

**Ministry of Education**

**Identified Competency Focus Areas and Core Courses for Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions’ Exit Examination**

**Program: - BA in Geography and Environmental Studies**

**Prepared by:**

**Gebremaryam Araya/ Hawassa University/**

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Acknowledgement

The time to identify the graduate profile, competencies and learning outcomes was very short. However, since the BA program curriculum which was recently prepare by Dilla University is well organized, I directly copied the background, vision, mission, value, professional profile, graduate profile, competencies and learning outcomes from the curriculum.

Hence, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to staffs of Dilla University department of Geography and Environmental Studies who prepared the harmonized BA curriculum of Geography and Environmental Studies.

Contents Page

Acknowledgements…………………………………………………………………………….……….i

[1. Introduction 4](#_Toc109117771)

[1.1. Brief Nature of the Program and Related Challenges 4](#_Toc109117772)

[1.2. Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals of the Program 6](#_Toc109117773)

[1.2.1. Vision of the Program 6](#_Toc109117774)

[1.2.2. Mission 6](#_Toc109117775)

[1.2.3. Values 7](#_Toc109117776)

[1.2.4. Goals 7](#_Toc109117777)

[2. Expected Professional and Graduate Profiles 8](#_Toc109117778)

[2.1 Professional Profile 8](#_Toc109117779)

[2.2. Graduate Profile 8](#_Toc109117780)

3. Competencies and Learning Outcome……………………………………………………………….9

4. Expected Competencies and Courses to be included in the Exam………………………………..…10

5. Conclusion and Recommendation……………….……………………………………………….…12

[5.1. Conclusion 12](#_Toc109117781)

[5.2. Recommendations 12](#_Toc109117782)

# Introduction

## Brief Nature of the Program and Related Challenges

Geography has been broadly accepted as a bridge discipline between human and physical sciences. In the beginning, Geography focused on the physical aspects of the earth, however, modern Geography is an all- encompassing discipline that seeks to understand the earth and all of its human and natural processes as integrating elements. Geography has emerged through time as a trans-disciplinary subject integrating the regional diversity with the concepts of the timing of space and the spacing of time.

Attributed to advancement of technology and newly emerging issues in the field of geography, the program is becoming wider in scope. Geography as a field of study is composed of two main branches: Human Geography and Physical Geography. Apart from the two main branches, it is also composed of technical/skill based courses, which include Geo-information sciences, Cartography, Map Reading, and Surveying.

Environmental issues such as climate change; desertification & global warming, and environmental degradation are important issues of these days. Globalization in its environmental, cultural and economic perspectives is a recent and important development. As stated above, Geography is concerned with the spatial dimension of Geographic Phenomena and interconnection of humans and environment. Studying Geography is nurturing sensitivity for our neighbors, society and the world. It also enables us to understand the spatial pattern, to adopt and manipulate physical environment with wise decisions and to solve geographical problems in daily lives.

Geographic knowledge and skills help in developing our economy, to use resources more efficiently and keep the environment in good shape. Geography not only mediated between natural or physical sciences and biosciences on one hand and the social sciences on the other but also bridged and synthesized their mutual common broad spectrum underpinning through its core thrust on man - environment relationships, which naturally integrate them all. However, as a science, Geography is relatively young and many of its fundamentals appear during the nineteenth century.

