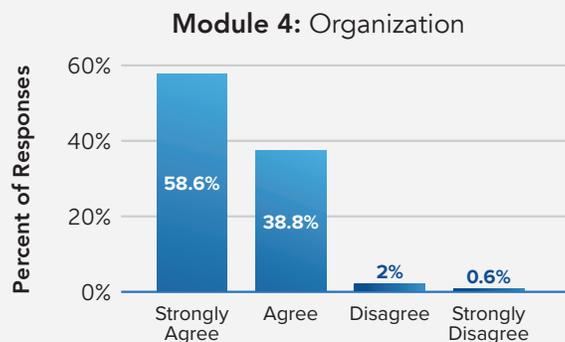
- a. Handgun
- b. Shotgun
- c. Introduction to Patrol Rifle
- d. Stress Shooting Course

18. Emergency Response Training

- a. First Aid, CPR, and AED
- b. Opioid Overdoses and Management
- c. Tactical Medicine

Cadet feedback for Module 4 was largely positive, especially for Organization, Time Allocation, and Preparation, where over 56% “Strongly Agreed” and less than 5% expressed any disagreement. Instructional quality ratings were also favorable overall but exhibited greater dispersion than other measures. While 59% of cadets rated quality as Excellent, 23.1% selected Above Average and 17% selected Average, indicating wider variation in perceived quality relative to organization and preparation, in line with the patterns we have seen in the other modules.

Figure 5. Module 4 Responses



Lesson-level analysis on perceptions of job preparedness reveals substantial variation within Module 4 that is not apparent from aggregate module scores. Control Tactics accounted for 7.89% of Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses, the highest rate observed across all lessons analyzed. In contrast, other Module 4 lessons showed considerably lower levels of disagreement, including Physical and Emotional Readiness (3.23%), Operation of Patrol Vehicles (2.87%), and Emergency Response Training (2.51%). Firearms training showed the lowest concentration of disagreement out of all the lessons (0.36%).

In some cases, the absence of disagreement, such as in firearms training, should not be interpreted as evidence of comprehensive preparedness. Uniform agreement may also reflect high confidence that is not independently validated in field conditions. However, the ability to distinguish between appropriate confidence and overconfidence falls outside the scope of this analysis.

MODULE 5

19. Scenarios and Practical Exercises

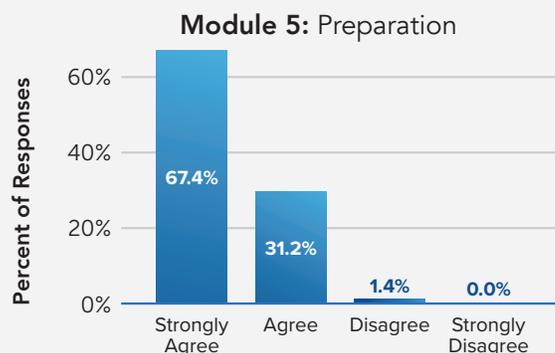
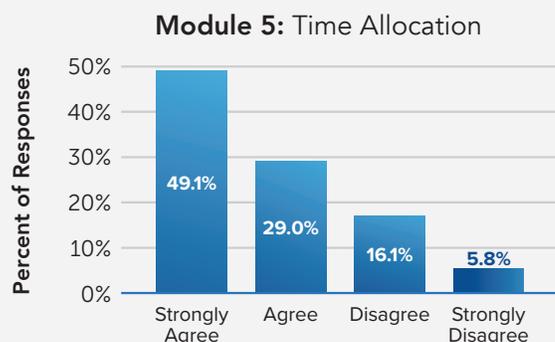
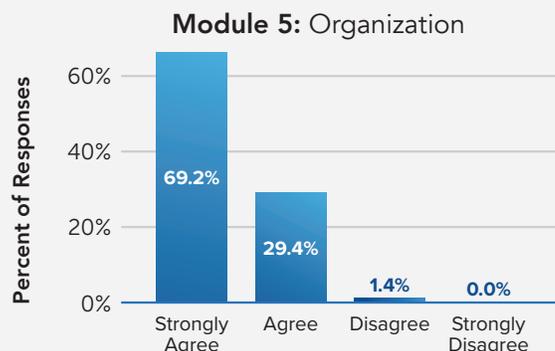
a. Final Scenarios

Module 5 received strong ratings for Organization, Preparation, and Instructional Quality, with a large majority of respondents selecting the highest response categories in each area. Ratings for quality showed less dispersion than in earlier modules, with most cadets rating instruction as Excellent or Above Average and relatively few selecting Average.

