**Department of Geography, University of Oregon**

**Assessment Plan for the Master’s and PhD program**

**December 7, 2018**

Masters and PhD students are required to complete a set of core courses, additional “breadth and depth” courses, and complete a written thesis.  These courses along with an independent research project provide the activities designed to meet our learning outcomes.

**The introductory sequence of courses addresses learning objectives 2, 4, and 5.**

611: Theory and Practice in Geography

612: Current Trends in Geography

613: Research Design

The goals of the sequence are: (1) to introduce you to professional life and expectations as a graduate student; (2) to provide you with an overview of the development of geography as a discipline, (3) to launch you into the process of conceiving, planning, and conducting thesis research, and (4) to examine issues of relevance to your professional development as a geographer.

**The ‘breadth and depth” requirement addresses learning objective 1.**

The purpose is to ensure breadth of knowledge within the discipline by requiring students to take courses in different focal areas of geography. Master’s students need to complete breadth requirements unless a student has previously taken equivalent courses at another institution or from the University of Oregon. Course substitution should be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. The breadth of geography includes three broad research areas: physical geography, human geography, and Geographic Information Science. The requirements include one graduate-level course from each of two areas which are not in the student’s research area. For the depth requirement, students may need to take additional upper-division courses related to their own research area. These ‘depth’ courses may include courses on foreign language or programming that are important in the student’s research area.

**The graduate seminar requirement addresses learning objectives 1, 2, and 4.**

A minimum of two graduate seminars (GEOG 607) from different faculty members is required.  These are 4-credit courses designed to ensure that a student will gain experience in the process of defining a research question and preparing a substantial research paper.

**The research workshop requirement (GEOG 608) addresses learning objectives 4 and 5.**

During the fall and spring quarters of each year prior to receipt of the Master’s degree, each student must register for GEOG 608, a one hour research workshop that meets regularly during the term. During each workshop meeting a student or faculty member gives a presentation of ongoing research, and participants are encouraged to offer comments and questions.  The workshop encourages students and faculty to share research issues and concerns with one another, and to provide students with a setting in which they are challenged to think critically about the work of others and to defend their own work in an environment of constructive criticism.

**Assessment methods: Masters and PhD students**

1. Annual assessment of graduating students. Assessment of graduate students is conducted annually in the spring term by the faculty.  During faculty meeting, faculty discuss and provide rankings of students in terms of success in the graduate program.  These rankings (high, medium, or low) are used mainly to prioritize funding for GEs in future years and secondarily for awarding scholarships.  These rankings are kept private and only required in cases where insufficient funding is available to the graduate students. Rankings are based on an amalgam of performance in terms of class performance, effectiveness in GE duties, and progress in research and writing.  We will add an additional task to our annual ranking activity: graduating (leaving) graduate students will be evaluated with respect to the learning outcomes, with the goal of tracking graduate student performance with respect to the learning objectives.  We will use the students’ committees assessment with additional input from other faculty who have taught or mentored the student.  Performance will be scored on a 1-5 scale.  Results will be securely archived in the main department office and the department file server.
2. Class performance. The main products from Masters students in our program are 1) final papers from GEOG 607 seminars, and 2) Thesis documents.   A future task with respect to assessment will be to collect short statements from instructors of 607 classes.  The statements will include 1) the class roster and syllabus, 2) which activities contributed to each learning objective, and 3) an assessment of the student work, including collective strengths and weaknesses of students performance with respect to expectations for the course and the department learning outcomes.  These records will be maintained by the Director for Graduate Studies (DGS) and kept on the file server.  After two years, an ad hoc committee will evaluate 607 courses for uniformity of expectations and student performance, and suggest actionable change in the content of the 607 seminars and evaluation of student performance.  This will be valuable guidance for the faculty designing these seminars.
3. Tracking employment following graduate. Student success is also measured by future employment. A database of job placement of our graduates will be updated annually by the Director of Graduate Studies in the spring term.
4. PhD students also must pass a comprehensive exam that includes a development of a set of 12 questions of which four are answered in written answers (PhD learning objectives 1, 2, and 4).  These are rigorous assessments of students’ independent thought and knowledge of the literature. In some cases, students are asked to re-submit up to two answers after receiving feedback.  It is difficult to use the comprehensive exam as data in an assessment task, therefore we will only track the number of question re-writes required for a student to pass the exam.  This data will be collected by the DGS.