

University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Programs Reviewed:	Geography, B.A., Hons.: Specialist, Major, Minor Geography, B.Sc., Hons.: Specialist, Major, Minor Geographical Information Systems, B.Sc., Hons.: Major, Minor Environmental Management, B.A., Hons.: Specialist, Major, Minor Environmental Science, B.Sc., Hons.: Specialist, Major, Minor
Division/Unit Reviewed:	Department of Geography, University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM)
Commissioning Officer:	Professor Amy Mullin, Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, UTM
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	1. Professor Sara McLafferty, Department Head, Geography and GIScience, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2. Professor Martin Sharp, Chair, Department, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Alberta
Date of review visit:	January 7-8, 2015
Date reported to AP&P:	October 27, 2015

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

1 Outcome

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations.

2 Significant Program Strengths

- Department is at the leading edge both internationally and nationally with respect to teaching innovation and experiential learning
- Excellent work by faculty in assessment of learning and in related pedagogical research
- High levels of student satisfaction
- Great student interest and rapid enrolment growth in GIS programs
- World-class research being conducted by human geographers
- Positive and effective internal and external relationships

3 Opportunities for Program Enhancement

The reviewers recommended that the following be considered:

- Strengthening the GIS curriculum, facilities, and supporting the faculty complement to better develop student knowledge and skills, and further develop excellence in the physical geography program
- Addressing challenges with respect to entering students' writing, numeracy, and spatial analytical skills
- Examining impact of enrolment growth on positive teaching delivery
- Enhancing access to student advising to aid students with program planning
- Attending to laboratory facilities to support faculty research in physical geography
- Further developing external relationships to support and showcase research and teaching activities
- Conducting additional strategic planning to identify research clusters and priority areas for hiring

4 Implementation Plan

The Dean undertook in consultation with the Department to support the following changes:

- Immediate Term (6 months)
 - Strengthening the GIS curriculum, facilities, and supporting the faculty complement to better develop student knowledge and skills, and further develop excellence in the physical geography program
 - The Department has recently made a number of hires in physical geography and has identified as a priority a future hire in geomorphology.
 - Addressing entering student skills
 - The Dean's Office has increased academic staffing at the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC), including an additional lecturer in English language learning.
 - Examining enrolment growth impact
 - The Dean's Office has enhanced infrastructure to maintain quality in undergraduate and graduate programming.
 - The Department has made four hires in the past two years.
 - Enhancing access to student advising

- The Dean's Office has conducted an assessment of student counselling resources in the department and concluded that it is reasonably well served in relation to other departments.
- The Department will explore re-assigning duties within its staff complement to provide support to the undergraduate counsellor during peak periods.
- o Attending to laboratory facilities
 - The Dean's Office will investigate the possibility of the Department using the Rock Lab and will develop new wet lab teaching space for the department.
- o Further developing external relationships
 - The Dean's Office has created the position of community outreach coordinator to foster outreach and experiential linkages and will work to strengthen connections to alumni through UTM's Office of Advancement.
- o Conducting additional strategic planning
 - The Department held a retreat in May 2015 and identified priority areas for hiring as well as opportunities for research and excellence.
- Medium Term (1-2 years)
 - o Strengthening the GIS curriculum, facilities, and supporting the faculty complement to better develop student knowledge and skills, and further develop excellence in the physical geography program
 - The Department will develop a new second-year course that introduces students to the foundations of mapping and cartography. In addition, it will introduce an advanced statistics course at the third-year level. Both courses will train students in standard software.
 - The Dean's Office will explore additional research space opportunities and the addition of a new graduate stream in physical geography.
 - o Examining enrolment growth impact
 - The Dean's Office will continue to monitor administrative staffing levels in the department to ensure its needs are being met, including adequate support for its priority initiatives, such as experiential learning and writing improvement.

The Dean's Office will follow up annually with the unit to assess progress.

5 Executive Summary

The reviewers identified program strengths as outstanding teaching innovation, experiential learning, and learning assessment; high levels of student satisfaction; student interest and growth in enrolment in GIS programs; world-class research by human geographers; and positive internal and external relationships. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: GIS curriculum and facilities; entering student skills; impact of enrolment growth; access to student advising; laboratory facilities for physical geographers; further developing external relationships; and strategic planning for research clusters and faculty complement. The Department has recently made a number of hires in physical geography and has identified as a priority a future hire in geomorphology, and it will develop a new second-year course that introduces students to the foundations of mapping and cartography. The Dean's Office has increased the faculty complement and enhanced infrastructure to maintain quality in

undergraduate and graduate programming. The Dean's Office will explore additional research space opportunities and the addition of a new graduate stream in physical geography. The Dean's Office will continue to monitor administrative staffing levels in the department to ensure its needs are being met. The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations.