M.S. in Geography Academic Assessment Plan

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Contact Name
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Office of the Provost

University of Florida

Institutional Assessment

Continuous Quality Enhancement

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Academic Assessment Plan for M.S. in Geography

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

A. Mission

The geography programs at the University of Florida are guided by the following mission:

> The Geography M.S. degree program in the University of Florida's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences prepare students for further graduate studies and employment by educating them about the complex relations among people, places, and environments. All graduate students are required to complete coursework in proposal writing, quantitative data analysis, and geospatial techniques to acquire a foundation of skills that bridges our diverse discipline. Students then pursue specialized coursework in natural resources, physical/environmental geography, geospatial technologies, medical geography and other areas. Students are also required to pursue coursework outside of Geography to strengthen ties with other disciplines. Through teaching, research and service, the Geography department is focused on understanding human-environmental relations on Earth through posing questions and analyzing data with statistics, mapping and geospatial technologies.

This mission aligns directly with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences mission (http://www.clas.ufl.edu/about/), specifically its foremost mission

> "…to lead the academic quest to understand our place in the universe, and to help shape our society and environment." As in the college "students acquire an intellectual foundation based on a well-rounded and comprehensive education designed for an increasingly technological and rapidly changing society."

This mission aligns directly with the University of Florida's mission listed in the catalog (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/uf-mission/pages/home.aspx). Complementing the university's land-grant, sea-grant and space-grant status, geographers study the Earth's surface, oceans and atmosphere, and how humans are transforming Earth. The department, as the University,

> "… work to "create the broadly diverse environment necessary to foster multi-cultural skills and perspectives in its teaching and research for its students to contribute and succeed in the world of the 21st century" by promoting more international and social understanding, and introducing students to geographic technologies. As such, Geography "aspires to advance by strengthening the human condition and improving the quality of life."

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

SLO Type	Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method	Degree Delivery
Knowledge	Students will describe, identify, and discuss both orally and in writing the subject matter related to their discipline.	Students will demonstrate satisfactory ability to integrate and expand on ideas critical to their area of specialization through written and oral examinations administered by their supervisory committee using a rubric developed by the program.	Campus
Skills	Students will identify, examine and explain the emerging science in their discipline.	Students will demonstrate satisfactory ability to present the results of their research in their written thesis and during the oral defense of their work as determined by their supervisory committee using a rubric developed by the program.	Campus
Professional Behavior	Students will exhibit professional behavior and ethical practice during the conduct of their research.	Students will conduct their research with high levels of professionalism as outlined by their supervisory committee. Students will give a presentation at the Departmental Colloquium series prior to their graduation. Faculty will evaluate the presentation using a rubric developed by the program. Students will self-report professional activities in an annual progress report.	Campus

C. Research

We expect our graduates to publish the research from their thesis in a peer-reviewed journal. Thus, we have designed our program with this goal in mind. All graduate students in our program are assigned research mentors before they enter so that they receive guidance from the outset. Our MS students are required to take two classes that educate them about the larger discipline of Geography (Geo 6118 Contemporary Geographic Thought) and the importance of developing technically-sound research methods and written communication skills (GEO6119 Proposal Writing in Geography or an approved

research methods course offered by another department). If they do not enter with sufficient background in quantitative data analysis, they must take an introductory course in this area from our department (GEO6160 Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Geographers). If they have the equivalent knowledge from the introductory course, they must take the intermediate-level course (GEO6161 Intermediate Quantitative Methods for Geographers). All students must take a course that emphasizes techniques utilized for research in Geography such as geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing, or a more advanced course that builds on these core techniques. To gain perspectives from other closely-related disciplines, MS students must take at least six credits of coursework from other departments. Towards developing their professional behavioral skills, we require MS students to attend weekly departmental seminars during two semesters, registering for GEO5920 Colloquium and completing evaluation rubrics of the presentations they observe. Prior to graduation, each student must present their thesis research during one of the weekly seminars. Finally, to facilitate presentation of research at academic conferences, we fund graduate students for a portion of travel to one national conference per year as well as covering costs of shared transportation and hotel bookings for regional meetings. Students complete an annual activities report each year that is signed by their advisor and reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator. This report contains information related to their coursework, progress towards completing published papers, a timeline towards graduation, and listings of professional activities. Each student receives a letter from the Graduate Coordinator evaluating their progress in the program.

