



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

*Department of Geography*

### Assessment Plan

M.S. in Geography  
2007

#### **I. Mission**

The Department of Geography offers courses of study leading to the Master of Science degree with specialization in natural environmental systems, urban/economic geography, or geographic information science. The mission of the M.S. in Geography is to provide a quality graduate education that prepares students to contribute to society in roles as scientists, analysts, managers, and educators.

#### **II. Student Learning Objectives**

The M.S. degree in Geography prepares students for careers in applied science and education and for advanced specialized study toward the Ph.D. To be successful in these pursuits and as a life-long learner, students must be able to formulate research questions, critically evaluate and synthesize knowledge from various sources, design and conduct an independent research project, properly use spatial data and methods of spatial analysis—including maps, and effectively communicate to peers and the general public, both orally and in writing.

Upon completion of the M.S. degree in Geography, students will:

1. have an in-depth understanding and mastery of the literature in at least one field of specialization (natural environmental systems, urban/economic geography, or geographic information science);
2. be able to critically evaluate and utilize scientific literature from geography and related fields;
3. recognize the contributions of others to understanding and properly attribute the work of others in their own writing and presentations;
4. demonstrate the ability to develop a research question and design an appropriate experiment for investigating that question;
5. demonstrate the ability to develop, analyze and interpret spatial data in the context of a research problem;
6. demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate geographic and quantitative information by means of maps, graphics, and illustrations;
7. demonstrate the ability to communicate ideas and research in oral presentations;
8. demonstrate the ability to communicate ideas and research in writing.



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### III. Methods

#### a. Direct Evidence of Student Learning

Method	Description	Timeline	Responsibility	Objectives
Research proposal	Evaluation of research proposals from GEOG 563 (a core course in the program) with regard to formulation of a research question, synthesis of literature, and proposed methodology	Semi-annual	Assessment Committee	1, 2, 3, 4
Research paper	Evaluation of research papers from GEOG 561 (a core course in the program) with regard to synthesis of literature, development and analysis of spatial data, and interpretation of results.	Semi-annual, coupled with evaluation of research proposal	Assessment Committee	1, 2, 3, 5
Class presentation	Evaluation of required, research-related presentations in advanced specialty courses and/or seminars	Each semester	Graduate coordinator	1, 2, 7
Thesis/non-thesis literature review	Evaluation of the literature review section of a sample of post-defense M.S. thesis or non-thesis papers.	Annual, at end of academic year	Assessment Committee	1, 2, 3, 8
Thesis/non-thesis research design	Evaluation of the research design or methods section of a sample of post-defense M.S. thesis or non-thesis papers.	Annual, at end of academic year	Assessment Committee	2, 4
Thesis/non-thesis results & interpretation	Evaluation of the results & interpretation sections of a sample of post-defense M.S. thesis or non-thesis papers.	Annual, at end of academic year	Assessment Committee	5, 6, 8
Presentation of thesis/non-thesis research	Evaluation of presentation and oral communication skills by faculty, peers, and guests at required oral presentation of thesis/non-thesis research	Fall and spring semesters	Graduate coordinator	6, 7
Internship supervisor reports	Evaluation of student skills, work ethic, and job performance in an internship, as reported by the internship supervisor	Annual, at end of academic year	Assessment Committee	4, 5, 8



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## b. Outcomes by Methods

	G563 proposal	G561 paper	Seminar presenta- tion	Thesis literature review	Thesis research methods	Thesis results	Thesis presenta- tion	Intern- ship report
1. literature mastery	X	X	X	X				
2. literature critical use	X	X	X	X	X			
3. ideas attribution	X	X		X				
4. research formulation	X				X			X
5. research & data analysis		X				X		X
6. graphic communication						X	X	
7. oral presentation			X				X	
8. written communication				X		X		X