

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR June 2018 SENATE**

FOR INFORMATION

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN
UNIVERSITY'S
B.A. PROGRAM in GEOGRAPHY/GÉOGRAPHIE
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

In accordance with the Laurentian University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian's response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE B.A PROGRAM
in
GEOGRAPHY/GÉOGRAPHIE**

Geography courses have been offered at Laurentian University since its inception in 1960. In that year, the courses were only available in English and in the following year, French courses followed. Initially, only four were available, but this number expanded rapidly so by the mid 70's, when courses could be grouped into two specializations, physical geography and human geography.

Today the Geography program offers both a general three-year B.A. program and a specialized four-year B.A. program. Both programs are offered in English and French. In addition, students can pursue a three-year 'combined concentration' or a four-year 'combined specialization' which, in addition to the Program of Geography's stipulations, requires credits from another discipline. A Certificate in Applied Geography is also available¹ as is an Honours Diploma.²

Currently, there are two full-time faculty members (plus 5 sessionals) supporting the anglophone program and three full-time faculty members (plus 1 sessional) supporting the francophone program.

¹ To receive the certificate, the student must maintain an overall average of 70% and complete a specified number of courses (in either English or French) for a total of 30 credits.

² The Honours Diploma Program has been developed for three-year general B.A. graduates who wish to pursue further studies in Geography. Admission to the Honours Diploma Program requires the successful completion of a general B.A. in Geography, with at least a 70% overall average in Geography courses required for the general B.A.

Administratively, Geography has bounced around. For the first couple of years (1960-1962) it was housed in the Department of History; then, between 1962 and 1970, it existed in the Department of Geology. In 1971 Geography became a stand-alone Department and that lasted until 2010, when it was split in two—some members joining the new School of the Environment whilst the others, still offering the Geography program, amalgamated with the Anthropology and Labour Studies programs to form a new Department of Northern and Community Studies.

In February 2017, the program submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University.

The self-study, based on data from the 2016/2017 academic year, presented an overview of the program and then reviewed the program's faculty and staff resources, its physical resources, its students, and the program's regulations and courses. The self-study concluded with an overall assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses and noted its future objectives, including its desire to host a graduate program in the discipline. There were also seven Appendices: Appendix A – Geography Programs and Diploma and Certificate Options; Appendix B – Current Research Interest of Full-Time Geography Faculty; Appendix C – Geography Program Enrolments for Specialized Programs (Honours), General Programs (BA3) and Various Combined Specializations; Appendix D – Enrolment by Course (French and English); Appendix E – Learning Objectives for Geography Courses and Programs (A Work in Progress); Appendix F – [Suggested Reviewers] for the Program of Geography; Appendix G – Course Outlines; and finally, not listed as an Appendix, the Curriculum Vita of both full and part-time faculty.

On April 26-27, 2017, after reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The external was Dr. William Osei, a full professor and chair of the Department of Geography and Geology at Algoma University, and not incidentally, the inaugural winner of that university's Distinguished Faculty Award. In addition, the team consisted of two Laurentian professors, Dr. Hassan Bougrine (Economics) from within the Faculty of Art and from the Faculty Science, Engineering & Architecture, Dr. Youssou Gringue (Mathématiques et informatique). Finally, there were two students in the program, Mr. Ewen Craig, 4th year Student representative—Anglophone and M. Daniel Paquin, 2nd year—Student representative—Francophone.

The site visit was thorough and included the facilities available to the program—faculty offices, labs and classrooms, the map library as well as the Desmarais library. There was also a campus tour which included the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre and the medical school.

Stakeholders interviewed included senior members of the university administration, the university librarian, the library technician formerly employed full-time in the program, the Chair of the Department in which the program resides, faculty teaching in the program, both as a group and individually, and some students. The team noted that because the review was conducted after classes were over, there were not a lot of students around to interview, much less to see them in class or in their labs. That said, reviewers were also able to meet with some former students currently employed by the city's Planning Department.

