

**Eastern Illinois University
Department of Geology/Geography**

**Geography Program
Student Learning Assessment Plan**

December 2021

Introduction

The Geography Program's Student Learning Assessment Plan serves as an overall measure of effectiveness and a launching point for discussion about the curriculum that provides students with a well-rounded background in geographic knowledge and analytical skills. The Geography program curriculum committee has developed a sequence of required and elective courses that will present students with a broad background of geographic knowledge and technical skills. These skills will serve as a strong foundation for graduate school or a career as a professional geographer.

Geography Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Geology/Geography Department is to promote learning of physical and human earth systems to students, to prepare students for successful careers or graduate education in Geography and cognate disciplines, and to engage students of all backgrounds to become active citizens through deeper learning of the world around them. The Department expects the successful Geography graduate to recognize, understand and be able to analyze spatial processes related to the physical world and human interactions within it. To assist students in reaching their goals, the Department will maintain a competitive curriculum, qualified faculty, an environment conducive to learning, and diverse community and alumni relationships. These will be harnessed to foster scholarship, enhanced teaching and learning experiences, a sense of professional and ethical responsibility, and service to the region. The Department actively encourages and supports diverse undergraduate inquiry through independent or one-on-one research with faculty members.

Goals and Objectives of Geography Learning Assessment

The Department of Geology and Geography expects each geography graduate to acquire a set of comprehensive geographic principles and expertise including the ability to skillfully present information in written and oral forms. In addition, graduates of geography are expected to be able to carry out rigorous independent research of a geographic topic. The department, hence, requires geography majors to take a series of courses throughout their four year program, incorporating the following essential elements of geography. These are organized into three major goals with concomitant learning objectives that are aligned with one of the university's five undergraduate learning goals (ULGs), abbreviated as follows:

- (C) Critical Thinking
- (W) Writing & Critical Reading
- (S) Speaking and Listening
- (Q) Quantitative Reasoning
- (R) Responsible Citizenship

Goal 1 Students will develop an expertise in using and creating maps, interpreting geographic data and images, and employing other geographic tools to present and interpret physical and human characteristics, and organize and analyze information in a spatial context.

Objective 1.1 uses and creates maps to interpret physical and human characteristics such as scale, distance, climate, soils, resource distribution, and other spatial information in determining geographic patterns; (C)

Objective 1.2 analyzes geographic data and appropriately presents them in charts, graphs, tables, and other forms. (Q)

Goal 2 Students will acquire a comprehensive understanding of and ability to analyze and discuss the physical processes that lead to the formation of unique patterns and shapes on the surface of the earth. Moreover, they will develop an appreciation of how physical environments affect human systems and how human actions modify the physical environment. (W,S,R)

Objective 2.1 understands the dynamic and interactive nature of the physical and human processes of the earth, including how the human activity within a region modifies the physical properties of the region, and how physical attributes of the land and climate influence and constrain human activities. (R)

- Objective 2.2 effectively analyzes and interprets information regarding the distribution of physical landscapes on the earth and their development from landscape processes (W)
- Objective 2.3 presents coherent arguments in well-organized, focused and cohesive evidence-based reports on the earth's physical processes and landscapes (S)

Goal 3 Students will develop understanding of spatial patterns and distribution of population, cultural mosaics, human settlement, and economic interdependence, along with an understanding of how global production, usage, distribution and conservation of resources are vital to humanity. (W,S,R)

- Objective 3.1 understands and interprets geographic patterns of population, culture, religion, and their interrelationships from a broad perspective, and demonstrates awareness of the vital role of economic resources and their spatial distribution in global conservation and stewardship of earth resources (R)
- Objective 3.2 effectively analyzes and interprets information regarding the distribution of human cultural and economic systems and the interdependences between regions and communities (W)
- Objective 3.3 presents coherent arguments in well-organized, focused and cohesive evidence-based reports on human cultural and economic patterns, processes and their interdependence (S)

Methods of Assessment

At this point in time the Geography Program does not have any one single “capstone course” in its curriculum; rather, we use a series of strong basic core courses and require all majors to concentrate in one of two areas (Environmental/Physical Geography or Human Geography) and to enroll in a specified number of upper-division courses in each of three areas (Human/Regional Geography, Environmental/Physical Geography, and Geographic Techniques). The assessment methods and measures used will take this into consideration.

1. Comparison of “pre” and “post” tests in introductory core courses.

Introductory (1000 & 2000 level) core courses are also used by the general student population as part of the University General Education requirements. We will have each student in the introductory courses take a

“pre” test covering selected items we consider to be essential knowledge in GEO 1100 Cultural Geography, GEO 1120 The Natural Environment, GEO 1200/1290 World Regional Geography, GEO 1400 Weather and Climate and GEO 2000 Food and Agriculture. The “pre” test will be given in the first week of classes. The test will be given a second time as a **“post” test**, distributed during the last weeks of the class. Comparison of the results of the “pre” and “post” tests will allow geography faculty to assess whether our introductory curriculum is providing a meaningful learning experience in the basics of geography. Results will be reviewed by those faculty teaching the courses.