At the same time, Module 5 exhibited greater overall variation in responses across evaluation categories than other modules. In contrast to other evaluation areas, responses related to Time Allocation were more mixed. While many respondents agreed or strongly agreed that time was used effectively, a larger share selected disagreement compared to other modules, indicating variation in perceptions of pacing or time sufficiency.

Lesson-level analysis shows minimal disagreement with job preparedness within Module 5. Scenarios and Practical Exercises accounted for 1.43% of Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses, placing it as the second lowest rate observed across all lessons analyzed. Taken together, these findings are in line with the qualitative findings which show cadets feel that reality-based training and scenarios are the most effective and valuable part of training, but also the area most in need of expansion.

Figure 6. Module 5 Responses



Qualitative Data Analysis

In addition to the quantitative data presented above, we reviewed the qualitative feedback submitted by cadets in their final evaluations. Cadet written feedback provides important context for these patterns. This open-ended input **highlights not only what they found most effective, but also where they saw critical gaps in preparedness.**

Cadets expressed deep appreciation for the instructors and the overall training mission. They also provided detailed, consistent, and constructive feedback pointing to areas of the academy that could be reevaluated. While many modules received favorable ratings overall, recruits frequently described gaps in realism, frequency, or application, highlighting a consistent distinction between theoretical instruction and training that feels directly transferable to real-world policing. Several cross-cutting themes emerged from the responses. The findings section below highlights the five most frequently raised concerns. These findings reflect areas where cadets feel the current curriculum or structure may negatively impact field readiness, morale, or instructional efficiency.

Training Topic	Outcomes
Reality-Based Training (RBT)	RBT, part of Module 5, received the highest “Excellent” rating for quality (68.8%) but the lowest “Strongly Agree” rating for time allocation (49.1%), mirroring cadet feedback that the training was highly valuable but came too late and was too limited in duration.
Defensive Tactics (DT)	DT is part of Module 4, which received strong scores across all indicators, suggesting cadets agreed it was well-organized, well-prepared, and appropriately timed. However, written feedback frequently described the techniques as outdated and misaligned with real-world scenarios.
Physical Training (PT)	PT is included within Module 4, which scored highly overall. However, cadets widely criticized its infrequency and lack of structure, but these concerns are not reflected in the quantitative scores. However, the wider spread in quality ratings could reflect this tension.
Firearms Training	Included in Module 4, this area received strong overall scores. However, cadets expressed significant concerns regarding insufficient time, lack of stress-based practice, and inadequate preparedness in their written feedback. Again, the wider spread of quality ratings could reflect this tension.
Academy Structure & Length	Though not tied to a specific module, this area reflects broader cadet concerns about downtime. Cadets noted redundant administrative hours, and inefficiency, especially in the final months, though these experiences were not uniform across all recruits. These issues were not fully captured in module-level ratings, which generally reflected high satisfaction with instructional time.



IV. LOOKING AHEAD

In April 2024, CPOC and PPD implemented several key changes to the survey to improve the quality and actionability of cadet feedback. The pilot version, spearheaded by former CPOC Senior Researcher Josh Koehnlein, invited recruits to provide general ratings of their overall academy experience, with a single open-ended question at the end.

Building on that foundation, CPOC's Senior Data Analyst Allison Teti led a redesign of the survey to better align survey items with instructional modules and allow for more targeted insights. While cadets still provide general ratings across all modules, conditional follow-up prompts were introduced to allow for more specific analysis of satisfaction and instructional effectiveness by topic area. If a cadet selected "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," or rated instructional quality as "Average," "Below Average," or "Poor," the survey prompted to give written feedback and explain why.

