Comprehensive Report

2020 - 2021

Program (CAS) - GEOG - Geography (PhD) - 438

General Information

Program Mission Statement

The Ph.D. program in Geography specialize in three broad areas including nature-society dynamics, cultural-historical geography, and geographic information science including unmanned aerial systems (UAS). This degree program is designed for students to master the theoretical knowledge and skills to design, implement, and present original geographic research in oral and written form. Therefore, doctoral students study geographic research methods and analysis, the history and philosophies of geography, and knowledge of current geographic research.

Program Four Column Report

Outcomes	*Assessment Methods*	*Findings*	*Use of Findings (Actions)*
Effective Communications - PhD students will develop the ability to communicate geographic information effectively orally and in writing. **Outcome Status:** Active **Planned Assessment Year:** 2017 - 2018, 2018 - 2019, 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2016 - 2017 **Start Date:** **Archived Date:** **Outcome Type:** Skills **Reason for Archival:**	**Analysis of Written Artifacts -** All students undergoing a defense of some sort are assessed on their writing skills by all committee members (typically four or five on a PhD committee). Rubrics are distributed to the committee members before the defense and are usually collected afterwards, although some faculty members return them later. Also, all instructors of graduate-level courses are requested to provide all Geography student papers from one of their assignments, usually a term paper or project, for evaluation by paid summer artifact readers. These readers have both assessed artifacts in the past, and were given general instructions on the assessment of the artifacts. Instructors were not aware of any identifying student information, including level (MS or PhD), to avoid bias, although the readers were also contributors of some artifacts so likely recognized their courses and their students via their writing. *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale) **Timeline for Assessment:** Each Semester **Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** [E written communication skills rubric final.docx](#)	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 3 - Meets Program Expectations (Proficient) Mostly meets Program Expectations. Minimally adequate samples for analysis(09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 7 **Number of Successful Students:** 7 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** : All students undergoing a proposal defense of some sort are assessed on their writing skills (rubric E) by all committee members, and there were two dissertation proposals defended this year. Also, all instructors of graduate-level courses are requested to provide all Geography PhD student papers from one of their assignments, usually a term paper or project, for evaluation by paid summer artifact readers. This provided 11 assessments, for 5 different students. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** For the 2 students who underwent a dissertation proposal defense, scores reflected between Efficient (2) and Proficient (3) averaged 2.79 (out of 4) on Rubric E, with categories for Content (2.75), Organization (2.75), and Style/Mechanics (2.88). Neither student stood out as below the Efficient level or above the Proficient level.	**Use of Findings (Actions):** These findings suggest a slight uptick in effective writing but that the department still needs to find ways to improve this area.(09/10/2021)

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
		Additionally, the two faculty members who assessed 11 graduate seminar artifacts found writing quality to be perhaps slightly higher than last year, with scores on the Content (2.87), Organization (3.0), and S&M (2.64). Last year, scores ranged from 2.5 and 2.88 on the Rubric E. Overall, the distribution of the 33 total scores (3 rubric categories for all 11 artifacts assessed) were 0 (0%), 1 (9.1%), 2 (24.2%), 3 (40.9%), and 4 (25.8%), no distribution of scores is available from last year. **Related Documents:** [E written communication skills rubric final.docx](#)	
	Oral Presentation - All students undergoing a defense of some sort are assessed on their oral presentation skills by all committee members (typically four or five on a PhD committee). Rubrics are distributed to the committee members before the defense and are usually collected afterwards, although some faculty members return them later. *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 2.2 or better (on a 3.0 scale). **Timeline for Assessment: Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** [J oral communication skills rubric.docx](#)	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 3 - Meets Program Expectations (Proficient) Students give good oral presentations.(09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 4 **Number of Successful Students:** 4 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** All students undergoing a defense of some sort are assessed on their oral presentation skills by all committee members. This year two PhD students underwent a dissertation defense and two defended proposals. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** The results suggest that our students develop good oral communication skills early on and continue to improve into their final defense, as those results were slightly higher than the proposals (2.68	**Use of Findings (Actions):** Besides funding for conferences, the department typically holds practice sessions before major conferences, organized by the student organizations in the department, and these definitely need to continue. Getting more faculty to attend these sessions is a goal that continue to support student oral communication skills. (09/10/2021)

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
		average vs. 2.00 average). **Related Documents:** J oral communication skills rubric.docx	

