

Tropical Conservation and Development
Center for Latin American Studies
Certificate Assessment Plan

A. Rationale

The TCD program is designed to address the reality that graduates entering the workforce need to be globally engaged and prepared to work beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. They must be able to address complex and inter-connected issues associated with biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being. The TCD Certificate is designed to “add value” to graduate education. TCD complements disciplinary knowledge gained from a students’ home department by providing the opportunities and space for students to learn across disciplines and develop leadership skills critical to working in conservation and development. TCD Program does not grant graduate degrees, only a certificate and concentration.

B. Mission

TCD’s mission is to bridge theory and practice to advance biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being in the tropics. We accomplish this mission via 1) training graduate-level professionals to bridge theory and practice and learn across disciplines; 2) promote integrative, comparative problem-centered research; and 3) strengthen and expand learning and action networks.

The TCD program is housed within the Center for Latin American Studies, and has 10 core faculty, a program coordinator, and approximately 100 affiliate faculty across 27 departments and four colleges (CLAS, CALS, DCP, and Engineering). The TCD program contributes to the Center for Latin American Studies’ mission to advance knowledge about Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as contributing to enhance research, teaching, and outreach in Latin American studies. TCD also contributes to the mission of the College by advancing our integrated knowledge of socio-ecological systems, and promoting interdisciplinary research and education. The TCD program by its nature is international with its focus on tropical, as well as sub-tropical and temperate areas in the global south. Faculty in the TCD program conduct research around the globe, and approximately 50% of the graduate students that participate in TCD activities are international students. These faculty and students contribute to the international mission of the University.

C. Student Learning Outcomes

TCD students are expected to attain the following learning outcomes upon graduation:

- 1. Knowledge Outcome:** Students will identify, describe and discuss key concepts or problems found within integrated social, cultural and ecological systems from different perspectives.
- 2. Skills Outcome 1:** Students will critically evaluate the scientific and other evidence resulting from work in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being in the tropics.
- 3. Skills Outcome 2:** Students will collaborate and communicate with their peers from across disciplines.

3. Professional Behavior Outcome: Students will interact with professional peers with cultural sensitivity, teamwork and effective communication.

To achieve these learning outcomes, the TCD program has developed a graduate certificate that includes conceptual core courses, skills courses, and electives from natural and social sciences. Within the core courses, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and share their often extensive experience and expertise. A brief description of the philosophy and general content in the conceptual core and skills courses follows.

1. Conceptual core: Introduce and integrate key concepts and theories from social and biophysical sciences to address conservation and development problems and issues from a comparative perspective across multiple scales in time and space
2. Skills courses: Provide opportunities to learn key concepts and *practice* communication, facilitation, conflict management, planning and/or management skills
3. Electives: Provide in-depth exposure to fields, concepts and issues that differ from those of their home department. Electives options are numerous and should be selected for their importance/utility in providing intellectual breadth for those pursuing careers in Tropical Conservation and Development

D. Assessment Timeline for TCD Certificate

Students with an interest in pursuing the TCD Certificate follow a series of steps outlined on the TCD website. They first fill out an enrollment form that familiarizes them with the TCD certificate. Second, they are required to schedule a meeting with the TCD Academic Advisor, who is a core faculty member within the TCD Program. The Academic Advisor will individually review the certificate plan with the graduate student. During this meeting, the student and Academic Advisor discuss why the student is interested in pursuing the graduate certificate and how best to plan the certificate requirements to complement the student's degree program and professional goals. The Academic Advisor discusses the conceptual core and skills course options in light of the program's student learning outcomes and reviews the variety of elective courses in social sciences and ecological sciences. Following the meeting with the Academic Advisor, the student completes and submits the enrollment form to the TCD Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator adds the student to the certificate database and the TCD Listserv. A mid-program consultation is scheduled with the TCD Academic Advisor to ensure the student is on track to complete certificate requirements and to discuss once more the TCD Certificate SLOs.

Faculty that offer TCD conceptual core and skills courses for TCD Certificate students are informed of the SLOs of the certificate. Students who successfully complete examinations, assignments and other course requirements meet the SLOs outlined above. During the semester prior to graduation, TCD certificate students complete and submit a certificate verification form to the Program Coordinator. All TCD Graduate Certificate students also are asked to complete an exit survey which provides a self-evaluation of how well they have achieved the SLOs, and to provide feedback on the certificate program. In addition, an exit interview with the TCD Director is encouraged.

The following table indicates the timeline for assessing knowledge, skills and professional behavior outcomes for students participating in the TCD Certificate program.

TCD Assessment	Initial meeting with TCD Academic Advisor	Assessment (1)	Mid-term assessment (2)	Assessment (3)	Final reflections(4)
Student Learning Outcomes					
Knowledge Outcome: Identify, describe and discuss key concepts or problems found within integrated social, cultural and ecological systems from different perspectives.	Year 1 (or at time student decides to pursue certificate) with TCD Academic Advisor	Year 1 of Certificate: conceptual core coursework; also elective coursework, especially from outside discipline	Mid-term consultation With TCD Academic Advisor	Year 2 or 3 of Certificate: conceptual core coursework; also elective coursework, especially from outside discipline	Semester prior to graduation: Completion of forms and consultation with TCD Program Coordinator Near end of final semester: Exit Survey/ Interview
Skills Outcome 1: Critically evaluate the scientific and other evidence resulting from work in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being in the tropics.	Year 1 (or at time student decides to pursue certificate) with TCD Academic Advisor	Year 1 of Certificate: conceptual core and skills coursework	Mid-term consultation With TCD Academic Advisor	Year 2 or 3 of Certificate: conceptual core and skills coursework	Semester prior to graduation: Completion of forms and consultation with TCD Program Coordinator Near end of final semester: Exit Survey/ Interview
Skills Outcome 2: Collaborate and communicate with their peers from across disciplines.	Year 1 (or at time student decides to pursue certificate) with TCD Academic Advisor	Year 1 of Certificate: conceptual core and skills coursework	Mid-term consultation With TCD Academic Advisor	Year 2 or 3 of Certificate: conceptual core and skills coursework	Semester prior to graduation: Completion of forms and consultation with TCD Program Coordinator

