

Geography Program Assessment Plan: 2006-2007

Department of Natural and Physical Sciences

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Park University

Introduction

As a discipline, geography is widely recognized for its holistic perspective and approach to understanding and solving both human and environmental problems from the local to the global scale. Simply stated, geography covers a large spectrum of topics and is difficult to place into one category. At Park University, it is the only program to span into both the social and natural sciences. The Geography Program, therefore, fulfills a vital role to the university by providing students with a conceptual framework for synthesizing information, concepts, and ideas among the various social and natural sciences.

The Assessment Plan for the undergraduate Geography Program is based on the University, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Department of Natural and Physical Sciences mission and vision statements, as well as the Geography mission statement and program competencies. Consistent with those mission statements, the Geography Program will offer a liberal education to its students. It is the intent of the Geography Program to be of assistance in fulfilling all these mission statements by providing students with an awareness and comprehension of important cultural, economic, and environmental issues of concern to local, national, and global communities.

Foundations of the Plan

The Geography Program Assessment Plan at Park University was established by a collaborative process of faculty within the Geology and Geography Program and is based on the following principles:

A. Flows from the institution's mission:

The plan is based on building connections among the University, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Natural and Physical Sciences, Geography Program mission statements.

University Mission Statement:

The mission of Park University, an entrepreneurial institution of learning, is to provide access to academic excellence which will prepare learners to think critically, communicate effectively and engage in lifelong learning while serving a global community.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Mission Statement:

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences of Park University will prepare graduates who are articulate, literate, reflective, lifelong learners and active global citizens.

Department of Natural and Physical Sciences Mission Statement:

The mission of providing the knowledge, practical and theoretical skills, and abilities for the

further education and successful employment of our students. We prepare students to be lifelong learners as scientists, teachers, researchers, health care professionals, as well as users and developers of technology. Our graduates will be inquisitive critical thinkers who are articulate, literate and committed to action in their global community.

Program of Geography Mission Statement:

The Geography Program is to educate students to think critically, analytically and creatively in the geographical sciences. Ethical and civic responsibilities will be stressed to promote students' understanding and awareness of the diversity of the world. Students will be technologically and intellectually prepared for higher and/or professional education and to have a successful career.

B. Has a conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework of the Geography Program is demonstrated in the holistic perspective and approach it expects from the majors. Whether it is spatial, place, physical, human, or environmental, an accomplished graduate would be able to critically think and communicate in geographic terms and the program assessment is designed to evaluate a senior's knowledge of these five, program competency derived, areas.

C. Has faculty ownership/responsibility:

The Geography faculty, in collaboration with various colleagues in College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, developed the assessment plan. It has and will evolve as experience and need demands it. The most current version will always be placed on the Assessment website and Geography website after final approval of the University Assessment Committee.

D. Has institution-wide support:

Geography faculty view the assessment plan as approved only after it has received institution-wide support. That support typically consists of, but is not limited to, the Department of Natural and Physical Sciences, the Council of Chairs, the Dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the University Assessment Committee, and the Provost.

E. Uses multiple measures:

The required portfolio will provide multiple measures of evaluation. It will contain their five core assessments as well as a written evaluation of their comprehension of the Geography Program competencies (see attached scoring guide).

F. Provides feedback to students, faculty and the larger institution:

Feedback to students through:

- Graded assignments and exams
- Course grade

Feedback to faculty through:

- Course evaluations
- Capstone Portfolio
- Exit survey

Feedback to the university through:

- Course evaluations
- Exit survey
- Annual Assessment Report

G. Is cost-effective:

The assessment plan, as outlined, will cost the students and faculty little time and money. It is therefore a situation where no obvious budget impact would be incurred by the university by the Geography Program implementing this assessment plan.

H. Does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution:

The Geography Program assessment plan is designed to affirm unmistakably the faculty's aspiration to educate others about gender roles, diversity, and internationalization so the plan and the program are already centered on fulfilling these goals.

I. Leads to improvement:

The purpose of the assessment is to systematically distinguish areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. Assessment tools are evaluated at least annually to permit for change and improvement. Outcomes of surveys are evaluated as they become available each year. The development of this assessment plan has already resulted in curricular changes for the program.

J. Includes a process for evaluating the assessment program:

Assessment tools are evaluated to conclude if they are providing the information required. Student and faculty feedback assists to determine the effectiveness of the Assessment Plan, as well as the overall effectiveness of the program. Modifications are made as evaluation indicates. Review of instruments is recurrent to acknowledge necessary refinement of the program.

Undergraduate Program Goals & Competencies

It is the goal of the Geography Program to have our students become useful and productive members of our global society and the communities in which they reside. The general goals of the Geography Program are formulated from the Park University Mission Statement.

Program Goals

1. To recognize the educational needs of our constantly changing student population and then modify the program accordingly.
2. To design and implement a curriculum of quality that promotes critical thinking and communication.
3. To prepare students to succeed, with their geographic knowledge, in a diverse and technological driven environment.
4. To prepare students for post-graduate success in the global society.

