



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY | Department of Geography

CURRICULUM REVIEW

PUBLIC REPORT

JUNE 2017

1 Program Context

The Department has developed strong and sound instructional programs across the board. The Department maintains that geography is an integrative discipline, with the concepts of space and place linking a wide diversity of phenomena. Thus, a major goal is to educate students in the physical aspects of places, in the spatial representation and activities of human phenomena, and in how the two interrelate. A second goal is to produce students who are capable of using the most current methods and technology to gather data and to analyse spatial relationships. We aim to educate and graduate students who can communicate their knowledge effectively in both verbal and graphic/cartographic forms.

Our Department is nearing completion of a year-long Faculty of Arts-wide initiated *Undergraduate Curriculum Review* to articulate, modernize and revitalize our undergraduate programs. The Department of Geography has made some significant changes to the structure and delivery of its undergraduate programs beginning in 2004. In 2004 we restructured the entire program including the realignment and streaming of course prerequisites. In 2008, we revisited the undergraduate program and, based upon our 4-5 year experiences post restructuring, created 5 “Streams” that reflected the strengths and skills of our graduates. These Streams were used as tools to guide undergraduates who were looking for specific sets of skills. Considering this history, recent changes to our program and substantial new faculty additions, we decided to undertake a comprehensive review and revision process where we adopted an iterative approach where we looked at the curriculum from top-down and bottom-up.

2 Guiding Questions

This process addressed several interrelated questions:

1. What are the objectives for our undergraduate curriculum?
2. How well do the course offerings align to the changing sub-disciplines that constitute Geography?
3. How well is the content and delivery mode of course content within the context of a rapidly changing discipline being achieved?
4. Are there any gaps or redundancies in the programs? Are course offerings delivering course learning outcomes?
5. How is the curriculum being delivered?
6. Does the departmental programs align with University of Calgary priorities?

3 Action Plan

Action Item #1: Refine the admission and degree requirements for BA and BSc (**1 year or less**)

- Evaluate high school math expectations for all departmental courses – potentially modify admissions requirements – [No Cost]
- Develop three to five *academic concentrations* within the BA and BSc degrees to better focus and align program learning outcomes with professional, societal, and career demands for our students – [No Cost]

Action Item #2: Review and adjust course content alignment with program expectations (**1-2 years**)

- Refine and standardize course learning outcome language for all courses, and assure that the course learning outcomes are aligned with Program Learning Outcomes for BA and BSc degrees – [No Cost]
- Modify course content as necessary in situations where required courses do not adequately meet program learning outcomes – [No Cost]

Action Item #3: Review how field schools fit into the curriculum **(2-3 years)**

- GEOG 391
 - Diversify course content to better reflect the range of disciplinary specialization within the department and the field of Geography [COURSE IS CURRENTLY SUBSIDIZED BY FACULTY OF ARTS, INCLUDING MORE URBAN/SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY COULD BE DONE AFFORDABLY IN CALGARY]
- International field schools
 - Integrate courses offered in international field schools into the curriculum by aligning learning outcomes and establishing equivalencies to on-campus courses – [No cost]
 - Develop an international field methods course to complement GEOG 391 to highlight the special methods used in international settings – [No cost]

Action Item #4: Review the role and contribution of 200-level “service” courses and 300-level intermediate courses **(2-3 years)**

- Evaluate the subject matter, integration, delivery, and coordination of our 200- and 300-level courses for both majors and non-majors – [No Cost]
- The Departmental Curriculum Committee and Human Geography Curriculum ad-hoc Committee will be charged with evaluating and updating the human geography undergraduate curriculum and integrating the changes into all BA and BSc requirements. – [No Cost]

Action Item #5: Create undergraduate GIS Embedded Certificate **(1-2 years)**

- Research and evaluate nature and format of similar certificates in other Canadian institutions– [No Cost]
- Consult with Dr. Tumasz on University of Calgary process for developing the certificate– [No Cost]
- Utilize existing courses to constitute the required and optional courses in the certificate – [No Cost]
- Evaluate TA resources required in GEOG 231 to accommodate larger enrolment due to the course being the entry-course to the certificate curriculum – [2 Full TAs per academic year for four new lab sections per year]

Action Item #6: Re-evaluate the use of TA resources across all undergraduate programs **(1-2 years)**

- The external review was clear that the balance of TA utilization was heavily skewed to physical geography and techniques courses, leaving human geography courses underserved – [No Cost]
- A human geography curriculum ad-hoc committee will be charged with updating the human geography undergraduate curriculum (see above), in part to consider how TAs can be in courses to enhance undergraduate education and learning – [No Cost]
- Redistribute TA resources between courses within constraints of existing GAT allocation – [No Cost]

Action Item #7: Establish dual-credit courses for high school outreach and engagement (**1-2 years**)

- Direct entry of students from high school has been limited for Geography
- Refine our 200-level courses and establish links to high schools– [No Cost]
- Consult with Kelly Heglund regarding procedures and opportunities – [No Cost]