UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

Department of Geography, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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1.0 NATURE OF THE PROGRAM

Geography at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa provides a broad and flexible academic program that explores the human and environmental systems that shape the surface of the Earth. The discipline investigates the interaction of culture, society, ecology and physical environments that characterize particular places and studies how these relationships vary across space. The Geography undergraduate program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa focuses on three interlocking sub-disciplines: human geography, environmental geography, and geographic technologies. Human geography investigates the cultural, economic, and political processes that shape human experiences on the Earth; the relationship between the environment, society, and culture; and the nature of place in the Asia-Pacific region. Environmental geography engages in a systematic study of the Earth’s physical environment (atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, and lithosphere) and considers the challenges associated with natural resource management and global environmental change. Geographic technologies include the study of cartography, geographic information systems (GIS), and remote sensing science. Students who study geography obtain a holistic understanding of the world and a set of methodological tools that can be applied to a wide range of domestic and international career opportunities. Geographers are involved in basic research at educational institutions, and are also active in environmental planning, natural resource management and social policy development with all levels of government, private firms, non-profit organizations and international agencies. Hawaii's unique historical, socio-cultural and environmental context also provides a fascinating setting for geographical investigations of issues that affect the wider Asia-Pacific region.

2.0 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The Department of Geography encourages a learning-centered model of instruction that emphasizes student engagement. Faculty is committed to this approach and will adopt teaching practices within individual courses offered by the department that support best teaching practices (Appendix A). In addition to this broad commitment to the provision of quality undergraduate education, a number of specific assessment tools have been developed which provide a comprehensive framework for assessing student success. These tools include:

1. development of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and rubrics for assessing these SLO in each course offered by the Department of Geography;

2. revision of the GEOG 493 Capstone Undergraduate Seminar to incorporate specific assessment tools that measure achievement of departmental SLO and student satisfaction with the undergraduate program;

3. alumni surveys that will be is sent to all recent graduates of the Department of Geography BA program; and

4. regular programmatic reviews every 5 years to assess the overall performance of the undergraduate program from a broader perspective which encourages transformative feedback and continuous improvement.

Each of these assessment framework elements is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this document, and supporting information is provided in attached appendices.

3.0 ASSESSMENT WITHIN INDIVIDUAL UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Assessment within individual courses will apply a set of common departmental Student Learning Outcomes (Appendix B) developed by the Department of Geography. Faculty may also adopt additional SLO specific to the needs and objectives of their individual courses. These SLOs will serve as benchmarks for achievement which are student-centric and focused on the knowledge, skills and abilities that students should develop while taking the course. In accordance with standard assessment practices, SLOs will feature action verbs that describe the hierarchy of the learning process, from knowledge and remembering at the most basic level, through comprehension, analysis, synthesis and finally evaluation of course material. All learning outcomes must be observable or measureable by standardized evaluation metrics. Rubrics provide one evaluation approach as these provide tools for assessing different levels of mastery across desired learning outcomes. All courses (regardless of whether they are taught by regular faculty, cooperating or visiting faculty or lecturers) will have defined SLOs that appear on each course syllabus.

Learning outcomes will also be advertised in departmental brochures and on the departmental website. Learning outcomes will be sequenced within each syllabus and will progress across courses within each stream of the undergraduate program. Thus, the development of SLOs and the rubrics to assess the SLO must involve the active participation of each faculty member in the department. While it is anticipated that faculty who regularly teaching each course will be responsible for developing individual course SLOs, there will be coordination across courses to insure a proper sequencing of SLOs to meet programmatic and stream goals. Because of the coordination required to achieve our goals of SLO progression within and across courses, we do not anticipate full implementation of departmental-wide SLOs before the Fall 2012 semester. Progress in achieving full integration and coordination of SLO will also be monitored by the Department's **Undergraduate Program Committee** as outlined in Section 6.0.