In their report dated September 5, 2017, it was clear that the reviewers acknowledged various issues arising from the self-study but did not necessarily agree with all recommendations put forth in that study. The goal of their review, they said, was to write “with objectivity,

independence, and interest to advance an academic program. Hopefully, some of the issues raised will engage the attention of the [program] and the Dean.”

On the positive side, the reviewers noted that:

- The program is consistent with the university’s mission and strategic plan.
- The program requirements for Geography are similar to those of departments of Geography across the province of Ontario and Canada. A main exception is the bilingual status of Laurentian University that demands French language credits for undergraduate admission paths in French.
- While not all courses are available in French, francophone students have a wonderful opportunity to take required courses in English. This “bilingual opportunity helps prepare students better for post-graduate study, job placement, community relations, and community leadership.”
- The curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline. Even with limited faculty, core areas of the discipline are fully covered. In response to suggestions from the last review that the self-review document touched on, and on the recommendation of an earlier ACAPLAN, the program has restructured its course groupings into the three areas of Physical, Human, and Techniques, to follow the norm in the Ontario universities system.
- The program combines classroom knowledge and practical work, in the laboratory, and in the field, to promote experiential learning.
- The [program] is adopting, albeit modestly at this point, innovations to promote instructional quality in the classroom and beyond, GIS being an excellent example.
- The courses themselves are designed to promote depth of knowledge, student understanding, and student success. Furthermore, the courses elicit creativity, critical thinking, and ability to apply and disseminate knowledge. Samples of completed assignments, projects, and thesis documents show high quality of student work.
- Interviews with stakeholders of the review exercise indicated excellent academic satisfaction of graduates and current students.
- Graduates of the program seem well prepared for post-graduate education, the work force, and community service. The graduates are competitive.
- Students viewed faculty as knowledgeable, and receptive to their needs and concerns. The reviewers shared this assessment noting “The faculty is well qualified and experienced, and command student respect and confidence.”
- The faculty are all excellent teachers and researchers.

Amidst these encomiums, there were some concerns expressed about the program in the body of the report:

- Courses in the French language tend to suffer from not being offered one time or another for low enrolment or available qualified instructors or both.
- While the program enjoys some success in attracting students, at least compared to other programs in the Arts, overall enrolment is still a worry.
- The program is not making best use of technology to reach students who cannot enroll in classes taught on campus.
- The overall curriculum needs a review to ensure that courses are both available and attractive to potential students.
- The absence of a full-time technician is being felt by the program.

- Faculty feel “abandoned” and not all are comfortable in their new department nor with the dean who stage-managed the changes.

On November 7, 2017 the program submitted its comments on the Report. The program’s comments were followed by a set of comments the Dean of Arts on January 12, 2018.

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE PROGRAM’S (P) RESPONSES AND THOSE OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (D)

- R1: The [program] requires additional faculty to strengthen the program. This should begin with the Francophone side to help create immediate balance in equity of opportunity for students. As enrollment improves, considerations for other hires should be made.**
- P1:** Le programme de géographie est d'accord avec la recommandation 1. L'unité appuie entièrement cette recommandation et espère que l'Université la mettra en application sans un délai raisonnable.
- D1:** The program received a new tenure-track position in 2015-16. The School is relaunching the search for a Research Chair in Sustainable Northern Economic Development. The full-time teaching load available within the program is currently greater in French than in English. It is unlikely that additional positions will be approved in the short term. The program should make every effort to collaborate with faculty in other disciplines such as cultural anthropology, environmental studies, or economics.
- R2: Strategies for increasing student numbers are important. The [program] must work closely with departments of recruitment and student retention at Laurentian. [It] must seek special resources and help for school visits. [It] must work to sponsor High School events on campus such as during the Geography Awareness Week. Other events may include a Geography Bowl among schools in the local area with dedicated prizes and certificates of achievement. [It] must develop [its] own promotional information for the [program]/university website for wider reach. The Ontario Universities Fair is another opportunity. Any other suitable and flexible strategies must be developed. Some of these strategies may have been tried before but there is no harm in trying again.**
- P2:** Le programme de géographie est d'accord avec la recommandation et espère travailler dans un futur proche en concertation avec Liaison et autres structures de recrutement.
- D2 :** The program is encouraged to participate actively in recruitment events organized by Liaison.
- R3: The [program] must infuse technology options and teaching modules in the programme to appeal to students who want university education but cannot be in a classroom or a university campus for given lengths of time.**
- P3:** Le programme de géographie est totalement ouvert à l'utilisation de nouvelle technologie pour l'enseignement des cours. L'unité fera le nécessaire d'approcher les services