In Ethiopia, the teaching of Geography at the tertiary level started in 1950 at the then University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA). By then, Geography was offered as an important field of study to students from social sciences stream. Since 1958, the department of Geography, now renamed Department of Geography and Environmental Studies as of 2002, has been offering the program in different public universities leading to the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Geography and Environmental Studies. Nowadays, the program is given in almost all of the public Universities in Ethiopia and it is one of popular program, which is most preferred by most undergraduate students from both social as well as natural science streams. Hence, hundreds to thousands of graduates has been joined to the market. However, as many stakeholders agree, the quality of education and graduates’ competency level is below the requirement (Eyob *etal.*, 2022). According to the same source, one potential way to enhance educational achievement and quality of education is offering exit exams. As Hilal El-Hassan, *etal.* (2021) stated, curriculum-based national exit exams play a crucial role in program assessment and measuring student achievement of program learning outcomes. According to the same source, these examinations are thought to have significant effects on how teachers teach and how students study. Hence, considering its role in assuring educational quality, currently the Ministry of Education is in position to introduce national exit exam on selected programs. Geography and Environmental Studies is one of the selected programs to have an exit exam in the coming year (2015 E.C). For this purpose, the Ministry of Education has selected two Universities (Addis Abeba University and Hawassa University) and organized a half day orientation at Bishoftu on July 18, 2022. The main focus of the orientation was about the preparations, procedures and administration of the national exit exam. The orientation was given by Mr. Seid Mohammed and his colleagues from the Ministry of Education. Initially, he presented a power point document focusing on the nature of exit exam, its aim, expected benefits and challenges of the intended exit exam. In addition to this, he stated the criteria to select programs and Universities which invited to the workshop. According to him, two individuals from two different Universities were invited to identify focus areas and select courses to be included in the exit exam. According to him, the two participants in each program were expected to prepare an initial document for the national exit exam focusing on focus area and course identification. As stated by Mr. Seid, the program courses to be included in the exit exam are ranged from 10-15 courses only and the exit exam will be given twice a year. According to him, the exit exam is an exam in which a student is required to pass in order to complete a course of study; and it is supposed to measure the learning outputs of a program as a whole not the individual courses. Students who may failed, will have the chance to take the exit exam repeatedly until they will score a pass mark that is 50% of the exam. According to him, since including all courses in the exam is difficult to administer, it is recommended to identify focus areas and core courses from the recently revised harmonized curriculum. As he presented, the courses which will be selected should be organized based on the three learning domains. Therefore, this draft document was prepared based on the orientation and direction given by the presenter. Though it is vital to produce such a document in a team work, unfortunately this draft document was prepared by a single individual from Hawassa University department of Geography and Environmental Studies. Hence, all actors are expected to contribute their lion’s share in enhancing this document.

## Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals of the Program

As mentioned before, the program level national exit exam is directly in line with the curriculum. Hence, the vision, mission, graduate profile and competencies are taken from the revised harmonized curriculum.

### 1.2.1. Vision of the Program

The vision of the Ethiopian government in the area of education in higher institution is to attain quality education and training system which assures at producing competent citizens. In line with this, the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies is to be a center of academic excellence in the field of Geography and Environmental Studies through innovative teaching of recent perspective of Geography and enhance awareness of the earth as a living planet with reference to human-environment interaction and resulting physical and human phenomena and their spatial variation amongst students of the discipline and allied sciences.

### 1.2.2. Mission

The missions of the program are:

* + - Implementation of the New Education and training Policy of the Country which demands academically qualified professional for the undergraduate educational program.
    - Producing academically qualified experts who can work research and community based activity on geographically diverse areas of the country.
    - Expanding the geographic research horizons and to effectively integrate it with the national planning and development;
    - Implementation of Ethiopia’s short and long socio-economic development plans by producing the necessary skilled manpower in both quality and quantity for the country’s development.
    - Enhancing the quality of geographical education for broader applications and its implementation for the resolution of human problems;

### 1.2.3. Values

The program has the following values:

* + - **Excellence in Education** – Offer a rigorous, high-quality education to all students and make a continuous and concerted effort to develop its academic and research programs to the center of excellence.
    - **Quality-** Exert a continuous effort to deliver highest standard academic and community services.
    - **Student Success** – Place learner needs at the center of our academic service programs
    - **Diversity** – Achieve multicultural understanding as a priority of educational and civic life
    - **Integrity** – Operate with fairness, honesty, and the highest ethical standards to sustain a student and community of trust in its academic and public services.
    - **Relevance-** Give a considerable attention to make sure that all academic and research activities are oriented to meet the needs of all stakeholders in particular and the development of the society in general.
    - **Innovation- S**trives to advance innovativeness among the academic community and students.
    - **Democracy and transparency- P**romotes principles of democratic values and transparency in its academic and administrative systems.
    - **Academic freedom-** the programme adheres to principles of academic freedom in an effort to advance academic wisdom and create an environment for free discussion and dissemination of ideas and research findings.
    - **Participatory-** the programme encourages and creates a system for the active involvement of all stakeholders in all its undertakings and decision-makings.
    - **Equity**- the programme promotes; affirmative action to encourage female participation both students and staff. social inclusiveness to disabled students, staff and community members social justice to initially disadvantaged regions and ethnic groups
    - **Accountability-** the programme promotes accountability at individual and institutional levels with full answerability to the public and the University community.