Specifically, these new module-specific prompts now ask:

- "You rated some lessons lower in overall teaching quality. Could you share what contributed to that rating and what could be improved, so we can enhance future classes?"
- "You indicated that one or more aspects of the lessons — including organization, time allocation, or job preparedness — were not satisfactory. Please describe why, so we can improve the experience for future recruits. For example: 'X class was too long/too short'; 'X topic should be taught earlier'; or 'X class did not prepare me well because _____.'"

These open-ended responses were essential to understanding not just what needed improvement, but why recruits felt that way.

In addition to the core training modules, cadets receive a presentation from CPOC on the history and role of civilian oversight. To build on the success of the current feedback module, a section has been added where recruits are asked to evaluate the quality and impact of the presentation by responding to the following questions:

- **Did the presentation help you better understand the role and importance of police oversight?**
- **Did it address your questions and concerns, and did the presenters actively listen to participant feedback?**
- **Did the presentation provide valuable insights that enhanced your understanding of civilian oversight?**
- **Were the presenters clear and knowledgeable in explaining the material?**

Cadets are also invited to respond to an open-ended question at the end where they can share any additional feedback for CPOC about the oversight content and delivery. CPOC will begin analyzing this feedback alongside the rest of the training survey to improve the clarity, structure, and delivery of its presentation. Results from this portion of the survey will be reported in future memos and used to ensure that CPOC's direct engagement with recruits remains meaningful and effective.

Moving forward, CPOC will conduct a thematic analysis of the additional written feedback to identify recurring issues and pinpoint specific classes or topics that cadets struggled with. This process will help uncover patterns, track which concerns have already been addressed through curriculum changes and highlight areas that remain persistent concerns. Additionally, CPOC plans to collaborate with PPD, Dr. Pamela Murray, recently appointed Executive Director of Training Curriculum & Professional Development, and Captain Joseph Green, the new Commanding Officer of the Recruit Training Unit, on updates to the survey in early 2026 to better ensure that feedback translates into concrete, actionable outcomes.

Conclusion

As previously outlined, several curriculum changes have already been implemented. These adjustments are a direct result of the ongoing collaboration between CPOC and the academy, as well as the rolling nature of the survey results being delivered to PPD. This collaborative structure and continuous feedback loop have enabled timely, data-informed improvements to the training curriculum.

By hearing directly from cadets, this project offers valuable insight into how the Academy's instruction is experienced on the ground. That is, this project supports the development of a curriculum that ensures that cadets have a voice in shaping their training experience.

As this partnership continues, CPOC will build on the success of the current feedback model to help strengthen instruction and support officer preparedness. CPOC looks forward to deepening this collaboration with the PPD Academy to ensure that cadet feedback continues to inform meaningful, lasting improvements.

V. APPENDIX

Glossary

<p>1. Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC)</p>	<p>Pennsylvania's state authority responsible for establishing mandatory training standards, curriculum requirements, and certification for municipal police officers.</p>
<p>2. Reality-Based Training (RBT):</p>	<p>Immersive, high-stress simulations conducted during dedicated training periods to replicate real-world policing encounters and test decision-making, communication, and tactical responses.</p>
<p>3. Scenario-Based Training</p>	<p>Structured exercises used throughout the curriculum to practice specific skills or policy application in controlled settings. These scenarios may be embedded within MPOETC-required modules (e.g., vehicle stops, radio communications) or delivered by specialized units.</p>
<p>4. Defensive Tactics (DT):</p>	<p>A set of hands-on techniques taught within the Control Tactics lesson and used to manage and restrain resistant individuals. Instruction emphasizes officer safety and the application of non-lethal, proportionate force to gain compliance.</p>
<p>5. Physical Training (PT)</p>	<p>A structured fitness program designed to develop strength, endurance, and physical conditioning required for the demands of police work.</p>
<p>6. Firearms Training</p>	<p>Instruction provided to police academy cadets on the safe handling, use, and qualification of department-issued firearms.</p>
<p>7. City hours</p>	<p>Refers to classroom instruction hours required by the City or Department, which are in addition to state-mandated training hours. For example, the CPOC presentation about oversight that is given to recruits is categorized under City hours.</p>
<p>8. Administrative hours:</p>	<p>Non-instructional time, such as lunch breaks or independent study, that is not counted as formal training instruction.</p>

