

Report on the Status of the Implementation Plan

(date and link)

Geography program 18 month status report

DUE: November 2025

DATE SUBMITTED: 05 11 2025

PREPARED FOR:

Vice President, Academic and Research
Algoma University Quality Assurance Committee

PREPARED BY:

[Dr. Nairne Cameron, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography, Geology and Land Stewardship & Dr. Paulette Steeves, Professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Healing and Reconciliation, Faculty Member, Department of Geography, Geology and Land Stewardship.]

1.0 ACTION

IQAP Article 3.6

- Step 19: 18 month status report (p. 38)
The department will prepare a report on the status of the Implementation Plan 18 months following the Senate's approval of the FAR. The CAO or designate will monitor the completion of the status report. The Department will submit the status report to the Office of the CAO who will then submit it to QualCom for review. QualCom may request additional information or action from the Department
- Step 20: Senate approval of 18 month status report:
When QualCom is satisfied with the 18-Month Status Report, QualCom will forward a recommendation to the Senate for approval of the report.

IQAP Article 3.7.1 (p. 39)

- The Office of the CAO will post the approved 18 month status report to the university website. The Office of the CAO will forward the Senate-approved 18 month status report to the Board of Governors for information.

2.0 PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Briefly describe the status of each recommendation. If the status is incomplete, provide a rationale. Please provide the rationale if there were any alterations to the original Implementation Plan.

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| Recommendation 1 | Consider streamlining the number of offerings to clarify pathways for students and focus on program strengths. While it is understood that the large number of courses is intended to keep options open for the future |
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| | recruitment of faculty, the program should focus on strengths and create a clear path for students (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <i>We are in the process of finalizing program modifications. A new program flow will be advanced and the domains of Geography, Geology, and Land Stewardship are being more closely integrated. Selected Geography courses are evolving to Geology coded courses. Greater emphasis is being placed on the STEM orientation of the programming consistent with a newly introduced STEM CIP coding. Changes have already been made to the Geomatics Certificate including computer science options to provide more depth for students as well as to offer sufficient credits within a 12-18 month period.</i> |
| Recommendation 2 | Streamline the program offerings to build on its strengths (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <i>We are developing an updated program flow to emphasize the strengths of both the three-year and four-year programs.</i> |
| Recommendation 3 | Determine and utilize appropriate resources (academic, financial, and external) to assist the Department in continuing to do what the program is doing well |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <i>The CIP codes for the Honours Geography program and Geomatics certificate were revised to a STEM CIP code in June-July 2025. Marketing has been contacted and the Department has requested that these revised codes be displayed on the website or in promotional materials. The Department utilized a portion of the \$5,000 annual budget in 2024/2025 to acquire a canoe which will be used for field research and excursions. A full-time faculty hire was approved in 2023 and the Department is awaiting the lifting of the hiring freeze for this hire to proceed, as one former faculty member retired and was not replaced, and a second former department member transferred to another academic unit and also has not yet been replaced.</i> |

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| Recommendation 4 | <p>To address the concerns associated with a relatively low number of majors, the university will engage with marketing and recruitment professionals to create unique and tailored approaches for the program. The university will engage in an in-depth analysis of actions that must be taken. The university will explore a creative re-branding/ re-imaging of the program to fit with the future of AlgomaU. It is anticipated that these changes will be uncomfortable for the program but are needed to ensure that the program remains healthy and viable (page 11, External Reviewers' Report).</p> <p>This work will be guided by and align with the Fall 2023 brochure (attachment No. 2), existing ethical swag items, and postcard mail-out plans, and use the database of First Nations Indigenous communities that was developed in Fall 2023.</p> |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <p><i>The Department attended the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA) Gathering in Halifax in October 2025 and participated with a display table with marketing materials. A press release was circulated following the event honouring the Algoma Level 1 students who graduated as certified land managers. Our Department of Geography, Geology and Land Stewardship was the only academic program that participated in the Anishinaabe Open House in June 2025. In September 2025, a meeting with Recruitment took place to plan steps for Fall 2026 recruitment. The Department already has a full-colour mutli-page brochure, banner, tablecloth, two sizes of postcards, and has designed and sourced ethically sensitive bookmarks and pencils. A video showcasing the program has been planned during October 2025 and some initial film footage has been captured.</i></p> |
| Recommendation 5 | Bring back the Lands Symposium for 2023 (page 12, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>Complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <p><i>A Water Stewardship Mini-Conference was held virtually in 2023 and 2025, and another such mini-conference is anticipated every two years as part of the GEOG 3196 Water Stewardship in a Spatial Context course. Initial plans have been made for a one-day Lands Symposium in May 2027, pending institutional support.</i></p> |
| Recommendation 6 | Continue to highlight and give recognition to NALMA Certificate (critically important partnership) (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>Complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <p><i>The NALMA partnership does not directly involve a certificate, but rather a group of 6 courses entitled "Level 1 Professional Lands Management</i></p> |

