

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST

**BACHELOR'S OF SCIENCE IN GEOGRAPHY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**BACHELOR'S OF ARTS IN GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
STUDIES**

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Program Faculty

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Degree Titles

Bachelor of Arts in Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Alaska Southeast
Bachelor of Science in Geography and Environmental Sciences, University of Alaska Southeast

The Geography Programs at UAS

At the University of Alaska Southeast we offer two degrees that address the cultures and environments of our unique location. These degrees are transportable; offering UAF students the opportunity to make progress toward their degrees through coursework at UAS to gain knowledge of SE cultures and environments, and UAS students can do the same at UAF to gain knowledge about the Arctic. Geography students at UAS are provided with a close working relationship with experienced and committed faculty members and GIS and research facilities, including marine and glacial environments, the ACRC, and local agencies. The strength of the Geography degrees is that they allow students to fashion their own environmental- and spatially-focused degrees across a variety of disciplines on campus. Furthermore, the Geography BA offers a track emphasis in Outdoor Studies. The Geography degrees complement the mission of UAS—“student learning enhanced by faculty scholarship, undergraduate research and creative activities, community engagement, and the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska”—as well as the work of the active Sustainability Committee. We believe that these connections across campus and commitments to understanding the local environments of SE Alaska offer students a unique opportunity only available at UAS.

Because the degrees are so similar in nature and outcomes, assessment methods for both will be the same.

Faculty

The Geography faculty at UAS are spread across departments within the School of Arts and Sciences. We currently have three full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty who are committed to leading the program, as well as approximately 15 affiliated faculty representing all three departments. Our full-time professors hold advanced degrees in their fields and have extensive research and teaching experience in geography. Faculty-to-student ratio in studio courses allows for intensive and individualized teaching and mentoring.

Purpose

As delineated in NWCCU (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities) *Standards 2.A – General Requirements*¹, *2.B – Educational Program Planning and Assessment*² and *Policy 2.2 – Educational Assessment*, the purpose of this document is to detail methods with which our teaching effectiveness is gauged in relation to the target student competencies detailed in the UAS Provost's office. These methods consist of

Method 1. Assessing individual students' achievement of well-defined learning goals and outcomes through

- a. Periodic surveys, final projects, field and lab experience, and writing tasks, in addition to successful completion of coursework
- b. Regularly scheduled Geography faculty meetings
- c. Completion of the GEOG capstone (490)
- d. The Majors Exit Survey

Method 2. Regularly scheduled Geography faculty meetings

Method 3. Faculty analysis of student evaluations

¹ "The institution offers collegiate level programs that culminate in identified student competencies and lead to degrees or certificates in recognized fields of study. The achievement and maintenance of high quality programs is the primary responsibility of an accredited institution; hence, the evaluation of educational programs and their continuous improvement is an ongoing responsibility. As conditions and needs change, the institution continually redefines for itself the elements that result in educational programs of high quality."

² "Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution."

Target UAS Competencies

Target UAS student competencies as outlined by the Provost are below.

1. **Competency in Communication**

College graduates should be able to write, speak, read, and listen effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences. Whether their aim is personal, academic, or professional, they should be able to communicate ideas and information effectively.

2. **Competency in Quantitative Skills**

A quantitatively literate person is capable of analytical and mathematical reasoning. This individual can read and understand quantitative arguments, follow logical development and mathematical methods, solve mathematical and quantitative problems, perform mathematical calculations, express functional relationships, and apply mathematical methods. As a minimum, a student should know the mathematical techniques covered in the general education mathematical requirements.

3. **Competency in Information Literacy**

Competency in information literacy combines the skills of being able to 1) identify needed information; 2) locate and access the information; 3) analyze and evaluate the content; 4) integrate and communicate the information; and 5) evaluate the product and the process. Reading and writing literacy plus traditional library skills provide the foundation to access the vast availability of electronic information.

4. **Competency in Computer Usage**

Students should have the knowledge to make efficient use of computers and information technology in their personal and professional lives because basic technological knowledge and skills apply to all fields and disciplines. Necessary skills range from a basic ability to use a keyboard through word processing concepts, spreadsheet and graphics applications to telecommunications, conferencing, and electronic mail technologies.

5. **Competency in Professional Behavior**

Professional behavior is expected of college students. Success in professional life depends on many behaviors, including responsibility, good work habits, ethical decision-making, recognition of the value of community service, and successful human relations.

6. **Competency in Critical Thinking**

Competency in critical thinking reflects proficiency in modes of thought such as conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, interpreting, and/or applying ideas and information. A critical thinker can approach a concept from multiple perspectives and frames of reference, compare and contrast ideas or models, and demonstrate a willingness to take intellectual risks. A critical thinker knows not only how but also when to apply particular modes of thinking. It should be noted that problem solving and analytical approaches may vary from discipline to discipline.

