



Geography Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Social Science
Degrees Offered	BSc; BA;
Modules Reviewed	<u>BA</u> : HSP: Geography, Geographic Information Science (GIS), Urban Development, Geography and Commercial Aviation; Specialization: Geography, Geography and Commercial Aviation; Major: Environment and Health, Geography, GIS, Physical Geography <u>BSc</u> : HSP: Geography, GIS <u>Dual Degree with Ivey</u> : HSP: Geography, Urban Development
External Consultants	Dr. Eric Crighton, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario Dr. Paul Treitz, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
Internal Reviewer	Susan Knabe, Associate Dean, Undergraduate, FIMS, UWO
Date of Site Visit	March 14 &15, 2019
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: June 10, 2019 SCAPA: September 11, 2019 Senate:
Year of Next Review	2026-27

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses and assessment and evaluation of the undergraduate modules delivered by the Department of Geography. This report considers the following documents: the program's self-study, the external consultants' report and the responses from the Department and Faculty. The Final Assessment Report identifies the strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement and improvement and details and prioritizes the recommendations of the external consultants and prioritizes those recommendations that are selected for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the Final Assessment Report that are selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, any action or follow-up that is required and the timeline for completion.

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is sent for approval through SUPR-U, SCAPA, Senate and the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance and is made available on a publicly accessible location on Western's IQAP website. The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is the only document resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public, all other documents are confidential to the Program/Faculty and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

The IQAP review for undergraduate programs in geography took place on March 14th and 15th. The reviewers met with the following: the Vice Provost, Academic Programs; the Vice Provost Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty; the Associate Dean (Academic) of Social Science; Chair and Undergraduate Chair of the department; geography faculty members grouped thematically: a) Urban Development and Combined degrees; b) BSc and Physical Geography major; c) GIS; BA HSP, Geography major, Environment and Health major; current geography CRC holder; undergraduate students; Geography administrative and technical staff; and a Teaching and Learning Librarian from Western Libraries. As well, the reviewers had a tour of the different laboratory (wet/dry, computer) facilities in SSC which service the undergraduate programs in geography.

The reviewers were impressed with the unit's commitment to undergraduate geography education, and particularly the emphasis on both interdisciplinary and experiential learning that the department fosters across the different modules through a range of different learning opportunities and assessments. In particular, the department's commitment to Indigenous scholarship and pedagogy was identified as an important contribution to both the field and the university. The Program Level Learning Outcomes map well on to the Western Degree Outcomes and are consistent with other geography programs in the province. Overall the programs are generally well supported in terms of excellent faculty and staff, with the reviewers singling out the cluster of health geographers and the recent growth in GIS faculty. They also noted, however, that there were some areas, such as physical geography, where administrative faculty responsibilities have further depleted the unit's ability to provide instruction in this area, and others, such as urban development, which are highly subscribed and, as a result, ripe for additional resources. In terms of staff support, the reviewers noted that the technical staff resources and labs available to service undergraduate learning are exemplary for a program of this size.

In terms of the improving the viability of the program, the reviewers indicated that while program registrations had declined since the previous report, this trend reflected a similar sector-wide decline. The reviewers identified the challenge of "marketing" geography to students, given that few if any jobs identify geography and suggested renaming (possibly using a focus on "environment") as a way to increase program enrolment, something that the department is already actively considering. The reviewers also identified the complexity of the different program offerings (both in terms of pathways through the program and apparent redundancies, such as the 4 extant 1st year courses) as potential barriers to students entering a geography module. At the same time, registrants in undergraduate geography courses remained robust over this period and provided a pool of students who entered geography program modules after second year, something which the department already capitalizes upon. To facilitate timely completion for folks who discover the modules late (and for those in the Urban Development module, which involves 15 courses) the reviewers suggested offering access to core courses during the summer.

Significant Strengths of the Program

The following program strengths are identified in both the self-study and the External Consultants' Report:

- “impressive” commitment to undergraduate experiential learning opportunities and real world assessments: including GIS applications for local agencies, mock Energy Board Hearings, field schools, internships,
- commitment to interdisciplinary approaches through exposure to a diverse range of faculty expertise (including Indigenous studies, GIS science, urban planning, public health, freshwater ecology, physical geography)
- high quality faculty, both in terms of research and teaching
- commitment to Indigenous scholarship and pedagogy
- growth in GIS program through faculty hires, infrastructure development, and curricular innovation
- the robust cluster of health geographers available to support the innovative Environment and Health module
- distinctive module in Urban Development
- 95% of students surveyed agreed that the department provided a supportive and engaging learning environment
- “extraordinary” level of technical staff support for undergraduate students and learning, particularly in the area of physical geography and GIS
- new physical and GIS facilities
- exemplary staff involved in program advising
- excellent library resources and support (including GIS support)

Summary of the Reviewers' Key Recommendations and Department/Faculty Responses

Resource Recommendations

- additional faculty resources in the areas of physical geography and urban development
- decrease reliance on Social Science Student Donation for physical geography lab materials

Curriculum Recommendations

- rationalize first year course offerings to avoid overlap and better reflect program streams; consider removing Geography 1100
- streamline program structure to reduce confusion for students and administrative burden
- address issues with timely completion for Urban Development (eg. offer additional core courses to accommodate Urban Development and students admitted to a geography module after the beginning of second year)
- actively integrate data analysis and communication learning objectives and assessment activities into curriculum
- differentiate GIS offerings (spatial analysis and quantitative methods courses) to ensure appropriate progression
- make field courses mandatory (need to develop Ontario based field course option to require this)

Other Recommendations

- consider foregrounding department emphasis on environment, either through a name change and/or development of an additional module

Other Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

In addition to the recommendations, the review process may have identified other considerations to enhance or enrich the program. List any such considerations:

- work with the Faculty of Science to ensure physical geography BSc courses are able to count as science credit for all students

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented in the Deans' Annual Report and filed in the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic).

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Ensure appropriate faculty resources for Physical Geography offerings or align curriculum with current resources	GIS/Physical Geography position has already been identified by the Department and Faculty		
2. Ensure appropriate resources for Physical Geography labs	Dean has agreed to support lab materials if SSSD monies are no longer forthcoming		
3. Rationalize first year offerings	Department discussing offering Geography 1100 only on-line in future; other courses have been reviewed and are aligned with recommendations		
4. Streamline program structure, remove inactive courses	Department to review overall efficiency and focus of modules, as well as removal of inactive courses		

5. Address issues with timely completion for Urban Development Module	Promotional event to provide information about module requirements; focus communicating requirements to students entering Western University and first year students		
6. Differentiate GIS offerings to ensure progression	Align course titles/descriptions to reflect curriculum adjustment (currently at DAP stage)		
7. Mandatory field course	Revisit reasons for moving field courses to optional		