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| | <i>Certification Program”. Students can complete four additional GEOG coded courses if they so choose to achieve the Aki and Environmental Stewardship Certificate. The partnership is highlighted on the Algoma University website, in the departmental brochure, in an October Algoma University press release, and on several marketing materials.</i> |
| Recommendation 7 | Build on the strengths of the program: Indigenous-led, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary teachings and research. This may take the program away from a traditional Geography program but it would be an exciting opportunity to create a new program that opens students’ eyes to new learnings. Increasingly, other universities are moving away from traditional faculties/departments and offering a wider and more creative range of degrees/certificates. This will aid employers/future students in understanding the value of these creative offerings, (page 11, External Reviewers’ Report) |
| Status: | <i>In progress, complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <i>In partnership with the Anishinaabe Initiatives Division, the Department established one of Algoma University’s few Indigenous partnerships at a national level and has sustained it for over five years. With the introduced land management lens, the program has already evolved substantially from a mainstream Geography program. We are planning to enhance the first year of the program by including foundational English, Math, and Anishinaabe courses. We will be including Geology courses within the Geography degrees, as part of our interdisciplinary integration. We are also proposing to further decolonize our courses, for example merging the Geography of Canada with the Geography of the United States course, to adopt a more holistic approach to studying the Geography of North America. A few new courses will be advanced for approval. An Aviation coded drone course will be recommended for Geography students so they can prepare for the advanced commercial drone operator certification.</i> |
| Recommendation 8 | Review course names/titles to ensure alignment with program strengths (page 11, External Reviewers’ Report). This would be in addition to the notable work that the Department has already done to align the program with the Land Stewardship theme |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <i>Many of the course titles have been updated in previous years, but all are being revisited. For transfer credits and knowledge for other institutions, some more commonly recognizable names may need to be retained, or dual names introduced during a transition phase. These changes will be advanced as part of the program modifications.</i> |
| Recommendation 9 | Continue to expand connections with the Community Advisory Circle and expand the range of projects/ research areas (page 11, External Reviewers’ Report) |

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| Status: | Complete and ongoing. |
| Details: | <p><i>The range of project and research areas is dependent on the full-time faculty complement (two full-time faculty). The most recent Community Advisory Circle meeting was held in October 2025. The Advisory will continue to be engaged.</i></p> <p><i>Faculty members in the Department have been involved long term (10+ years) with the People's Garden on campus, collaborating with students, faculty, community members and the Algoma University Student Union (AUSU). The Lake Superior Living Labs funded SSHRC Partnership Development grant (now completed) connected some activities collaboratively with the People's Garden, and helped to facilitate the new movable raised garden beds. The Department members were also part of a team that submitted a grant for a growing and teaching area on the Sault Ste. Marie campus.</i></p> |
| Recommendation 10 | Expand on "capstone" project (perhaps rename from Honours Thesis) to attract students interested in conducting research/ working with Dr. Steeves (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | In progress. |
| Details: | <i>This is still being considered, noting that the word "thesis" is a standard recognized by other institutions.</i> |
| Recommendation 11 | Find opportunities to maintain the relevancy of the program by drawing on strengths and creating opportunities for students. Recognize that "job readiness" is a selling feature for AlgomaU, but so is "life readiness" and preparing students for a new world where Indigenous perspectives and knowledges are the most powerful pathway (page 11, External Reviewers' Report). The Department is encouraged to continue exploring work integrated student experiences, continue collaboration for practicums and PLMCP programming. |
| Status: | Complete and ongoing. |
| Details: | <i>Recent students have had practicums with the Sault Ste. Marie Museum and the Island Geomatics project. The partnership with NALMA continues. The possibility of properly supervised practicums will be discussed with the Community Advisory Circle and NALMA.</i> |
| Recommendation 12 | Engage constructively with Environment Science to find synergies that will help build greater depth to the program, raise enrolments, and enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration, without compromising the significant Indigenization efforts already made to the program offerings (page 12, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | Complete and ongoing. |

