DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND CITY & REGIONAL PLANNING
College Of Social Sciences

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN (SOAP)

I. Mission Statement

The Department of Geography is committed to provide effective teaching, advising and research opportunities. We prepare and motivate students to apply the spatially-based analytical tools of Geography to the study of social and environmental problems that range in scale from local concerns to global issues. We feel this is in keeping with the commitment of the larger university community by embracing a culture of diversity and internationalization, producing transformative scholarly research and creative works that target regional issues with global significance and exemplifying the ethical stewardship of capital and human resources.

II. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

Goal 1: The Department's graduates will understand and analyze spatial relationships.

Outcome 1: They will explain and interpret the distribution, processes and linkages between culture, economy, urbanization, agriculture, politics and language.

Outcome 2: They will explain and interpret the interrelationships between lithosphere, atmosphere and hydrosphere and biosphere.

Goal 2: The Department's graduates will understand, analyze, and critique human and environment interactions.

Outcome 3: They will explain and critically evaluate how human activities modify physical and biotic environments.

Outcome 4: They will explain and critically evaluate how the physical and biotic environments affect humans.

Goal 3: The Department's graduates will be able to use basic geography tools and analytical techniques and apply them in a real world setting.

Outcome 5: They will be able to perform quantitative analysis and interpret the results.

Outcome 6: They will be able to read, interpret and construct maps.

2 Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)

Course	Goal 1 Outcome 1	Goal 1 Outcome 2	Goal 2 Outcome 3	Goal 2 Outcome 4	Goal 3 Outcome 5	Goal 3 Outcome 6
2	I		I	I	I	
4	I	I	I	I	I	
5		I	I	I	I	
7		I	I	I	I	
20	I	I	I	I	I	I
25	I					
30					I	
111		A	A	A	A	
112		A	A	A	A	
114		A	A	A	A	
115		A	A	A	A	
118		A	A	A	A	
122		A	A	A	A	
127	A	A	A	A	A	
128		A	A	A	A	
132	I		A	A	A	
135			A	A	A	
139T		A	A	A	A	
140					A	I
141					A	I
142					R	A
143					R	R
149	R	R	R	R	R	R
150	R	R	R	R	R	
151		R	R	R	R	R
152		R	R	R	R	R
160	R		R	R	R	
161	R		R	R	R	
162	R		R	R	R	
163	R		R	R	R	
164	R		R	R	R	
165	R		R	R	R	
166	R				R	
167	R		R	R	R	
170T	R		R	R	R	
171T	R		R	R	R	
172	R		R	R	R	
173	R		R	R	R	
174	R		R	R	R	
175T	R		R	R	R	
176	R		R	R	R	
177T	R		R	R	R	
178	R		R	R	R	
179	R		R	R	R	

181	R		R	R	R	
184	R		R	R	R	
187T	R		R	R	R	
190						
191T						
192						
194W						
195						

I=introduced, R=reinforced, A=Advance

3 Assessment Methods

Direct Measures

1. The department will assess student papers and projects. These documents will be reviewed by department committee.

    a. Each year the papers/projects will be only from either a human, physical or environmental geography courses and will be evaluated with their corresponding outcomes. Performance will be measured against a department-designed rubric. The department will construct and apply three scoring rubrics to evaluate the papers and projects collected each academic year (appropriate to either human, physical or environmental geography courses). Students will need to earn a grade of "C" or better in order to meet the outcome.

2. Post- testing will be implemented in several courses to assess various outcomes. Specific short answer or essay questions will be asked to access not only their understanding of the outcome but their writing proficiency as well. The answers will be graded against a department rubric in which students will have to earn a grade of "C" or better to meet the outcome.

3. Class exercises covering calculation of risk quantification, health and disease-related rates, temperature, and emission rates will be evaluated to assess quantitative and reasoning skills. A grade of "C" or better will be required to meet the outcome.

Indirect Measures *(Alumni Survey is required)*

1. The department will conduct an alumni survey every 3 years to assess the employment status and graduate school placement of our undergraduate majors.

    a. The survey will include questions about individual job placement, post-graduate school placement and will be sent to each undergraduate geography alumnus. The department staff will organize the returned information into a database and a summary of the data will be provided to faculty and included in the self-assessment report.

2. The department will conduct a senior survey to measure students' self-evaluations of

advanced knowledge and of the program's success.