Data Cleaning and Deduplication Process

To ensure the integrity of the survey analysis, we applied a rigorous data cleaning process before reviewing results. This helped us focus only on responses that were complete, valid, and most up to date.

1. Removing Incomplete Surveys

Each survey asked cadets to evaluate the five curriculum modules, with multiple questions under each (e.g., about organization, quality, timing, and preparation).

We removed any surveys that were missing answers in key questions across these modules. This ensured that partial or abandoned submissions did not distort the findings.

2. Resolving Duplicate Responses

Some cadets submitted more than one survey. When this happened, we retained only the most recent complete version. Older or incomplete submissions from the same person were removed to avoid double-counting.

Summary of Dataset Refinement:

Description	Count
Total Number of Recruits	305
Original survey responses	297
Removed due to missing information	15
Removed older duplicate submissions	3
Final dataset used for analysis	279

This cleaning process helps ensure that the results accurately reflect cadet feedback and uphold the reliability of the findings shared in this report.¹⁰

Cadet Survey Methodology: Training Assessment Overview (March 2024 – March 2025)

Once survey responses were cleaned and validated, we analyzed ratings given by cadets across the five training modules and four instructional categories. We grouped responses based on the questions listed earlier in this report:

Organization - To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The module's lessons were organized and taught in a logical manner.

Preparation - To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The information provided in the following lessons prepared me for my job.

Time Allocation - To what degree do you agree with the following statement: There was enough time in each individual class to teach the subject.

Quality - Overall, please indicate the overall level of quality of the teaching for each lesson.

¹⁰ Hammer, B., E. Virgili, and F. Bilotta. "Evidence-Based Literature Review: De-Duplication a Cornerstone for Quality." World Journal of Methodology 13, no. 5 (2023): 390–398. <https://doi.org/10.5662/wjm.v13.i5.390>.

VI. TABLE OF FIGURES

03 Figure 1. Job Preparation by Lesson

17 Figure 4. Module 3 Responses

14 Figure 2. Module 1 Responses

19 Figure 5. Module 4 Responses

16 Figure 3. Module 2 Responses

20 Figure 6. Module 5 Responses

Table 1. Distribution of Cadet Responses on Job Preparedness by Lesson for Figure 1

Module	Lesson	Job Preparedness Rating	Number of Responses (N)
Mod1	Introduction to Law Enforcement in PA	Strongly Agree	130
Mod1	Introduction to Law Enforcement in PA	Agree	140
Mod1	Introduction to Law Enforcement in PA	Disagree	8
Mod1	Introduction to Law Enforcement in PA	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod1	Introduction to the Academy	Strongly Agree	113
Mod1	Introduction to the Academy	Agree	155
Mod1	Introduction to the Academy	Disagree	9
Mod1	Introduction to the Academy	Strongly Disagree	2
Mod1	Laws and Criminal Procedures	Strongly Agree	154
Mod1	Laws and Criminal Procedures	Agree	121
Mod1	Laws and Criminal Procedures	Disagree	3
Mod1	Laws and Criminal Procedures	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod2	Crash Investigation	Strongly Agree	147
Mod2	Crash Investigation	Agree	124
Mod2	Crash Investigation	Disagree	8