Geography Program Competencies:

These were developed by the Geography faculty after reviewing the Geography Education Standards Project. 1994. *Geography for Life: The National Geography Standards*. Washington D.C.: National

Geographic Society Committee on Research and Exploration. Each of the following program competencies is designed to meet the mission statements from the Program, Department, College, and University:

- 1. Spatial Perspective:** *Demonstrate how to use maps and other geographic tools and technologies to present and interpret geographic patterns (past, present, and future).*
- 2. Places and Regions:** *Formulate regional generalizations (supported with physical and human local specifics) to describe and analyze places at various scales of inquiry.*
- 3. Physical Systems:** *Analyze and explain characteristics and the spatial distribution of the earth's ecosystems and the physical processes that shape these patterns.*
- 4. Human Systems:** *Analyze and explain the characteristics and spatial distributions of human populations and the processes that shape these patterns.*
- 5. Environment and Society:** *Analyze how human actions modify physical environment and how the physical systems affect humans.*

Measures of Assessment

The Geography Program is designed to measure a student's competence in five core areas of geography, which are derived from the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) National Geography Standards (1994).^{*} The program curriculum consists of five core classes (GGH110 Cultural Geography, GO125 Natural Disasters, GGH200 Geography of the United States and Canada, GGP315 World Physical Geography, and GGP350 Geographic Information Systems), which are each designed to specifically fulfill one of the five program competencies. Students are required to complete a Core Assessment (research paper, portfolio of assignments, etc.) for each of these courses, which in turn, serve as the foundation for the students' capstone experience—a Capstone Portfolio. The Capstone Portfolio includes the student's five core assessments along with a written evaluation by the student. The evaluations require the student to explain how the core assessments demonstrate that you know each of the five program competencies. Evaluation of the students' Capstone Portfolios serves as the principle measure of the program's overall effectiveness and will be scored by the enclosed program rubric to assess the effectiveness of the program for achieving each program competency.

The Geography Program is evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively. Each student, major and non-major, has the occasion to evaluate each course at the conclusion of the term/semester. The results are returned to the instructor and are accessible to the program coordinator, department chair, and Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and eventually become part of the data collection for course / program review and curricular changes. In addition, graduating seniors are expected to complete an "Exit Survey for Majors" during their last semester in an effort to determine if the program met their expectations and employment needs.

There are numerous measures of assessment that unify each Geography course to the overall program outcomes and to the University Mission and Vision Statements, Program Mission Statement, and interconnected components of historical thinking. These measures attest that the assessment of program graduates accurately exhibits their competence in the assorted standards and competencies.

Students are expected to employ best research practices, advance and implement appropriate geographic methodologies, effectively utilize primary and secondary sources, and to effectively articulate a geographic understanding based on their research.

The **course** assessment measures include, but are not limited to:

Papers Quizzes Projects Oral presentations Examinations

The **program** assessment measures includes a:

Direct Evidence: Scoring of the Capstone Portfolio which includes the following:

1. Core Assessments from GGH 110, GO 125, GGH 200, GGP 315, and GGP 350.
2. Written evaluation by the student that explains how the five core assessments demonstrate their knowledge of each of the five program competencies.

Indirect Evidence:

1. Graduation Exit Surveys
2. Course Surveys

Annual Review of Assessment

Faculty members within the Geography Program will review the results of the Capstone Portfolios and Exit Surveys annually and submit a written report of their findings and any associated program changes it intends to make as a result to the University Assessment Committee.

PROGRAM COMPETENCIES

Program Competencies	Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered	Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting/Circumstances (i.e. course, internship, portfolio...) used to assess the Program Competency	
Program Competency #1	Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered	Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting used to assess the Program Competency	
<p>SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE: Demonstrate how to use maps and other geographic tools and technologies to present and interpret geographic patterns (past, present, and future).</p>	<p>GGP 350 GGP 270 GGP 330 GGP 335 GGP 355</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) Paper with associated project</p>	<p>Setting or Circumstances GGP 350 Geographical Information Systems (GIS) has an exploration and evaluation of the application of GIS technology to a particular problem; students will write a 10-12 page research paper that specifically addresses Program Competency #1.</p>
Program Competency #2	Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered	Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting used to assess the Program Competency	