3. Assessing internships. Surveys will be conducted with the former graduates of the department to understand usefulness of internship in their career pathways. Each question will have an associated score and an overall score equivalent to a "C" will be required to meet the outcome.

4 Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

Measure	Goal 1 Outcome 1	Goal 1 Outcome 2	Goal 2 Outcome 3	Goal 2 Outcome 4	Goal 3 Outcome 5	Goal 3 Outcome 6
Papers and projects	X	X	X	X		
Post test			X	X		
Class exercises					X	X
Internship analysis					X	X
Alumni survey		X		X		X
Senior survey	X		X			X

5 Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

Assessment Activity	Year 1 AY 10/11	Year 2 AY 11/12	Year 3 AY 12/13	Year 4 AY 13/14	Year 5 AY 14/15
Papers and projects				X	
Post test					
Exercise				X	
Internship analysis					X
Alumni survey		X			
Senior survey			X		
Self-assessment report					X
Advisory board			X		

6 Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting

Assessment for AY 2009/2010:

A scoring rubric was developed by the Assessment Coordinator for analysis of student papers. The results, which included examples of varying student performance, were included in the Spring 2010 Annual Report. Based on the analysis, five future changes were suggested for improving Goal 6.

Assessment for AY 2010/2011:

The department will develop three separate rubrics (to correspond to course and outcomes) to better assess the student portfolio component. The rubrics will be created by the department as a whole and will be implemented again in AY 11/12.

Changes for SOAP AY 2010/2011:

As a result of our last assessment and ongoing assessment support, the following changes have been made to this year's SOAP:

- The number of goals/outcomes was slightly reduced as to avoid overlap and/or outcomes that cannot be easily measured.
- The curriculum map was adjusted to reflect the changes in the goals/outcomes.
- The direct measures (particularly the student portfolio) were written with greater specificity.
- The timeline was adjusted for better manageability.

Assessment for AY 2011/2012:

The department conducted an alumni survey.

Department changes for AY 2011/2012:

Given the alumni results, the following changes will be made:

1. The survey will be updated to better assess the outcome.
2. The survey will be updated to reflect standard norms and procedures in surveys and questionnaires.
3. The survey will be handled in a more timely manner to allow adequate time for responses, as well as a follow-up and incentive.
4. The survey will be conducted via mail or online survey system for confidentiality.
5. Check as to whether GIS certificates have been sent to former students.
6. Career development will be top priority, as well as making our internship program more robust.

This is the department's first year of linking the alumni survey with assessment. It is clear that

improvement measures need to be taken so that this survey not only assesses the overall quality of the program, but the actual outcome as well. The survey was reduced in size to facilitate more responses in the short time frame, so including questions regarding the outcome, as well as including open-ended questions should not a problem in the future.

Assessment for AY 2012/2013:

The department designed and conducted a senior survey and formulated an advisory board.

Changes for SOAP AY 2012/2013:

The department reduced the number of goals and outcomes and developed a more realistic timeline for assessment. More specific rubrics were created. A course assessment was completed however it was assessment against the course outcomes rather than the SOAP outcomes and therefore results are not included in this section.

2013/2014 Assessment:

An exercise, measuring GE IB Learning Outcome 1, was evaluated for three sections of Geography 115 in Fall 2013.

We learned from the GE problem sets that 2/3rd of the students in all three sections of Geography 115 met the expectations of grade of C or better. This suggests that students are learning the required analytical/quantitative skills they need to have before they finish their GE requirements.

Final papers, measuring Major Learning Outcome 4, were evaluated for one of the sections of Geography 128 in Spring 2014.

The final papers were assessed using critical thinking rubrics. Faculty gave each paper a score out of 20 points based upon criteria such as explanation of issues, evidence, and influence of context and assumptions. See attached rubrics for details. We expected that most of the students to achieve B or above on the final papers. For the grades that the students received from the instructor, they have met this criterion. However, when the papers were assessed solely for critical thinking using value rubric, only 54% of the students received B. The Department will use additional measures to assess student critical thinking skills. Though, it seems the scores are different because the rubric and paper guidelines were not as closely aligned as we think they could be. So, we plan to address this issue to make more clear linkages between the rubrics and writing guidelines.

The Department is not making any changes at this time except for more closely aligning assignments and the rubrics used to measure the critical thinking skills. We will be conducting further assessment and collecting data to determine whether students are truly meeting our benchmarks.