D. Assessment Timeline

Program M.S. in Geography College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Assessment SLOs	Assessment 1	Assessment 2
Knowledge		
Area of specialization and relationship to discipline	Oral thesis defense	Written thesis
Skills		
Critical thinking and oral and written communication	Oral thesis defense	Written thesis
Professional Behavior		
Ethics and professionalism	Colloquium Presentation	Annual self-report of professional activities

E. Assessment Cycle

Assessment Cycle for:
Program M.S. in Geography College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Analysis and Interpretation: ___May-June_____
Program Modifications: Completed by _____August 31____
Dissemination: Completed by ___September 30_____

Year SLOs	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Content Knowledge						
Area of specialization and relationship to discipline			X	X	X	X
Skills						
Critical thinking and oral and written communication			X	X	X	X
Professional Behavior						
Ethics and professionalism			X	X	X	X

F. Measurement Tools

The measurement tools used by faculty in the Department of Geography to evaluate our three SLOs utilize both direct and indirect methods. We have developed rubrics to evaluate all three SLOs. Knowledge and skills are assessed at the thesis oral defense and in the writing of the thesis itself. Each committee member is asked to assess knowledge as it pertains to the student's area of specialization, place of research within the larger discipline of geography, and linkage of previous search to the current research objective and results. A 1-5 scale is utilized where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent. To assess skills, committee members also utilize a 1-5 scale to rate the ability to conduct original and independent research, that the research methods were performed correctly and were appropriate for the study undertaken, the oral presentation of the research and its results, and writing skills. Two methods are used to assess professional behavior. A rubric developed by the faculty is used to evaluate a seminar given by each student as they present their thesis research. The rubric assesses the components of a good presentation in terms of the introduction and placement of the work within the context of previous work, data and analysis, results and conclusions. The presentation skills of the student as well as the design of the presentation and professional behavior associated with both the research and the presentation are also assessed. A copy of this rubric is included below. To collect indirect data for the measurement of professional behavior, students submit annual activities reports that include items such as colloquium attendance where they learn to evaluate presentations with a rubric, conference presentations, and progress towards the submission of a research article to a journal for peer review.

GEO5920 Presentation By:_____

Quality	Not Applicable	Missing or Unacceptable	Needs Major Improvement	Needs minor improvement	Good
Introduction					
Problem statement/Issue/ Research question					
Rationale					
Background literature/Conceptual framework/Theoretical context					
Methods					
Data sources					
Variables/Indicators/Model					
Analysis					
Findings					
Results					
Discussion of results/Conclusions					
Limitations of findings					
Presentation Style					
Clarity of presenter					
Slide design					
Answers to questions					
Professional behavior					
Sum for each column:					
Multiple by		0	1	2	3
Subtotal					

Total score: Add Subtotals: _____

EVALUATED BY_____
DATE_____
RECOMMENDATIONS_____
_____
_____

G. Assessment Oversight

Here, list the names and contact information of those who oversee the assessment process in your program. Add or delete rows as needed.

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
Corene Matyas	Graduate Coordinator	matyas@ufl.edu	294-7508
Michael Binford	Department Chair	mbindord@ufl.edu	294-7500

Figure 1. University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric

Related resources are found at http://www.aa.assessment.edu

Program: Year:

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	**Partially Met**	**Not Met**	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The program mission clearly supports the College and University missions, and includes specific statements describing how it supports these missions.				
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Measures	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLO.				
Research	Research expectations for the program are clear, concise, and appropriate for the discipline.				
Assessment Map	The Assessment Map indicates the times in the program where the SLOs are assessed and measured.				
	The Assessment Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
Assessment Cycle	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric, continued

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Measurement Tools	Measurement tools are described clearly and concisely.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of at least one measurement tool.				
Assessment Oversight	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				