techniques ayant l'expertise pour une discussion et voir comment cela peut se réaliser concrètement.

- D3 :** The program is encouraged to work with Laurentian Online to create online courses. Sessional faculty could be hired to develop on line courses for the program.
- R4: The [program] must re-evaluate its courses and begin to place emphasis on those with potential for attracting high student numbers. This may involve the design of some new courses and banking of some old courses.**
- P4:** Le programme de géographie est d'accord avec la recommandation. L'unité va faire le nécessaire pour actualiser certains cours afin de les rendre attractifs et ce, en conformité avec les exigences académiques du programme de baccalauréat en géographie.
- D4 :** The program is encouraged to design new courses that will serve students from both Geography and other disciplines such as Economics, Earth Science, Environmental Studies or Archaeology.
- R5: The [program] must consider using online courses to expand offerings.**
- P5:** Les membres de l'unité n'ont pas une expertise dans l'enseignement en ligne. Cette recommandation va être étudiée plus en profondeur par l'unité et aura besoin, si nécessaire, d'une expertise externe pour sa mise en application.
- D5 :** Sessional faculty could be hired to develop online courses for the program. Careful consideration should be given to making use of existing online courses in GEOL, ARCL and STAT. For example, a concentration in Geology and Geographic Techniques could be launched if a minimum of 12 credits of GEOG courses were developed.
- R6: The [program] must work closely with other [programs] for cross-listing of courses.**
- P6:** Le programme de géographie fait déjà du cross-listing avec d'autres départements et programmes.
- D6 :** There are many opportunities for collaboration with other programs. Collaboration could involve cross-listing courses or adding courses from other programs to the approved list of electives. There are also opportunities for co-teaching with members of other programs.
- R7: The [program] must consider expanding offerings in such areas as Geomatics. Several [programs] will find this important for their students. For example, Geology, Earth Science, Public Health, and Emergency Services, are some areas that will benefit from some Geomatics courses.**
- P7:** Le programme de géographie est totalement d'accord avec cette recommandation et l'appuie fortement. L'unité espère avoir le soutien de l'administration pour la réalisation de cette recommandation. L'appui à la mise en place d'un Laboratoire de télédétection sera un signal très fort dans cette direction.