### 1.2.4. Goals

The program:

* + - Impart current knowledge and practical skills to Geography graduates through theory, practices and field exercises;
    - Prepare qualified professionals who engage in local, national, and global issues;
    - Provide relevant, up-to-date, and integrated theoretical and practical skills that can be applied to solving community issues and problems;
    - Integrate the curriculum with marketplace and societal needs and to prepare students for careers in the public and private sectors or for advanced graduate study;
    - Provide optimum community service;
    - Conducts high quality research on relevant issues;
    - Conducts high quality professional training; and
    - Instill in students ethical and moral values related to citizenship and community.

## **2. Expected Professional and Graduate** Profile

## 2. Professional Profile

The graduates of this program are expected to have the following professional profiles:

* Design and implement socio-economic development policy
* Advise and implement on environmental and development related issues in government, community based institutions, commercial enterprises and non-government organizations;
* Work as self-employed in various areas of development endeavors;
* Manage natural resources and participate in land rehabilitation
* Plan in various transport facilities
* Solve problems related to climate and environmental hazards
* Consult on livelihood and food security issue
* Make and interpret maps, aerial photos and satellite imageries
* Provide geo-spatial analysis service
* Interpret the link between environment, development and population dynamics;
* Provide consultancy service in solving resource based and boundary conflicts;
* Analyze rural-urban linkages.

1. **Expected profile of graduates**

The curriculum of the department is designed with the view that graduates who complete their education from the department shall be able to:-

* + - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of spatio-temporal distributions in both physical and human phenomena, and use geographic and environment perspectives to evaluate, make decisions about, and report on issues, processes, and events
    - Identify, collect and compile information through archives, field survey; aerial photographs and remotely sensed data to alleviate spatio-temporal problems of physical & human environment and develop potentialities,
    - Use different theories and models to understand and explain spatio-temporal processes, trends and patterns related to human and physical environment; and actively participate in food security and livelihood related research undertakings
    - Apply modern tools and techniques like GIS, surveying and remote sensing to generate, organize, and analyses Geo-data for Spatial Decision Support system and sustainable development
    - Conduct researches, which are beneficial to society and present the result of their findings in clear and coherent manner;
    - Appreciate the natural environment, work on resources and environmental degradation, pollution and population explosion, which are global issues of today’s
    - Involve as an expert in terrain analysis, land use planning and administration
    - Have basic understanding on fundamental national issues and sustainable development.

1. Competencies and Learning Outcome

The program aims to provide undergraduate students with both subject-specific knowledge and general skills. It aims:

1. To produce all rounded professionals capable of
   * Understanding the facts and patterns of Spatio-temporal processes and possibilities of human and physical phenomena and their interactions
   * Identifying and solving Spatio-temporal problems of the physical and human environment
   * Comprehending the risks, potentials, and prospects of the country’s environment in isolation as well as in global perspective
   * Generating, analyzing, and presenting Spatio-temporal data of physical and human environment using different scientific procedures, models, tools, and techniques
   * Demonstrating confidence and conviction that enable them to become positive role models to society, committed to change and development
2. Participating in community development by:
   * Providing various kinds of professional trainings to the community
   * Awakening the general public of environmental problems, their causes, consequences and mobilize the public for positive actions
   * Providing professional consultancy services with a view to accelerate environmental, social and economic developments
3. Conduct research in different areas (environment, development, society, economy, etc.,) that would help in solving societies’ problems and disseminate results thereof.
4. Establish a system and culture of provision of continuous training, consultancy services and conducting research
5. Enhance customer satisfaction with departmental services by devising sound system.
6. Expected Competencies and Courses to be included in the Exam

As mentioned in the introduction part, Geography and Environmental Studies is an interdisciplinary which has more thirty core courses. Since the exit exam will consisted of a maximum of 15 courses, it is challenging to identify and select it from this broad discipline. With this challenge and subjectivity the following courses are selected and categorized on the major branches of the field. As stated before, this an initial draft document which will be enriched by all actors.

Table 1: Association among Expected Competencies and Course to be Included in the Exam

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Competencies Correlated with**   **Theme One** | | | **Theme One:**  **Physical Geography Courses** | | | |
| **No** | **Number of Courses to be Included for Exit Exam** | | **Learning Domain** |
| 1 | To produce all rounded professionals capable of:   * Understanding the facts and patterns of Spatio-temporal processes and possibilities of human and physical phenomena and their interactions * Comprehending the risks, potentials, and prospects of the country’s environment in isolation as well as in global perspective | | 1 | Climatology (Basic and Applied) | | **Cognitive** |
| 2 | Geomorphology | | **Cognitive and Affective** |
| 2 | * Involve as an expert in terrain analysis, land use planning and administration | | 3 | Terrain Analysis, Land Use  Planning and Administration | | **Both Cognitive, Affective & Psychomotor** |
| 3 | Participating in resource management and community development by:   * Providing various kinds of professional trainings to the community * Identifying and solving Spatio-temporal problems of the physical and human environment * Awakening the general public of environmental problems, their causes, consequences and mobilize the public for positive actions | | 4 | Geography of Natural Resources  Analysis & Management | | **Both Cognitive, Affective & Psychomotor** |
| **B. Competencies Correlated with**  **Theme Two** | | | **Theme Two:**  **Human Geography Courses** | | | |
| **No** | **Number of Courses to be**  **Included for Exit Exam** | | **Learning Domain** |
| 1 | | * Providing professional consultancy services with a view to accelerate environmental, social and economic developments | 1 | Geography of Transport and  Development | | **Both Cognitive and Affective** |
|  | | 2 | Environmental Policy, Ethics and  Governance | | **Affective** |
|  | | * Establish a system and culture of provision of continuous training, consultancy services and conducting research * Have basic understanding on socio-cultural dynamism and appreciate diversity | 3 | Geography of Population and  Settlement | | **Both Affective and Cognitive** |
| 4 | Cultural and Social Geography | | **Both Affective and Cognitive** |
| 2 | | * Have basic understanding on fundamental national and regional issues | 5 | Urban and Regional Planning | | **Both Affective and Cognitive** |
| 3 | | * Use different theories and models to understand and explain spatio-temporal processes, trends and patterns related to human and physical environment; and actively participate in livelihood related research undertakings | 6 | Livelihood and Economic Geography | | **Both Cognitive and Affective** |
| **C. Competencies Correlated with**  **Theme Three** | | | **Theme Three:**  **Technical Courses** | | | |
| **No** | **Number of Courses to be**  **Included for Exit Exam** | **Learning Domain** | |
| 1 | | * Generating, analyzing, and presenting Spatio-temporal data of physical and human environment using different scientific procedures, models, tools, and techniques | 1 | Quantitative Techniques & Spatial  Analysis | **Psychomotor** | |
| 2 | Cartography and Map Reading | Both Cognitive and **Psychomotor** | |
| 3 | Applied GIS and Surveying | Both Cognitive and **Psychomotor** | |
| 2 | | * Conduct research in different areas (environment, development, society, economy, etc.,) that would help in solving societies’ problems and disseminate results thereof. | 4 | Research Methods in GeES | Both Cognitive and **Psychomotor** | |
| 3 | | * Demonstrating environmental impacts of projects and introducing balancing mechanism that enable them to become positive role models to society, committed to change and have the skill to balance the economic and ecological issues | 5 | Project Design and Impact  Assessment | Cognitive, Affective & **Psychomotor** | |

1. **Conclusion**

As a tool, national exit exam is expected to assure quality education. Hence, based on the direction given by the MoE, fifteen courses are selected to include in the exit exam. These courses are thematically categorized in to three major branches: courses related with Physical Geography, Human Geography course and Technical courses. As it was stated, the national exit exam will be mandatory for graduating students on campus in their terminal semester of the program. Though it is considered as a tool for educational quality assurance, there are several challenges in implementing it. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to select the courses and to identify their related learning domains. In addition to this, it is obvious that testing and evaluating the skill domain will be challenging. As it was stated, the content of the exam is expected to be objective which is difficult to evaluate students’ technical skill. Beyond this, since the exam is going to implement for the first time, students may not be ready psychologically.

## 

## 5.2. Recommendations

* Since this document is an initial draft, all actors should play their role
* Professionals from HEIs should actively participate in enhancing the quality of the document involving other actors
* Before taking the exit exam, students should be first given an awareness creation orientation
* Content of the exam should be included both objective and technical/subjective areas.