Student Learning Goals and Outcomes

Geography students achieve UAS competencies in the following ways.

Graduates will acquire the communication skills, quantitative skills, information literacy, computer literacy, professional behavior and critical thinking skills as designated in the UAS competencies.

- A. Students will demonstrate effective oral and written communication in exams, written work, class discussion, and formal presentations.
- B. Students will demonstrate quantitative skills through successful completion of the core requirements and the Earth Systems and Geographic Analysis breadth requirements.
- C. Students will demonstrate critical thinking, objectivity and reasoning in exams, class discussions, field-based instruction, and the production of original research.
- D. Students will demonstrate information literacy in formal presentation of research, conduct of research, and a strong foundation in GIS and data analysis.
- E. Students will demonstrate computer literacy in the use of software for GIS and data analysis.
- F. Students will demonstrate professional behavior in presentations, classroom participation, and classroom conduct.

Program Assessment Methods

The effectiveness of the Geography programs is gauged by

1. **Faculty meetings**

Geography faculty meet once each semester to discuss program agenda items, progress, recruitment, majors, teaching duties, and curriculum changes.

2. **Student Evaluations**

Student evaluations are analyzed and discussed to identify strengths and weaknesses of the programs.

3. **Tracking Student Retention**

Geography enrollment numbers are tracked with assistance from UAS institutional research and evaluated relative to historical numbers and numbers nationwide.

4. **Tracking Graduate Employment and Graduate School Acceptance**

Close mentorship and small class size allow faculty to track alumni employment data. UAS Institutional Research, with assistance from the Alaska Department of Labor, will provide further employment data. These data are compared to historical and national data.

5. **Geography Declaration and Capstone Assessment Evaluations**

Program coordinators will conduct declaration surveys to establish baseline information by which to measure effectiveness of the program. Majors are required to take a capstone course in their final year, during which faculty teaching that capstone will conduct an exit assessment (see Appendix A and C). At regular faculty meetings, these evaluations will be examined for the purposes of program assessment.

Conclusion

The accumulation of data as described above will lead to new practices and interpretations that the UAS geography faculty believes to be critical in continuing to provide each student with an exceptional undergraduate experience in their field, personal growth, and career opportunities. The geography programs' ability to rapidly adapt to these changing conditions highlights the unique merits of a small university in Southeast Alaska.

Prepared by Sarah Jaquette Ray, Assistant Professor of English, Eran Hood, Associate Professor of Environmental Science, and Sanjay Pyare, Associate Professor of GIS and Landscape Ecology, December 2012

Appendix A

Geography Declaration Survey

Geography Declaration Survey

Student Name
Date
Geography Degree:

Please complete the following survey by darkening a bubble to the right of each question.
Scale 1=Very Well 6=Very Poorly

How effectively do you write, speak, read, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6
How well do you read and understand quantitative arguments, follow logical development and mathematical methods, solve mathematical and quantitative problems, perform mathematical calculations, express functional relationships, and apply mathematical methods?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6
In regard to research how readily do you identify needed information, locate and access the information, analyze and evaluate content, integrate and communicate the information and evaluate the product and the process?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6
How competently do use computer technology from word processing, spreadsheet and graphics applications to telecommunications, conferencing, and electronic mail technologies?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6
How would you describe your levels of responsibility, good work habits, ethical decision-making, recognition of the value of community service and successful human relations?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6
How would you describe your ability to conceptualize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, interpret, and apply ideas and information?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6

Please complete the following three sections.

Describe your one-year goals as they pertain to geography.

Describe your three-year goals as they pertain to geography.

Describe your ten-year goals as they pertain to geography.

Appendix B

Grading Scale

GRADING SCALE

A+, A and A-

A grade of "A" indicates a thorough mastery of course content and outstanding performance in completion of all course requirements.

B+, B and B-

A grade of "B" indicates a high level of acquired knowledge and performance in completion of course requirements.

C+, C and C-

A grade of "C" indicates a satisfactory level of acquired knowledge and performance in completion of course requirements.

D+, D and D-

A grade of "D", the lowest passing grade, indicates a minimal level of acquired knowledge and minimal performance in completion of course requirements. It is generally not accepted to satisfy requirements in certain majors and in graduate programs.

F

A grade of "F" indicates failure to meet a minimal level of understanding of course content and/or performance in completion of course requirements.

CR (Credit)

A grade of "CR" indicates that course credit was awarded under the credit/no-credit option and the student's knowledge and performance was equivalent to a grade of "C" or higher.

P (Pass)

A grade of "P" indicates the satisfactory completion of course requirements under either the pass/fail or the pass/no-pass grade mode. For performance comparison only, a grade of "P" (pass) is considered equivalent to a grade of "C" or higher in undergraduate courses and a grade of "B" or higher in graduate courses.

NP (No Pass)

A grade of "NP" indicates failure to meet a minimal level of understanding of course content and/or performance in completion of course requirements.

DF (Deferred)

A grade of "DF" indicates that the course requirements may extend beyond the end of the course, as in thesis, project, research courses, internships, etc. A final grade and credit will be withheld without penalty until the course requirements are met within an approved time.

NB (No-Basis)

A grade of "NB" indicates that a student has not completed the coursework by the end of the semester. No credit is given nor is NB calculated in the GPA. This is a permanent grade and may not be used to substitute for an Incomplete.

I (Incomplete)

A grade of "I" indicates that a student has not completed the coursework by the end of the course. A final grade and credit will be withheld without penalty until the course requirements are met within an approved time, not to exceed one year. After one year, the "I" becomes a permanent grade.

AU (Audit)

Audit is a registration status indicating that the student has enrolled for informational instruction only. No course credit is granted. The student may receive a "W" if he or she does not meet agreed-upon terms or attend the course being audited.

W (Withdrawal)

Withdrawal is a registration status that indicates withdrawal from a course after the official course drop date.

Appendix C

Geography Capstone Assessment Evaluation

Geography Capstone Assessment Evaluation

Student Name
Date
Degree:

1=Very Well 6=Very Poorly

Graduates will acquire the communication, critical thinking, information literacy, computer literacy and professional behavior skills as designated in the UAS competencies.

Outcome 1. Student demonstrates effective oral and written communication	①②③④⑤⑥
Outcome 2. Student demonstrates quantitative skills	①②③④⑤⑥
Outcome 3. Student demonstrates critical thinking	①②③④⑤⑥
Outcome 4. Student demonstrates information literacy in research	①②③④⑤⑥
Outcome 5. Student demonstrates computer literacy	①②③④⑤⑥
Outcome 6. Student demonstrates professional behavior	①②③④⑤⑥

Describe the student's goals, graduate school, and/or employment prospects as they pertain to geography.

Appendix D

GEOGRAPHY ASSESSMENT MATRIX

UAS Geography Outcomes Assessment Matrix
12/20/2012

General Outcomes (Competencies)	Specific Outcomes	Geography Assessment Strategies		Relevant Courses
		BS	BA	
Communication	• be able to write, speak, read, and listen effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences • be able to communicate ideas and information effectively	Proficiency in Power Point Presentation and written essays	Proficiency in Power Point Presentation and written essays	BS: GEOG 101, GEOG 312, GEOG 490, & any human-environment major requirement course option BA: same as BS
Quantitative Skills	• Can read and understand quantitative arguments, follow logical development and mathematical methods • Should know the mathematical techniques covered in the general ed. Mathematical requirements	Passing grades in math GERs and science courses	Passing grades in math GERs and science courses	BS: MATH 200, BIOL 105, BIOL 106, CHEM 105, CHEM 106, PHYS 103, PHYS 104, PHYS 211, PHYS 212, ENVS 102, ENVS 492, GEOG 338, BIOL 271, & any Earth Systems major requirements BA: ENVS 102, ENVS 492, GEOG 338, BIOL 271, & any Earth Systems major requirement course option
Information Literacy	• Able to identify needed information • Locate and access the information • Analyze and evaluate the content • Integrate and communicate the information	Integrate scholarly research in papers or projects that receive passing grades	Integrate scholarly research in papers or projects that receive passing grades	BS: all upper-division major course offerings BA: all upper-division major course offerings
Information Technology	• Make efficient use of computers and information technology	Successful completion of GIS courses to demonstrate basic mapping and/or modeling skills Proficiency in Power Point presentation	Successful completion of GIS courses to demonstrate basic mapping and/or modeling skills Proficiency in Power Point presentation	BS: GEOG 338, GEOG 309, GEOG 406, GEOG 410, GEOG 415, GEOL 301, GEOGL 302 BA: same as BS
Professional Behavior	• Demonstrate professional behaviors, such as	Successful completion of	Successful completion of	BS: all upper-division major course offerings

	responsibility, good work habits, ethical decision making, recognition of the value of community service, and successful human relations	coursework and GEOG capstone (490)	coursework and GEOG capstone (490)	BA: all upper-division major course offerings
Critical Thinking	• Proficiency in modes of thought: conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, interpreting, and/or applying ideas and information. • Demonstrate an ability to approach, compare & contrast a concept from multiple perspectives and frames of reference • Demonstrate a willingness to take intellectual risks. • Understands when to apply particular modes of thinking.	Written and oral presentation of original thought through essays, projects, or presentations	Written and oral presentation of original thought through essays, projects, or presentations	BS: all major course offerings in Human-Environment (fill in science courses that practice critical thinking here) BA: all major course offerings in Human-Environment (fill in science courses that practice critical thinking here)