- D7 :** As the reviewer noted in Recommendation 11, Ontario universities are moving away from the old system of designating computer labs for use by a single program. At Laurentian, IT is fully responsible for the computer lab used by the Geography program. Courses in geographic techniques attract a wide range of students. The needs of other programs should be considered in developing such courses.
- R8: The [program] must [seize] opportunities to work closely within the School of Northern and Community Studies (SNCS) system for course development, course offerings, and research.**
- P8:** Le programme de géographie est partie intégrante du SNCS/ EENC et s'inscrit dans le cadre global défini par l'école dans le domaine de l'enseignement et la recherche.
- D8 :** Laurentian no longer has a Department of Geography. The geography program has joined the School of Northern and Community Studies (SNCS) which also houses programs in Anthropology and Labour Studies. Over time, there will be synergies among the three programs.
- R9: The question of the technician underlies some of the uncertainties in the [program]. The [program] must re-examine positions and work to resolve the issue. Should this issue tear the [program] apart and continue to foster conflict with others?**
- P9:** Tous les départements de géographie à travers le Canada, sauf exception, ont au moins un technicien. Le fait que l'unité n'a pas de technicien crée, effectivement, une incertitude sur la qualité de l'enseignement, la formation des étudiants et sur la recherche.
- D9:** The decision to restructure the former Department of Geography was made in 2009-10 and implemented by the current Dean during the first month of her appointment in August 2010. Some members joined what would become the School of the Environment while others joined the School of Northern and Community Studies. The technician position was transferred to the Library in order to centralize GIS services, an administrative decision upheld by an arbitrator several years ago. Print maps previously housed in the Department were moved to the Library (although technological changes are making them obsolete). Maps discarded by the University Librarian have been kept by the program. IT has taken over responsibility for the computer lab. Some of the courses that previously required support are no longer offered through Environmental Studies in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Architecture. The former technician continues to provide some support through an agreement with the Library.
- R10: Following up with [recommendation] 9, the Dean may work to accommodate some of the needs of the [program] by increasing the hours of the technician for services in the [program]. This approach may be incremental, i.e. from current hours to 50% of work hours etc. It is clear that some of the services that the technician offered in the past are no longer available.**
- P10:** Le programme de géographie est entièrement d'accord avec cette recommandation. L'unité l'appuie totalement et attend voir la bonne volonté de la doyenne sur ce dossier.

D10: Various alternatives have been proposed and remain possibilities. One option is to make use of GTAs from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Architecture. Only the new hire has taken advantage of this. In the Sciences, programs supported by technicians have lab hours attached to specific courses for which students pay additional fees. The geography program could formally revise the curriculum by adding a lab to particular courses. Similarly, students in programs that offer excursions are required to pay activity fees. The geography program could seek approval for activity fees to cover its excursions. It could also free up some of the School's own budget by placing course materials on D2L instead of photocopying.

R11: **The [program] must move to consider the issue of the computer lab. There are many advantages for downloading the operation of the lab to Computer Services. They have higher budgets for software and hardware. They pay to renew and upgrade software, and they have personnel and expertise for maintenance and coordination. Departments across Ontario are moving towards that option.**

P11: Le programme de géographie est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

D11 : For the past few years, IT has taken responsibility for the computer lab used by the geography program. As noted by the reviewer, the fact that the lab is shared by students from other programs is not an issue for geography students.

R12: **The [program] must move to work closely with the Dean of Arts. This is important for better relationships and for the [program]'s progress.**

P12: Le programme de géographie est entièrement d'accord avec cette recommandation. L'unité est disposée, comme cela a toujours été le cas, à travailler avec la doyenne et tout administrateur et ce, dans l'intérêt supérieur du programme de géographie et des étudiants et étudiantes.

D12 : Since the changes to the former Department of Geography in 2010, there have been new developments at Laurentian including the establishment of the School of Mines. The proposed program in Global and International Studies will be of interest to the geography program.

In conclusion, the program commented « Le programme de géographie espère vivement que, cette fois-ci, l'administration va mettre en application les recommandations de l'évaluateur externe. En effet, les recommandations des deux dernières évaluations du programme de géographie n'ont jamais été mises en application par l'administration. » In response, the Dean noted « The geography program has many opportunities to move forward. »

ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN endorses the recommendations of the Review Team although since Recommendations 8, 11 and 12 appear to have been accepted without question, ACAPLAN will not include these in its list:

R8: The [program] must [seize] opportunities to work closely within the School of Northern and Community Studies (SNCS) system for course development, course offerings, and research.

R11: The [program] must move to consider the issue of the computer lab. There are many advantages for downloading the operation of the lab to Computer Services. They have higher budgets for software and hardware. They pay to renew and upgrade software, and they have personnel and expertise for maintenance and coordination. Departments across Ontario are moving towards that option.

R12: The [program] must move to work closely with the Dean of Arts. This is important for better relationships and for the [program]'s progress.

The general direction of ACAPLAN's recommendations is as follows: use various strategies to increase enrolment and *then* discuss restoring the technician as full-time, as well hiring more full-time faculty, starting with one who is bilingual who could support both sides of the program.