2. Questions imbedded into exams of core courses.

Assessment of the educational outcomes of the core courses will include the use of **imbedded questions** within a final exam, i.e. questions designed specifically to determine if the students are achieving specific programmatic goals outlined above.

3. Questions imbedded into exams of upper division courses.

Students in upper division courses will also be assessed using imbedded questions in exams. Although most of these courses are not required for any individual student, they tend to attract enrollment from a large proportion of Geography majors.

4. Assessment of written reports in upper division courses.

Where possible, these will employ standard rubrics for assessing written reports agreed upon by the Geography faculty (appendix A).

5. Assessment of oral presentations in upper division courses.

Where possible, these will employ standard rubrics for assessing oral presentations agreed upon by the Geography faculty (appendix B).

6. Major Exit Survey

An **exit survey** of majors will be designed to determine the level of satisfaction students had with their undergraduate experience in the Geography Program. Categories of questions will include satisfaction with their relationship with department personnel, the content and personal relevance of the undergraduate curriculum, inclusivity of the department and exposure to new ideas and perspectives, the physical facilities in the department, and any research or internship experience in which they may have participated. There will be open-ended questions as well, so that the students can elaborate on their ratings as well as provide critical feedback

on the program in general. In order to promote the best response rate, these surveys will be included in a letter from the Chair congratulating the students on having graduated and asking them to reflect on their evaluation of the program.

7. Alumni Survey

An **alumni survey** will be mailed to all graduates, five and ten years after graduation. This will allow time for the students to work on their careers, interact with peers, determine if the EIU experience provided them with a useful background in geography and help us to further assess changing needs and potential improvements in the program.

OVERVIEW OF MEASURES/INSTRUMENTS

The following chart provides an overview of the individual student learning goals for geography majors, their relationship to the university's undergraduate learning goals, associated assessment methods and target results.

SLO(s) <i>Note: Measures might be used for more than 1 SLO</i>	ULG*	Measures/Instruments <i>Please include a clear description of the instrument including when and where it is administered</i>	How is the information Used? <i>(include target score(s), results, and report if target(s) were met/not met/partially met for each instrument)</i>
Objective 1.1 Uses and creates maps to interpret physical and human characteristics such as scale, distance, climate, soils, resource distribution, and other spatial information in determining geographic patterns. (C)	Critical Thinking	Comparison of "pre" and "post" tests in introductory core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of upper division courses.	Target improvement from "pre" to "post" test of 50% in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 80% for imbedded exam questions in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 90% for imbedded exam questions in upper division courses.
Objective 1.2 Analyzes geographic data and appropriately presents them in charts, graphs, tables, and other forms. (Q)	Quantitative Reasoning	Comparison of "pre" and "post" tests in introductory core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of core courses.	Target improvement from "pre" to "post" test of 50% in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 80% for imbedded exam

		Questions imbedded into exams of upper division courses.	questions in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 90% for imbedded exam questions in upper division courses.
Objective 2.1 Understands the dynamic and interactive nature of the physical and human processes of the earth, including how the human activity within a region modifies the physical properties of the region, and how physical attributes of the land and climate influence and constrain human activities. (R)	Responsible Citizenship	Comparison of “pre” and “post” tests in introductory core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of upper division courses. Major Exit Survey Alumni Survey	Target improvement from “pre” to “post” test of 50% in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 80% for imbedded exam questions in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 90% for imbedded exam questions in upper division courses. Engagement and enthusiasm of majors and alumni in surveys.
Objective 2.2 effectively analyzes and interprets information regarding the distribution of physical landscapes on the earth and their development from landscape processes (W)	Reading and Writing	Assessment of written reports in upper division courses.	Overall average rating of 4 out of 5 in departmental paper evaluation rubric.
Objective 2.3 presents coherent arguments in well-organized, focused and cohesive evidence-based reports on the earth’s physical processes and landscapes (S)	Speaking and Listening	Assessment of oral presentations in upper division courses.	Overall average rating of 4 out of 5 in departmental speech evaluation rubric.
Objective 3.1 understands and interprets geographic patterns of population, culture, religion, and their interrelationships from a broad	Responsible Citizenship	Comparison of “pre” and “post” tests in introductory core courses. Questions imbedded into exams of core courses.	Target improvement from “pre” to “post” test of 50% in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 80% for

perspective, and demonstrates awareness of the vital role of economic resources and their spatial distribution in global conservation and stewardship of earth resources (R)		Questions imbedded into exams of upper division courses. Major Exit Survey Alumni Survey	imbedded exam questions in introductory core courses. Target correct answer rate of 90% for imbedded exam questions in upper division courses. Engagement and enthusiasm of majors and alumni in surveys.
Objective 3.2 effectively analyzes and interprets information regarding the distribution of human cultural and economic systems and the interdependences between regions and communities (W)	Reading and Writing	Assessment of written reports in upper division courses.	Overall average rating of 4 out of 5 in departmental paper evaluation rubric.
Objective 3.3 presents coherent arguments in well-organized, focused and cohesive evidence-based reports on human cultural and economic patterns, processes and their interdependence (S)	Speaking and Listening	Assessment of oral presentations in upper division courses.	Overall average rating of 4 out of 5 in departmental speech evaluation rubric.