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| Details: | <i>The Geography program was a founding contributor to the Environmental Science program and a Geography faculty member taught the Introduction to Environmental Science course when the program was first launched. In addition to the many GEOG coded courses already shared with the Environmental Science program, just recently we have developed a new Special Topics course to support the Graduate Certificate in Environmental Science. The course entitled Special Topics in Geography I: Environmental Science within a Geographical and Cross-Cultural Context was first offered in the Winter of 2025.</i> |
| Recommendation 13 | The university and the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee will consider the metrics used to evaluate programs as quantitative comparable metrics may not be appropriate for all programs, courses and offerings. Metrics are needed to assess qualitative aspects such as alignment with overall Vision and Mission of AU and what a specific program can do to enhance the reputation and standing of the university. Consider the “stories that are told” about AlgomaU and what truly represents what the university is striving to achieve(pages 11-12, External Reviewers’ Report) |
| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <i>The Department would appreciate clarification on the criteria and process, so that we can tailor our efforts accordingly. We understand APPCOM is currently working to review various program metrics. The Department is actively preparing a short promotional video in conjunction with Marketing/Communications to showcase a story narrative of the programming and student opportunities.</i> |
| Recommendation 14 | Continue with involvement in the projects/activities conducted by Dr. Steeves: an enormous opportunity for students to work with a high-level expert and achiever (page 11, External Reviewers’ Report) |
| Status: | <i>Complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <i>A video of one of Dr. Steeves’ research projects has been recently added to the departmental website. We are working with Communications to develop a video on the program for the department website and social media. Dr. Steeves has held a number of workshops this year open to all Algoma students and the general public. Dr. Steeves hires Algoma students every year and trains them as research associates. Dr. Steeves suggests that Algoma University hold a researcher and research associate opportunities day for students to meet the researchers, and hear about research associate and training opportunities.</i> |
| Recommendation 15 | Expand on opportunities with the Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies. There is the potential to investigate a new undergraduate degree option and over the long term a graduate degree could be developed (page 11, External Reviewers’ Report) |

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| Status: | <i>In progress.</i> |
| Details: | <p><i>The Department of GG&LS has had discussions with the Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies (FCCS) regarding expanding programs. However, this is dependent on a new faculty hire for GG&LS. A new faculty hire was approved in 2023. GG&LS is waiting for the faculty hiring freeze to be lifted to move forward with this pre-approved hire.</i></p> <p><i>As two FCCS departments are now working to restart enrolment in first year courses and degree programs, their planning will be focussed on this likely for the next year before they may start planning for opportunities between departments to create new programs or degrees.</i></p> |
| Recommendation 16 | Continue to expand two-eyed seeing approach across all assignments, activities, and programming (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>Complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <i>Two-Eyed seeing perspectives are shared in many of the Department's classes. In fact, the Two-Eyed seeing approach is sometimes expanded to Multi-Eyed seeing dimensions.</i> |
| Recommendation 17 | Provide attractive incentives for faculty in other departments to seek Transdisciplinary collaborations (page 12, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>Incomplete.</i> |
| Details: | <i>Due to budgetary (\$5,000 annual total departmental budget), faculty complement, and current resource constraints, the Department is unable to provide monetary and other incentives for faculty in other departments. We are open to brief consultations with other programs to assist them wherever possible.</i> |
| Recommendation 18 | Expand visibility of Dr. Steeves— as a CRC and researcher, major ability to attract students to the Program (page 11, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | <i>Complete and ongoing.</i> |
| Details: | <i>Dr. Steeves was cross-appointed to the Department up until August 2024, and only joined the Department as a full faculty member at that time. Her profile and research are shared and highlighted on the website, in the departmental brochure, and at every opportunity. Dr. Steeves is developing a Healing & Reconciliation Special Topics course which we hope to transform into a permanent course available for students from many disciplines to learn more about this important topic relating to Algoma University's Special Mission. Dr. Steeves also offers a decolonized geographical research methods course which provides enhanced perspectives for student researchers from a variety of disciplines.</i> |
| Recommendation 19 | Seek new ways of collaborating and cross-listing courses to better engage with the Environmental Science program (page 11, External Reviewers' |

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| Status: | Complete and ongoing. |
| Details: | <i>In addition to the many GEOG coded courses already shared with the Environmental Science program, we have developed a new Special Topics course to support the Graduate Certificate in Environmental Science. The course entitled Special Topics in Geography I: Environmental Science within a Geographical and Cross-Cultural Context was first launched in the Winter of 2025. This course is being offered again in the 2026 Winter term.</i> |
| Recommendation 20 | Continue valuable community engagement activities (page 12, External Reviewers' Report) |
| Status: | Complete and ongoing. |
| Details: | <i>The Department has been involved in the following events in 2025: Anishinaabe Initiatives Open House (June 2025), Water Stewardship Mini-Conference (June 2025), and the 13th NALMA National Gathering and Graduation (October 2025).</i> |
| Recommendation 21 | Consider renaming the program to a topic that more adequately reflects the content of offerings (page 11, External Reviewers' Report). Consider a department name change to reflect its innovative Indigenous focus (page 11, External Reviewers' Report). |
| Status: | In progress. |
| Details: | <i>This is still being considered and will require more engagement. Anishinaabe knowledge holders would need to be consulted to bestow any Indigenous adopted name. Perhaps a dual name can be contemplated.</i> |

3.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please use the space below to report on anything the Department/Program believes is appropriate to bring to the Algoma University Senate concerning this program. Please outline and explain any circumstances that have altered the original Implementation Plan and any significant developments or initiatives that have arisen since the program review.

The intakes for our Geography 3 year (General) and 4 year (Honours) program were suspended in May 2025 until September 2025 which resulted in disruption to our program implementation plans. Now that the intakes have been re-instated, our plans are resuming.