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
Geographic Knowledge - PhD students will develop apposite knowledge in geographic literature and research. **Outcome Status:** Active **Planned Assessment Year:** 2017 - 2018, 2018 - 2019, 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2016 - 2017 **Start Date:** **Archived Date:** **Outcome Type:** Knowledge **Reason for Archival:**	**Course Embedded Assignments -** Instructors of the respective courses assess their students on rubrics specific to the course, designed by them (5403 – Rubric B, 5413 – Rubric C; see departmental Graduate Assessment Plan). Instructors are provided with a copy of the rubric and instructions early in the semester, and are left to complete it at their leisure (either as the semester progresses or at the end) but are urged to separate student grades from achievements of specific benchmarks as indicated on the rubric. *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale). **Timeline for Assessment:** Yearly **Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** B 5403 rubric.doc C 5413 Rubric.doc	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 3 - Meets Program Expectations (Proficient) Solid performance. (09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 4 **Number of Successful Students:** 4 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** Instructors of the respective courses assess their students on rubrics specific to the course, designed by them. This year there were four PhD students in GEOG 5403 and the same four student in GEOG 5413. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** The data suggest that students exceeded expectations in geographic knowledge, and that the structure of both courses works well. In 5413, students had high levels of preparation and participation, providing for discussion with wide breadth and depth. With COVID-19, it was not practical to conduct an oral midterm exam (the norm the course), so the instructor used a written takehome. The students not only performed well on the exam but enjoyed the questions -- a pandemic pivot that worked very well. In both 5403 and 5413, students had the most difficulty in understanding as well as relating broader philosophies and social	**Use of Findings (Actions):** Instructors may develop assignments and in-class activities to improve students' abilities to understand and relate broader philosophies and social theories to geographic thought and research.(09/10/2021)

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
		theories to geographic thought and research. **Related Documents:** [B 5403 rubric.doc](#) [C 5413 Rubric.doc](#)	

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
Geographic Skills - PhD students will develop skills in tools for geographic data collection and methods of analysis. **Outcome Status:** Active **Planned Assessment Year:** 2017 - 2018, 2018 - 2019, 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2016 - 2017 **Start Date:** **Archived Date:** **Outcome Type:** Skills **Reason for Archival:**	**Course Embedded Assignments -** Instructors of the respective courses assess their students on rubrics specific to the course, designed by them (5303 – Rubric A, 6313 – Rubric D; see departmental Graduate Assessment Plan). Instructors are provided with a copy of the rubric and instructions early in the semester, and are left to complete it at their leisure (either as the semester progresses or at the end) but are urged to separate student grades from achievements of specific benchmarks as indicated on the rubric. *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale) **Timeline for Assessment:** Yearly for GEOG 5303 Every other year for GEOG 6313 **Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** [A 5303 Rubric.doc](#) [D 6313 Rubric.doc](#)	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 4 - Exceeds Program Expectations (Advanced) Highly Exceeds Program Expectations but difficult to assess with limited data. (09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 2 **Number of Successful Students:** 2 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** Instructors of the respective courses assess their students on rubrics specific to the course, designed by them. This year there were four PhD students in GEOG 5303 and GEOG 6313 was not taught. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** With only two students enrolled/assessed, it is hard to reach any conclusions that would lead to a use of the findings. Both students did extremely well in the class. **Related Documents:** [A 5303 Rubric.doc](#) [D 6313 Rubric.doc](#)	**Use of Findings (Actions):** No action recommended at this time based upon the above. (09/10/2021)

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
Geographic Research - PhD students will develop geographic dissertations that marshal evidence, analyze data, and synthesize meaningful conclusions. **Outcome Status:** Active **Planned Assessment Year:**	**Review of Thesis/Dissertation/Creative Component -** All students undergoing a final defense are assessed on their research and writing skills by all committee members (typically four or five faculty	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 3 - Meets Program Expectations (Proficient) Slightly Above Program Expectations but difficult to assess with limited data.	**Use of Findings (Actions):** No new information exists with which to formulate any actions. (09/10/2021)

Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Findings	Use of Findings (Actions)
2017 - 2018, 2018 - 2019, 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2016 - 2017 **Start Date:** **Archived Date:** **Outcome Type:** Skills **Reason for Archival:**	members on a PhD committee). Rubrics are distributed to the committee members at the beginning of the defense and are usually collected afterwards, although some faculty members return them later. *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale). **Timeline for Assessment:** Each Semester **Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** [I PhD research skills rubric_final 2010.docx](#)	(09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 2 **Number of Successful Students:** 2 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** All students undergoing a final dissertationdefense are assessed on their research and writing skills by all committee members. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** With only two assessments and with only one defense last year, it difficult to report what these data suggest except that students are performing at or above expectations. **Related Documents:** [I PhD research skills rubric_final 2010.docx](#)	
Specialty Areas - PhD students will be able to identify and discuss significant geographic trends within their (three) chosen specialty areas of geography. **Outcome Status:** Active **Planned Assessment Year:** 2017 - 2018, 2018 - 2019, 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2016 - 2017 **Start Date:** 05/12/2019 **Archived Date:** **Outcome Type:** Knowledge **Reason for Archival:**	**Comprehensive, Certification, or Professional Exam(s) -** All doctoral students taking comprehensive exams are assessed with Rubric H *** Learning Outcome Goal/Benchmark:** Students will average 3.0 or better (on a 4.0 scale) **Timeline for Assessment:** Every semester **Other Assessment Type:** **Related Documents:** [H phd specialty area knowledge rubric.docx](#)	**Reporting Period:** 2020 - 2021 **Conclusion:** 4 - Exceeds Program Expectations (Advanced) Cannot assess -- insufficient data.(09/10/2021) **Number of Students Assessed:** 1 **Number of Successful Students:** 1 **How were students selected to participate in the assessment of this outcome?:** All doctoral students taking comprehensive exams are assessed. **What do the findings suggest about student achievement of this learning outcome?:** With only one doctoral students taking comprehensive exams this year, no data are reportable and no conclusions can be drawn.	**Use of Findings (Actions):** No new information exists with which to formulate any actions.(09/10/2021)

Outcomes	*Assessment Methods*	*Findings*	*Use of Findings (Actions)*
		Related Documents: [H phd specialty area knowledge rubric.docx](#)	

Annual Executive Summary   Annual Executive Summaries - 2020 - 2021

Executive Summary

Program Assessment Coordinator
Rebecca Sheehan

Plan Review and Approval
Date Current Plan Was Reviewed and Approved
08/14/2018

Date of Future Plan Review and Approval
08/14/2023

Summary of Assessment Findings
Describe overall assessment findings and faculty members' interpretation of the assessment results

Overall, results indicate that student performance is fairly consistent and that while we would always strive to see students achieving higher scores and performance, the average scores (and performance of most students) are at an acceptable level. Ultimately, a graduate student's curriculum follows a very specialized path beyond the few core courses, and they undertake a lot of independent work, so effecting curricular changes that can target weak areas (like writing) is especially challenging at the graduate level. Overall, faculty seem satisfied with the general results but will continue to focus on teaching writing skills through examples and extensive feedback on written work.

Dissemination of Findings
Describe the individual(s) or committee responsible for reviewing and interpreting assessment data

Coordinator serves a dual role as Graduate Outcomes Assessment Coordinator. The Associate Department Head disseminates and gathers the rubrics from defenses. The Graduate Coordinator gathers the rubrics for the core courses (Rubrics A-D), and sends out repeated calls for artifact submission for Learning Outcome 1. She then collects, inputs, and preliminarily evaluates the data and computes summary statistics.

Describe the process for sharing and discussing assessment findings with program faculty

The Assessment Coordinator writes and circulates (via e-mail) a draft report for review and comment by all faculty in the department. This is done in early August in advance of an all-day planning conference held by the department the week before the fall semester begins, and discussion about the results, what they mean, and what to do with them subsequently occurs and is incorporated into a final draft of this report. This final draft is sent around a second time for final review before submission.

Program Improvements Based on Assessment
Based on data collected this year, what changes are being considered or planned for the program?

At this point in time, no concrete ideas for making and changes to the program have emerged.

Based on this year's findings, what (if any) changes are planned for the assessment process?

No changes are planned for 2021-22.

Describe the process for implementing these changes/planned program improvements

Not applicable.

Program Improvements Made in the Last Year
Other Improvements

"Other" Improvements
None.

Goals for the Coming Year

Get more colleagues involved in both assessment generally and in developing ideas to improve student performance.

Is this program report ready for review?
Yes

This program report could not be completed due to low student enrollment

List all individuals associated with this report preparation

Rebecca Sheehan

Jon Comer

Related Documents