WHO WILL PERFORM THE ASSESSMENTS and WHEN

With each faculty member involved in the courses that will be used as a basis for the assessment, the Geography Assessment Committee (GAC) will be composed of the entire Geography faculty. A Chair will be selected to ensure that activities are conducted on time and the Chair of the GAC will maintain the current and historic assessment records.

At the end of each semester geography faculty that teach GEO 1100 Cultural Geography, GEO 1120 The Natural Environment, GEO 1200/1290 World Regional Geography, GEO 1400 Weather and Climate and GEO 2000 Food and Agriculture will compile the “pre” and “post” test results, and faculty teaching upper division courses will compile the **Imbedded Questions, Writing and Speech Assessments** in the upper division course final exams. The results will be provided to the Chair of the GAC, who will compile all of the data received into a single report, providing preliminary comparison analyses and including results from the Alumni survey responses received. This report will be disseminated by August 1st of each year to all

Geography faculty members (Unit A as well as Unit B) for review. At/On September 15th of each year, the Geology faculty members will meet to discuss the results in relation to the Geography Program's learning goals and objectives. The committee, by quantitative and qualitative means, will identify significant strengths and weaknesses evident in the curriculum. Attention will be paid to national trends within the discipline and employment requirements. Individual courses and/or program curriculum may be modified if necessary; and/or the goals and objectives could be modified to meet the needs of changing trends.

The Chair of the Geography Assessment Committee will create/submit the appropriate Assessment Report to the Dean (Year 2) or to the Dean and VPAA (Year 4) as necessary.

APPENDIX A: Geography Paper Evaluation Rubric

Geography Program

Paper Assessment Evaluation

Student: _____ **Semester:** _____
Topic: _____ **Course:** _____

Length/Formatting:
Length and formatting (font/margins) appropriate
5 4 3 2 1 0

Organization:
Ideas clearly organized, use of intro/conclusion, material flows
5 4 3 2 1 0

Critical Thinking:
Proper support of arguments, analysis of concepts and theory
5 4 3 2 1 0

Information Presented:
Facts understandable, accurate, and assignment relates to class/geography
5 4 3 2 1 0

Language (Style and Grammar):
Appropriate tense, proper language, relevant punctuation
5 4 3 2 1 0

Graphics:
Effective use of graphical materials, maps, charts and other visual devices
5 4 3 2 1 0

Citations:
Proper use of reference, parenthetical citation or footnotes, etc.
5 4 3 2 1 0

Overall Grade:
5 4 3 2 1 0

- 5 *The student demonstrates a superior ability in written communication*
- 4 *The student demonstrates a significant ability in written communication*
- 3 *The student demonstrates a satisfactory ability in written communication*
- 2 *The student demonstrates a less than satisfactory in written communication*
- 1 *The student demonstrates no discernible ability in written communication*

APPENDIX B: Geography Speech Evaluation Rubric

Geography Major Speech Assessment Evaluation

Presenter:

Semester:

Topic:

Course:

Time of Presentation:

Time requirements met by the student.

5 4 3 2 1 0

Presentation Organization:

Ideas clearly organized, presenter prepared, flow of presentation

5 4 3 2 1 0

Information Presented:

Understandable, accurate, assignment relates to class/geography

5 4 3 2 1 0

Presentation Style:

Language used, articulate, eye contact, use of notes, pitch, free of fillers, professionalism

5 4 3 2 1 0

Graphics:

Use of visual aids ex: (maps, graphs, pictures, charts)

5 4 3 2 1 0

Overall Grade:

5 4 3 2 1 0

- 5 The student demonstrates a superior ability to communicate research ideas**
- 4 The student demonstrates a significant ability to communicate research ideas**
- 3 The student demonstrates a satisfactory ability to communicate research ideas**
- 2 The student demonstrates a less than satisfactory ability to communicate research**
- 1 The student demonstrates no discernible ability to communicate research.**

CLAS Deans' comments on B.S. in Geography report

Reviewer: Mike Cornebise

1. Evaluation is appropriately embedded throughout the curriculum and, therefore, should allow the entire faculty to participate in the assessment process. A feedback loop has been determined such that the faculty will review data on an annual basis and use the results to inform curricular decisions.
2. While the attached rubrics (Appendix A and B) are useful at a general level, linking them more directly to the SLOs and the EIU undergraduate learning goals is recommended. This will allow the program to better track and evaluate student attainment of program specific and university learning goals.

Overall, the plan appears ready for data collection. Let us know if we can assist with program assessment as you begin the process. We look forward to seeing data analysis in fall of 2023.