

Geography Students' Ability to Critically Assess, Interpret, and Analyze Geographic Research

Geography BA - College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Step 1: Student Learning Outcome

Students can critically assess, interpret, and analyze geographic research.

Step 2: Methods and Measures

The department of Geography and the Environment assesses for the outcome using embedded, direct measures including a paper in GEOG 300A and final exam essays in GEOG 340, and GEOG 425. The program's assessment plan identifies where in the curriculum the outcome is Introduced and Developed (300), and Developed and Mastered (400). Faculty and an Assessment Coordinator assess a random sample from all enrolled students.

Step 3: Criteria for Success

GEOG 300A: 75% of students score 70% or higher on the "concept / development" portion of the paper.

GEOG 340: 75% of the total points (7).

GEOG 425: 75% of total points (100) on both randomly selected final exam essay questions.

Step 4: Results

Assessment performed in spring 2019 with results as follows:

GEOG300: 16 out of 20 randomly selected papers (80%) received an acceptable score on the "concept / development" component of the paper grade with an average score of 81.2%, which exceeded the criteria for success.

GEOG340: Exam essay question average points was 6.13 (n=36), equivalent to 87.5% of the total points which exceeded the criteria for success.

GEOG 425: Two essay questions were randomly selected from the final exam. Students on average received 90% and 85% of the points for the two questions, respectively which exceeded the criteria for success.

Step 5: Improvement Actions

The department will continue to practice the "early warning system" to address student research and writing-related issues. Specifically, in GEOG 300A the instructor reviews

grades (of the first 2 papers) to make an early identification of students who need additional support with respect to interpretation and analysis of research, and/or writing-related resources. Additional enhancements that may be integrated into future offerings of courses include;

- 1) Invite representatives from the University Learning Center and the Writing Center to share information about their resources and services to students in the class.
- 2) A series of short (~15 minute) lecture content will be created to address common student issues with respect to interpretation and analysis.
- 3) Emphasis will be given on better discussion of the significance of assigned readings in terms of course objectives.
- 4) Instructors to provide sample essay questions prior to midterm and final exams.

Lastly, the program intends to revise the current alumni survey to better reflect student learning outcomes for use as an indirect measure.