Mod2	Crash Investigation	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod2	Homeland Security	Strongly Agree	152
Mod2	Homeland Security	Agree	121
Mod2	Homeland Security	Disagree	5
Mod2	Homeland Security	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod2	Human Relations	Strongly Agree	133
Mod2	Human Relations	Agree	137
Mod2	Human Relations	Disagree	9
Mod2	Human Relations	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod2	Juveniles	Strongly Agree	129
Mod2	Juveniles	Agree	139
Mod2	Juveniles	Disagree	11
Mod2	Juveniles	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod2	Responding to Special Needs	Strongly Agree	142
Mod2	Responding to Special Needs	Agree	129
Mod2	Responding to Special Needs	Disagree	7
Mod2	Responding to Special Needs	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod2	Vehicle Code Enforcement	Strongly Agree	156
Mod2	Vehicle Code Enforcement	Agree	119
Mod2	Vehicle Code Enforcement	Disagree	4
Mod3	Case Presentation	Strongly Agree	146
Mod3	Case Presentation	Agree	119
Mod3	Case Presentation	Disagree	13
Mod3	Case Presentation	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod3	Criminal Investigations	Strongly Agree	145
Mod3	Criminal Investigations	Agree	126
Mod3	Criminal Investigations	Disagree	7
Mod3	Criminal Investigations	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod3	Drug Law Enforcement	Strongly Agree	148
Mod3	Drug Law Enforcement	Agree	123
Mod3	Drug Law Enforcement	Disagree	7
Mod3	Drug Law Enforcement	Strongly Disagree	1

Mod3	Patrol Procedures & Operations	Strongly Agree	150
Mod3	Patrol Procedures & Operations	Agree	122
Mod3	Patrol Procedures & Operations	Disagree	6
Mod3	Patrol Procedures & Operations	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod4	Control Tactics	Strongly Agree	143
Mod4	Control Tactics	Agree	114
Mod4	Control Tactics	Disagree	19
Mod4	Control Tactics	Strongly Disagree	3
Mod4	Emergency Response Training	Strongly Agree	166
Mod4	Emergency Response Training	Agree	106
Mod4	Emergency Response Training	Disagree	6
Mod4	Emergency Response Training	Strongly Disagree	1
Mod4	Firearms	Strongly Agree	182
Mod4	Firearms	Agree	96
Mod4	Firearms	Disagree	1
Mod4	Firearms	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod4	Operation of Patrol Vehicles	Strongly Agree	151
Mod4	Operation of Patrol Vehicles	Agree	120
Mod4	Operation of Patrol Vehicles	Disagree	8
Mod4	Operation of Patrol Vehicles	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod4	Physical and Emotional Readiness	Strongly Agree	146
Mod4	Physical and Emotional Readiness	Agree	124
Mod4	Physical and Emotional Readiness	Disagree	9
Mod4	Physical and Emotional Readiness	Strongly Disagree	0
Mod5	Scenarios and Practical Exercises	Strongly Agree	188
Mod5	Scenarios and Practical Exercises	Agree	87
Mod5	Scenarios and Practical Exercises	Disagree	4
Mod5	Scenarios and Practical Exercises	Strongly Disagree	0

Table 1 presents the distribution of cadet responses underlying in **Figure 1. Job Preparation by Lesson**. This table shows the number of respondents selecting each job preparedness rating category, (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), for every lesson.

Understanding the Bar Charts (Figures 2–6)

Each training module covers multiple lesson topics that are rated by cadets across four core categories: Organization, Time Allocation, Preparation, and Quality. However, the number of lesson topics within each module varies. For example, Module 1 includes three topics per category, while Module 2 includes six. This structural difference matters when interpreting the results, as some categories reflect more content than others.

To account for this variation, Figures 2–6 use percentage-based bar charts rather than raw counts or averages. This way, displaying responses as percentages shows how cadet feedback is distributed across rating categories (e.g., Strongly Agree, Agree, Excellent), without over-weighting modules that contain more lessons.

Using percentages allows for fair comparisons across modules, even when the number of lesson topics is different. It also makes it easier to spot patterns, such as categories where cadets consistently rated the module highly, or areas where feedback was more mixed. These charts help highlight both strengths and areas for potential improvement in the training program, based directly on cadet experience.

