

College of Letters and Science
2002 Annual Survey and Report of Departmental Assessment Practices

Please return to Dean Certain by May 24, 2002
 c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein
 307-E South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall, Madison WI 53706

Department Name: Geography - Graduate Program

I. Assessment Plan

- Q1. The department has an assessment plan for the undergraduate program. Y N
- Q2. The department has an assessment plan for the graduate program. Y N
- Q3. The assessment plan/s is/are linked to articulated outcome goals for your majors. Y N

Please identify the types of tools in the assessment plan(s); if possible, indicate the academic years in which they have been or are intended to be employed:

Tools used to directly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
National Exams		
Local Exams		✓
Capstone Courses		
Embedded Testing		✓
Student Portfolios		
Theses, Dissertations		✓
Performance Evaluations		✓
Pre & Post Testing		
Tools used to indirectly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
Student Surveys		✓
Exit Interviews		✓ individual advisors planned 2002-3
Alumni Surveys		
Employer Surveys		
External Reviews		✓

Q5. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?
Performance evaluations / Theses and Dissertations

Q6. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?
National Exams

Q7. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?
~~Student Surveys~~ Exit Interviews

Q8. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?
External Reviews

Q9. Please elaborate on any of the responses given above (please attach additional pages as needed).

II. Assessment Processes

Q10. Responsibility for assessment has been assumed by

an individual
 a committee

If responsibility is delegated to an individual, this person is:

the chair / tenured faculty / untenured faculty / academic staff / short term staff / other: _____

If responsibility is delegated to a committee, this group is:

Specially constituted to address assessment of student learning

Y N

Part of the Curriculum Committee

Y N

Part of the Executive Committee

Y N

Part of the Undergraduate/Graduate Education Committee

Y N

Other: _____

Q11. The department has requested funds from the University Assessment Council (UAC) to help the department assess student learning.

Y N

If "yes", did the UAC award the department funds?

Y N

Were those funds useful?

Y N

Q12. The department has sought professional assistance to conduct assessment.

Y N

If "yes", from whom has the department has sought professional assistance? (For example, the LEAD Center, the Office of Quality Improvement, the UW Survey Center, etc.)

III. Additional Information

1. Please attach a brief description of any changes in curriculum, advising, or procedures that were the result of your assessment findings so we may include this information in our annual report to the Provost. If your department has received funds from the University Assessment Council, you may attach the assessment report submitted to the UAC in compliance with its funding support requirements.

2. In the interest of streamlining our requests for assessment information, please identify an assessment contact person: Robert Keiser

3. Do you have any suggestions for workshops or learning opportunities in the area of student outcomes assessment?

Thank you for taking time to complete this report.

Please return this report by May 25, 2002.

**Department of Geography
Graduate Studies Assessment
Academic Year 2001-2002**

May 22, 2002

Introduction

The Graduate Studies program within the Department of Geography, like the Geography Department as a whole, is in the process of undergoing a significant restructuring. The reconfiguration of graduate studies is being done with the goal both of making the provision of services and information to the graduate student population more effective, and also of enhancing the involvement and empowerment of the graduate student population in departmental governance.

In this year-end report, we will review the trends in graduation within the program, provide a brief outline of the programmatic changes that occurred during the academic year, and conclude with a statement on the restructuring to the program that is currently underway, with a view to additional changes that will be made during the upcoming year.

Trends in Graduation

Between 2000 and 2001, the Department of Geography graduated 20 MS and 8 PhD candidates. The degrees were spread relatively evenly across the principal areas within geography, with 9 MS and 2 PhD degrees in People-Environment, 4 MS and 4 PhDs in Human Geography, 4 MS and 2 PhDs in Physical Geography and 1 MS and 2 PhDs in Cartography/GIS. The vast majority of the MS graduates (16) are currently enrolled in PhD programs in geography or other advanced degree programs (e.g., Law School). The other four of the MS graduates are working in a research/analysis positions where they are using their graduate training in geography on a regular basis (between 50 and 100%). The eight PhD graduates are all employed in academic positions. This profile conforms to the graduate program's history and reputation as a PhD-granting, academically oriented program. This has caused some concern among those graduate students who do not plan to go on for the PhD and a career in academia, and the restructuring of the Graduate Studies Committees, with a focus on collecting and providing information on non-academic career/job opportunities, and putting together a set of contacts in business, government and NGOs from among our graduate program alumni are designed to begin to more adequately address this concern.