					Near end of final semester: Exit Survey/ Interview
Professional Behavior Outcome: Interact with professional peers with cultural sensitivity, teamwork and effective communication.	Year 1 (or at time student decides to pursue certificate) with TCD Academic Advisor	Year 1 of Certificate Via course activities in conceptual core and skills courses that involve group (team) work and collaboration with peers. Adherence to UF's honor code in courses.		Year 2 or 3 of Certificate: Certificate Via course activities in conceptual core and skills courses that involve group (team) work and collaboration with peers. Adherence to UF's honor code in courses.	Semester prior to graduation: Completion of forms and consultation with TCD Program Coordinator Near end of final semester: Exit Survey/ Interview

E. Assessment Cycle for TCD Certificate

The TCD Certificate is subjected to diverse assessments on a continuous basis, taking advantage of the academic and administrative structures adhered to by the TCD program. The TCD program resides in the Center for Latin American Studies and has two administrative staff – the TCD Program Director (PD) and Program Coordinator (PC). TCD Management meets weekly to review activities and address management and academic issues. TCD also has an Academic Advisor (AA) that meets with all TCD certificate students and reviews requests by students related to the curriculum. TCD governance is through the TCD Steering Committee (SC), which meets 2-3 times per semester. The Steering Committee is used to review and decide upon policies, precedents, procedures, and ad hoc requests. The Steering Committee membership is representative to maintain ties with key related programs, core and affiliate faculty, and students. The TCD core faculty have joint appointments in the Center for Latin American Studies and an academic department. The core faculty hold 1-2 retreats on an annual basis to discuss the program, including the certificate courses and requirements, and strategic directions. Students completing the certificate are consulted individually to again assess the SLOs and to receive additional feedback on the certificate and other TCD activities. Student feedback is encouraged and greatly appreciated. The TCD students have an active UF recognized student group that elects officers and two representatives to the TCD Steering Committee.

Assessment Cycle for:

Tropical Conservation and Development Program

Center for Latin American Studies & College of Liberal Arts and Science

- Analysis and Interpretation: Academic Advisor (AA), Steering Committee (CC), Program Director (PD), Program Coordinator (PC), TCD Core faculty (CORE)
- Improvement Actions: Completed by PD, PC and AA
- Dissemination: Completed by PD, PC

Year	14-15 Cycle 1	15-16 Cycle 1	16-17 Cycle 2
Knowledge Outcome: Identify, describe and discuss key concepts or problems found within integrated social, cultural and ecological systems from different perspectives.	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Improvement Actions & Dissemination	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation
Skills Outcome 1: Critically evaluate the scientific and other evidence resulting from work in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being in the tropics.	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Improvement Actions & Dissemination	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation
Skills Outcome 2: Collaborate and communicate with their peers from across disciplines.	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Improvement Actions & Dissemination	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation
Professional Behavior Outcome: Interact with professional peers with cultural sensitivity, teamwork and effective communication.	AA, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation	AA, SC, PD, PC, CORE Improvement Actions & Dissemination	AA, PD, PC, CORE Analysis and Interpretation

F. Methods and Procedures

Completion and approval of enrollment form for TCD Certificate: Students must submit this form for review by the Academic Advisor

Grading rubrics: Each student will be evaluated in the TCD certificate courses using the grading rubrics outline in the respective course syllabi.

Completion of certificate verification form: Each student must submit a certificate verification form near the end of the semester just prior to graduation for review by the TCD Program Coordinator.

Final reflections: Each student must complete an **exit survey** to provide feedback on the certificate program. Students will be asked the following questions, among others and evaluated as "Achieved" or "Did not achieve".

What motivated you to sign up for the TCD Certificate?

In your opinion, provide your level of agreement with the following statements:

I can discuss key concepts or problems found within integrated social, cultural and ecological systems from different perspectives.

I can critically evaluate the scientific and other evidence resulting from work in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and human well-being in the tropics.

I can collaborate and communicate with my peers from across disciplines.

I am capable of working in diverse teams.

Please identify what skills you have acquired or strengthened while earning the TCD certificate that will enhance your ability to be an effective in conservation and development career?

What are the most important lessons you have learned about working with your colleagues and about conducting yourself in an appropriate fashion in a professional context?

What are your suggestions for how TCD can improve the quality of its certificate and concentration program?

Apply for TCD Certificate:

All certificate applicants are directed to complete the central application located on the Office of Admissions' website at <http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/start.html>. Once the student completes the certificate application online, they should let the TCD PC know so she can follow up them and instruct them to contact the AA for an appointment. If the PC sees on ISIS any student that has signed up for the certificate that has not yet contact her or the AA, she will proactively contact the student and schedule a meeting.

Upon Graduation: students will again notify PC by sending her an email and the form available on line "Verification of Completed Requirements form". The PC will check the students' transcripts to make sure they have indeed finished the TCD certificate requirements. If so, the PC will carry out final certification in ISIS admin on the designated semester deadline. Throughout the year, the PC sends

messages to the list of students pursuing the TCD certificate with reminders about deadlines and other important info.

A. Assessment oversight

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