4.0 CAPSTONE SEMINAR ASSESSMENT

All undergraduate majors in the Department of Geography are required to complete the **GEOG 493 Capstone Undergraduate Seminar**. This capstone seminar represents one of our most important assessment tools and includes both a broad evaluation of student learning through the submission of written and oral products; and feedback from students on their satisfaction with the overall Geography BA program. Assessment of departmental SLO will focus on the following questions:

1. do students have an in-depth knowledge of complex relationships between environment, society, and culture?,
2. do students understand the functioning and behavior of Earth systems and how humans influence these systems?,
3. can students apply a range of analytical methods to studying geospatial phenomena?

In step with University of Hawaii guidelines, student assignments in the capstone seminar are designed to assess student achievement of SLO. For example, the development of a "specialized understanding of how the process of globalization is reshaping human experiences through economic, cultural, and political change" is a SLO in the Human Geography Stream. To assess this desired outcome, oral and written products produced by the student will be organized to showcase their understanding of these complex inter-relationships and dynamics. The explicit purpose of the capstone seminar is to synthesize and integrate the undergraduate experience. Throughout Geography 493 students will reflect not only on their development through open discussions and the organization of student products; but will also be explicitly encouraged to provide feedback on the undergraduate program. Assessment data collected in Geography 493 will be compiled, analyzed, and delivered to the Undergraduate Program Chair each year for evaluation. Data from the capstone seminar will also be used in the department's broader programmatic review process that occurs every 5 years (see Section 6.0).

5.0 ALUMNI SURVEY

A survey questionnaire will be sent to all recent graduates of the Department of Geography BA program immediately prior to major programmatic reviews that occurs every five years. The questionnaire will include questions concerning satisfaction with their degree, current employment, value of their geographic training in their professional and personal lives, and any suggestions for potentially improving the Geography BA Program at the University of Hawaii.

6.0 TRANSFORMATIVE FEEDBACK AND PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT

The Department of Geography Undergraduate Program Assessment Plan is a dynamic document subject to regular modification to maintain and improve the quality and effectiveness of undergraduate education. The **Undergraduate Program Committee** led by the Undergraduate Chair will meet annually to review data collected in the Capstone Undergraduate Seminar, and to discuss minor revisions to the undergraduate program or the undergraduate program assessment plan. In addition to these annual review and feedback mechanisms, the department will also conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the undergraduate program on a regular 5 year cycle. The programmatic assessment process will evaluate data collected during the proceeding 5 year period to evaluate progress in achieving both broader program goals and departmental SLO. C**ourse mapping** (Appendix C) will be used to insure that individual courses support overall program objectives and provide for a broader strategic perspective on program evaluation. The 5 year programmatic assessment will include feedback mechanisms to insure that assessment is transformative in character and that continuous improvement in student learning outcomes is achieved. The Department of Geography's BA program was substantially modified in 2010-2011, and the first major programmatic assessment will be scheduled for the 2015-2016 academic year to allow for a full evaluation period of the revised program.

APPENDIX A

BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

The Department of Geography encourages a learning-centered model of instruction that emphasizes student engagement. Faculty are committed to this approach and will adopt the following teaching practices that support a learning-centered model of instruction.

Contact Between Students and Faculty

Frequent student-faculty contact is an important factor in student motivation and involvement. Contact with faculty outside the classroom broadens the learning environment, provides intellectual and emotional support, and provides students with role models.

Cooperation Among Students

Learning is enhanced through cooperative and social approaches rather than focusing on activities which are competitive, isolating and individualistic. Good learning is collaborative learning and emphasizing group cooperation increases student involvement and deepens their understanding of course content.

Active Learning Techniques

Learning is not a spectator sport and passive approaches that emphasize listening and memorization are not encouraged. Classes in the Department of Geography will emphasize discussion, presentations and reflective writing. Teaching through application in the form of class-based projects, internships or service learning all help to transform abstract concepts into concrete action and measurable skills. Individuals bring different talents and styles to the classroom, and students should be provided with of opportunities to engage in active forms of learning that may be more suited to their individual strengths.

