

Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan – Geography Department

Draft 7/16

The Geography Department conducts assessments of its program as a committee of the whole. We are in constant communication with each other and often discuss pedagogy and student success both formally and informally. Many years ago, the department began conducting periodic course by course assessments. For these analyses, instructors present their courses by sharing the course material with a committee consisting of the other full-time members of the department. These materials include syllabi, readings, teaching materials, worksheets, handouts, and tests, etc., as well as the sample work and test responses of students earning a variety of grades on each assignment. Each course is thoroughly discussed by the committee and is also viewed in context of the three overall goals of the department:

- To what extent does this course enable students to gain skills, knowledge, and conceptual understandings in geography?
- To what extent do students in this course acquire fundamental life skills and values?
- To what extent do students in this course grow intellectually in their knowledge of an increasingly global society?

Faculty apply a 5-point scale using the following rubric to rank course content and provide feedback to instructors: 1 = not present; 2 = minimally present; 3 = moderately present; 4 = highly present; and 5 = embedded throughout. The rankings are averaged for each goal and example results are presented below.

Goal	Skills, knowledge, and conceptual understanding	Fundamental life skills and values	Knowledge of an increasingly global society
GRY 120: Cultural Geography	4.3	4.6	4.3
GRY 221: Social Geography	5	4.25	5
GRY 328: Geographic Information Systems	4.75	3.75	2.5
GRY 400: Spatial Analysis	5	3.62	2

It should be noted that the rankings do not provide a cumulative score reflecting quality, i.e. a course receiving an average score of 4.2 is not necessarily more effective than one receiving one of 3.9. A technology course such as GRY 328: Geographic Information Systems, for instance, should not be expected to enhance student growth in their knowledge of an increasingly global society to the same extent expected of a content course such as GRY 120: Cultural Geography. It is the fact that faculty focus, reflect, and discuss course content within the larger goals and objectives of the program during the process of assessing each course that does the most to foster improvement. After each assessment cycle, changes and improvements to course content, connections between courses, and content of the major(s) have occurred.

The department will add a discussion and assessment of student learning outcomes to our existing course by course assessment methodology. An assessment will occur early in the fall semester for four courses and will allow us to carefully review our learning outcomes, curriculum map, and assessment methods for any edits before the final draft is due. Our goal as a department is to ensure the success of all students and we pride ourselves on the individual attention we give to all of our students. Our faculty often work outside of the classroom with students who are struggling to help them achieve their goals and succeed. The Department Chair, Wendy Miller, will be the lead faculty contact.