<p>PLACES AND REGIONS: Formulate regional generalizations (supported with physical and human local specifics) to describe and analyze places at various scales of inquiry.</p>	<p>GGH 200 GGH 201 GGH 202 GGH 203 GGH204 GGH 205 GGH 206 GGH 207 GGH 208 GGH 209</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) Portfolio</p>	<p>Setting or Circumstances GGH 200 Geography of the United States & Canada has a portfolio that covers 4 of the 4 Core Learning Outcomes and specifically addresses Program Competency #2.</p>
<p>Program Competency #3</p>	<p>Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting used to assess the Program Competency</p>	
<p>PHYSICAL SYSTEMS: Analyze and explain characteristics and the spatial distribution of the earth's ecosystems and the physical processes that shape these patterns.</p>	<p>GGP 315 GGP 370 GO 130 GO 141 GO 151 GO 200 GO 205 GO 300 GO 310 GO 320 GO 330</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) Paper</p>	<p>Setting or Circumstances GGP 315 World Physical Geography has a paper that covers 4 of the 5 Core Learning Outcomes and specifically addresses Program Competency #3.</p>
<p>Program Competency #4</p>	<p>Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting used to assess the Program Competency</p>	
<p>HUMAN SYSTEMS: Analyze and explain the characteristics and spatial distributions of human populations and the processes that shape these patterns.</p>	<p>GGH 110 GGH 140 GGH 210 GGH 223</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) Portfolio</p>	<p>Setting or Circumstances GGH 110 Cultural Geography has an end of the semester Portfolio that covers 4 of the 4 Core Learning Outcomes and specifically addresses Program Competency #4.</p>
<p>Program Competency #5</p>	<p>Course(s) in which Program Competency is covered</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) and Setting used to assess the Program Competency</p>	
<p>ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY: Analyze how human actions modify physical environment and how the physical systems affect humans.</p>	<p>GO 125 GGH 226 GGP 340 GGP 345 GGP 365</p>	<p>Assessment Instrument(s) Paper</p>	<p>Setting or Circumstances GO 125 Natural Disasters has a paper that covers 4 of the 5 Core Learning Outcomes and specifically addresses Program Competency #5.</p>

BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

REQUIREMENTS FOR:

B.A. MAJOR - 33-39 HOURS, 2.0 GPA (General or Human Concentration)

B.S. MAJOR - 33-39 HOURS, 2.0 GPA (General or Physical Concentration)

Core Curriculum:

GGH 110	Cultural Geography	3 cr.
GGH 200	Geography of the United States & Canada	3 cr.
GO 125	Natural Disasters	3 cr.
GGP 315	World Physical Geography.....	3 cr.
GGP 350	Geographic Information Systems.....	<u>3 cr.</u>
	Core Total.....	15 cr.

Concentrations :

Three courses (min. 9 cr.) at the 300-level or above.

General Geography - Select any six GGH, GGP, or GO courses. (18-24) cr.

Human Geography - Select any six GGH courses. (18) cr.

Physical Geography - Select any six GGP or GO courses. (18-24) cr.

Concentration Total.....18-24 cr.

Human Geography Courses

GGH 140 Economic Geography	(3)
GGH 201 Geography of Africa	(3)
GGH 202 Geography of Latin America	(3)
GGH 203 Geography of Europe	(3)
GGH 204 Geography of Asia	(3)
GGH 206 Geography of the Middle East	(3)
GGH 305 Geography of Russia	(3)
GGH 309 Geography of Missouri & Kansas	(3)
GGH 310 Geography of Terrorism	(3)
GGH 312 Military Geography	(3)
GGH 323 Urban Geography	(3)
GGH 326 Resources & People	(3)
GGH 290 Selected Topics in Human Geography	(1-4)
GGH 390 Special Topics in Human Geography	(1-4)

Physical Geography Courses

GO 130 Astronomy	(4)
GO 141 Introduction to Physical Geology	(4)
GO 151 History of the Earth	(4)
GO 200 Oceanography	(4)
GO 205 Introduction to Meteorology	(4)
GGP 270 Spatial Analysis	(3)
GGP 290 Selected Topics in Physical Geography (1-4)	
GO 300 Introduction to Dinosaurs	(3)
GO 310 Sedimentology & Stratigraphy	(4)
GO 320 Geomorphology	(4)
GGP 330 Cartography	(3)

- GGP 335 Remote Sensing (3)
- GGP 340 Environmental Planning (3)
- GGP 345 Land Use Planning (3)
- GGP 355 Advanced GIS (3)
- GGP 365 Geography of Disease (3)
- GGP 370 Biogeography (3)
- GGP 390 Special Topics in Physical Geography (1-4)
- GGP 450 Internship in GIS (3)

Required Minor: Minor Total.....18-28 cr.
Any of the minors offered by the university.

Minor Areas	Chemistry	Fine And Performing Arts	Legal Studies	Political Science
Accounting	Communication Arts	Geoscience (if Human Geography Major)	Mathematics	Psychology
Art or Design	Criminal Justice Administration	Global Studies	Music	Sociology
Biology	Economics	History	Peace Studies	Spanish
Business Administration	English	Interior Design	Philosophy and Religion	Theatre

GE, MGE, LL, MLL Requirements:
Any General Education Requirements imposed by the university.

***BS requires 8-9 credits of Natural Science in replacement of the BA's required 8 credits of Modern Language.**

Electives:
Any Electives needed to fulfill the graduation requirements of the university

Capstone Portfolio:
Consisting of a evaluation of the five core assessments from the core curriculum courses and how they connect with the program competencies.