As far as the technician is concerned, the incumbent, who is paid as a full-time technician works in the library except for about 2 hours on Friday afternoons when he is assigned to the program. At other times, students are expected to drop by the library to see him. The intent of ACAPLAN's recommendation is to substantially increase his presence in the program so that students will know him and where to find him.³

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE BA
PROGRAM
In
GEOGRAPHY**

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline
1. Strive to recruit more students in program.	Work closely with liaison office, seeking special resources and help for school visits. Try to sponsor High School events on campus such as during the Geography Awareness Week Review and try to improve current promotion material	Program Head with some resources supplied by Dean	December 2018 and ongoing
2. Recruit more francophone	i. Level tuition fees for international	Associate VP Academic and	December 2018 and ongoing

³ Most other Canadian geography programs have one or more full-time technicians. For example, Nipissing, with 10 faculty in the Geography program have 3; Lakehead with 7 faculty, have 2.

<p>students...and women</p>	<p>francophone students</p> <p>ii. The Liaison office needs to establish a clear strategy involving faculty which is focused on recruiting francophone students from Africa.</p> <p>iii. Develop program-specific strategy to ensure Liaison officers travelling abroad promote individual programs rather than the overall Laurentian experience</p>	<p>francophone Affairs</p> <p>Chair and Executive Director, Student Life & Enrolment Management</p>	
<p>3. Infuse technology options and teaching modules in the programme to appeal to students who want university education but cannot be in a classroom or a university campus for given lengths of time</p>	<p>Develop a three-year Concentration in Geography and give careful consideration to making use of existing online courses in GEOL, ARCL and STAT. As a start, a concentration in Geology and Geographic Techniques could be launched if a minimum of 12 credits of GEOG courses were developed.</p>	<p>Program Head with Laurentian Online along with qualified sessional hires whose salaries are covered by the Dean</p>	<p>December 2018 and ongoing</p>
<p>4. Re-evaluate existing courses emphasizing those with potential for attracting high student numbers. This may involve the design of some new courses and banking of some old courses</p>	<p>Program retreat on this subject, focusing on identifying courses that support the four major areas of Geography: human, physical, regional, and techniques</p> <p>* that could be banked * that could serve not only Geography but</p>	<p>Program Head</p>	<p>December 2018</p>

	<p>other disciplines such as Economics, Earth Science, Environmental Studies or Archaeology.</p> <p>An excellent area to focus initially would be courses in GIS</p>		
5. Explore new collaborations with other [program]s	<p>Collaboration could involve cross-listing courses or adding courses from other programs to the approved list of electives. There are also opportunities for co-teaching with members of other programs.</p>	Program Head in consultation with Dean	December 2018 and ongoing
6. Increase the hours of the technician for services in the [program]. This approach may be incremental, i.e. from current hours to 50% of work hours etc. It is clear that some of the services that the technician offered in the past are no longer available⁴	<p>Schedule technician to introduce himself in all first-year courses as well as more senior-level other courses identified by faculty.</p> <p>Technician may also support professors in class who are teaching such courses as cartography, map reading, photo interpretation, applied cartography, remote sensing, urban planning, field trips, applied geomorphology, etc.</p>	Program Head and University Librarian	September 2018

⁴ The technician used to be involved in recruiting students from area high schools; he also used to run labs in Remote Sensing, Air Photo Interpretation, Cartography, Introduction to GIS, Geomorphology, Applied Geomorphology, all still taught as courses. He also used to plan and run field trips and maintain contact with graduates. Currently he does not offer advice to students doing independent studies or undergraduate theses but this function could be revived with little extra effort.

	Program Head should require all students doing independent studies and theses to see technician before they begin		
7. The [program] requires additional faculty to strengthen the program. This should begin with a bilingual faculty member who could support both anglophone and francophone streams. As enrollment improves, considerations for other hires should be made.	Place request on faculty's wish list	Dean	Ongoing until enrolment can justify additional faculty member

The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean's Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University's web site.

CONCLUSION

The B.A program in Geography/Géographie is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2025.