High But Reasonable Expectations

An appropriate level of challenge stimulates student participation and achievement, while too much or too little can discourage interest. Teaching methods that challenge and set high but reasonable expectations support learning for all students no matter how intelligent or motivated.

Prompt and Frequent Feedback

Prompt and frequent feedback is an important tool that focuses study effort and allows students to reflect on what they have learned. Students require frequent opportunities to receive feedback on their performance. While entrenched forms of feedback such examinations and term paper may be adequate for assigning course grades, these practices should be supplemented by other opportunities for more frequent counsel and direction to students.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Human Geography Stream

1a) students will be able to explain and critically evaluate the complex relationship between the environment, society, and culture

1b) students will be able to explain and critically evaluate how economic, political, and cultural processes at different scales are reshaping human experiences globally

1c) student will be able to apply appropriate analytic methods to describe spatial patterns and associations in the human environment

Environmental Geography Stream

2a) students will be able to explain the basic operation of environmental systems (biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere)

2b) students will be able to describe how human activities can influence the functioning of basic environmental systems

2c) students will be able to apply appropriate analytical methods and techniques to describe spatial patterns and change in the physical environment

Geographic Technologies Stream

3a) students will be able to identify the specific characteristics of spatial data sources

3b) students will be able to apply appropriate techniques to display spatial patterns and change in the human and physical environment

3c) students will be able to produce maps in a professional manner

APPENDIX C - COURSE MAPPING

	SLO 1A	SLO 1B	SLO 1C	SLO 2A	SLO 2B	SLO 2C	SLO 3A	SLO 3B	SLO 3C
GEOG 101				I	I				
GEOG 101L						I			
GEOG 102	I	I	I	I	I				
GEOG 104	I	I	I	I		I	I	I	I
GEOG 151	I	I	I						
GEOG 300				R	R	R			
GEOG 302				R	R	R			
GEOG 303				R	R	R			
GEOG 305	I								
GEOG 309				R	R	R			
GEOG 322	R	R		I	I				
GEOG 324	R	R							
GEOG 325	R	R	R						
GEOG 330	R	R	R						
GEOG 335	R	R	R						
GEOG 340	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
GEOG 352	R	R	R						
GEOG 353	R	I	R						
GEOG 355	R	R	R						
GEOG 356	R	R	R		R				
GEOG 365	R	R	R		R				
GEOG 366	R	R	R	R		R	R	R	R
GEOG 368	R	R	R		R		R	R	R
GEOG 370							R	R	R
GEOG 375									
GEOG 376							I	M	M
GEOG 380			R			R	I	I	
GEOG 385				R					
GEOG 387	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
GEOG 388	I	I	I	I	I	I	R	R	R
GEOG 399	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
GEOG 400				M	M	M			
GEOG 401				M	M	M			
GEOG 402				M	M	M			
GEOG 403				R	M	M			
GEOG 404				M	M	M			
GEOG 405				M	M	M			
GEOG 408				R	R	M			
GEOG 409				R	M	M			
GEOG 410				M	R	R			
GEOG 411				M	R	R			
GEOG 412					R	M			
GEOG 413					R	M			
GEOG 421	M	R	M						
GEOG 422	M	M	M						
GEOG 423	R	M	M	R	R				
GEOG 424	M	M	M						
GEOG 425		R							
GEOG 426	M	M	M		R				
GEOG 435	R	M	M	R	R				
GEOG 436	M	M	M						
GEOG 453	M	R	M						
GEOG 468A	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
GEOG 470							M	R	R
GEOG 472							I	I	M
GEOG 476							M	M	M
GEOG 489							M	M	R
GEOG 490	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
GEOG 492	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
GEOG 493	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

I = INTRODUCED R = REINFORCED M = MASTERED

NA = Directed Studies or Capstone Lecturers/Visiting Faculty/Not Taught Recently