Programmatic Changes

During the past academic year, a number of programmatic changes have been made to graduate studies in geography, and on the basis of our conversations with graduate

student representatives and the graduate student population as a whole a series of additional changes are planned for the upcoming year. First, we have changed the skills area within the PhD degree requirements by adding a qualitative methodological option, reflecting the fact that graduate research in Human Geography, Cartography and People-Environment increasingly relies on these methodologies. We have added one advanced qualitative methods course in geography, and have planned to have this offered by a rotating group of faculty who will present different aspects of qualitative methods most relevant for the differing geography specialties that utilize these techniques. In addition, we have collapsed the primary and secondary specializations within the MS program into one area of specialization involving the same number of courses (four).

We have also worked to provide students with more information on degree and reporting requirements in more user-friendly formats, including checklists and simplified forms that they can review with their thesis advisors and update on a regular basis.

More importantly, the department has been able to shore up gaps in graduate teaching and research with new hires in urban/economic geography, population geography and migration studies, and most recently in cartography and GIS. This has allowed us to more adequately meet student demand for courses, and offer a greater variety of seminars, particularly in Human Geography. However, we face a serious problem next year in physical geography, due to our inability to hire replacement faculty this past year. As physical geography is a traditionally very strong component of the graduate studies program, this is a critical problem that will need to be addressed in the very near future if we are to continue to attract the best graduate students in this field of geography.

Within the department, each area of specialization meets to plan curriculum development needs and to coordinate course offerings. Beginning in 2002-3, we plan to involve graduate student representatives more directly in this planning process.

Finally, and primarily as a result of graduate student initiative, two new programmatic additions occurred within graduate studies this year. First, the graduate students and faculty in Human Geography created a specialty group (THUGS), borrowing from the successful creation of similar specialty groups in Physical Geography (PGIG) and People-Environment (HERD). These specialty groups provide a forum for graduate students and faculty to meet and discuss their current research, to present their research results and papers prior to delivery at professional association meetings, and to discuss the theoretical and methodological works making news in their areas of the discipline. It is also the case that these specialty groups help to build a sense of community within the graduate student population. Next year, we plan to work toward the creation of a similar specialty group in Cartography and GIS.

The second programmatic initiative launched by graduate students this year is the graduate student symposium, which was a day-long series of paper sessions held in the Red Gym through which graduate students had the opportunity to present the results of their research. Student and faculty feedback indicate that this was a highly successful event, and the department plans to hold a symposium every year during the spring

semester. In addition, it has been proposed that individual paper sessions be held more frequently throughout the academic year, and we plan to add this component to graduate studies during the upcoming year.

Restructuring

As noted above, the department is currently undergoing an internal restructuring which will affect graduate studies. As a result of the changes currently envisioned, graduate students will be more involved in departmental governance, and will also have greater opportunity to voice concerns about their experience within the program. This will be accomplished through a rewriting of the position description of graduate student representatives, that will provide them with a greater ability to represent the interests and concerns of the graduate student population, and will also enhance their ability to influence decision-making that affects the graduate studies program, from curriculum development and new hires to programmatic changes and professional development. Second, the department is in the process of creating a graduate student faculty liaison position, whose duties are being defined jointly by the graduate students and faculty, and who will be nominated and elected by the graduate student population. The primary responsibility of the liaison will be to mediate and help to resolve disputes and concerns raised by the graduate student population regarding their relations with faculty in the department.

The departmental website is also currently undergoing a restructuring. On the graduate studies page, we plan to provide direct information on grants and fellowships available, to provide access to successful grant applications from our graduate student population, and to provide greater information on career opportunities. In addition, graduate student pages are currently being added to the graduate studies website, and each student will have access to her/his webpage for revising/updating the information contained there.

Finally, as a result of a year-end meeting held with the graduate students, and also in response to the results of the 2000 National Doctoral Program Survey, the graduate students are in the process of creating a Professional Development Committee, that will provide a forum for addressing graduate student concerns regarding teaching and teacher training, professional ethics, grant/fellowship writing skills development, skills development in the area of research paper presentations, journal manuscript preparation, preparation for job interviews, and development of CVs and effective letters of application. This list of topics is derived from survey results and conversations with graduate students currently in the program, but is not meant to be constraining. Each year, graduate students on the Professional Development Committee will determine a set of priorities, and a series of workshops and more informal "continuing conversations" will be held to address those priorities.

Next year promises to be one of even more dynamic change than the last, and both the faculty and the graduate students in the geography program are excited about the prospects and opportunities that lay ahead.