

Economics Graduate School Program Handbook

Students are held to the standards described in the handbook in effect at the time they matriculate.

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General Program Information

- Program overview
 - a. Ph.D., MS and IUG.
- Fox Graduate School and University Standards
 - a. Satisfactory Scholarship
 - Students enrolled in a graduate degree program must maintain a minimum grade-point average of 3.00 to remain in good academic standing.
 - [GCAC-404 - Satisfactory Scholarship](#)
 - b. Scholarship and Research Integrity
 - At least one CITI training course (RCR recommended)
 - A minimum of 5 hours of in-person discussion-based education
 - RECR requirements: [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research \(RECR\) Program](#).
 - c. Graduate Council Graduation Publication Requirements
 - PhD
 - The dissertation must be made available to the public through inclusion in the University Libraries.
 - [GCAC-607 - Dissertation - Research Doctorate](#)
 - Research Master's Degrees (MA, MS)
 - The thesis must be made available to the public as an official University record through inclusion in the University Libraries.
 - Graduate programs may require all students in the program to submit their scholarly paper or essay to an appropriate Penn State repository and/or may require one or more copies of the scholarly paper/essay for the program's library or files.
 - [GCAC-642 - Culminating Experience - Research Master's](#)
 - Professional Doctoral Degrees
 - The written portion of the professional doctoral culminating experience (non-performance-based programs) or the final performance (performance-based programs) must be deposited for inclusion in the University Libraries.
 - [GCAC-707 - Professional Doctoral Culminating Experience](#)
 - Professional Master's Degree
 - Graduate programs are strongly encouraged to have their students submit the product of their culminating experience to ScholarSphere, as appropriate to the program and discipline.
 - [GCAC-742 - Culminating Experience - Professional Master's](#)
 - d. Graduate Council defined time limits
 - A Ph.D. student is required to complete the program, including acceptance of the doctoral dissertation, within eight years after the date of successful completion of the qualifying examination, not including approved leaves of absence as outlined in GSAD-906.
 - [GCAC-610 - Time Limitation - Research Doctorate](#)
 - All requirements for a research master's degree, including acceptance of the culminating experience, must be met within eight years of the beginning of the first semester of enrollment to the graduate degree program.
 - [GCAC-632 Time Limitation - Research Master's](#)

- A professional doctoral student is required to complete the program, including acceptance of the professional doctoral culminating experience, within eight years after the date of successful completion of the qualifying examination, not including approved leaves of absence as outlined in GSAD-906.
 - [GCAC-708 Time Limitation - Professional Doctorate](#)
 - All requirements for a professional master's degree, including acceptance of the culminating experience, must be met within eight years of the beginning of the first semester of enrollment to the graduate degree program.
 - [GCAC-732 Time Limitation - Professional Master's](#)
 - e. Graduation deadlines
 - See [Academic Dates and Deadlines](#)
- Program standards and expectations
 - a. J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School Academic standards
 - b. J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School Integrity standards
 - c. J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School Mentoring standards
 - d. J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School Student Conduct standards
 - e. J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School Engagement expectations
- Links to Fox Graduate School and University resources
 - a. General
 - [Graduate student resource library](#)
 - [University Libraries](#)
 - [Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Fox Graduate School](#)
 - b. Academic Resources
 - [Fox Graduate School Academic resources](#)
 - [Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation Requirements](#)
 - [Graduate Writing Center](#)
 - [Fox Graduate School Ombudsperson Office](#)
 - [Avenues for addressing graduate student concerns](#)
 - c. Career and Professional Development
 - [Graduate Exhibition](#)
 - [Three Minute Thesis](#)
 - d. Funding
 - [Financial aid including Office of Student Aid](#)
 - Research and Conference Travel Funding Opportunities
 - [International Travel Grants](#)
 - e. Health and Well-being
 - [Health Insurance / SHIP](#)
 - [Graduate Student Parental Leave](#)
 - [Mental health support](#)
 - [Child Care at Penn State](#)
 - [Students in crisis](#)
 - f. Special Populations
 - [Adult Learner Programs & Services](#)
 - [Student Disability Services](#)
 - International Students
 - [Penn State Global ISSA](#)
 - [English for Professional Purposes Intercultural Center \(EPPIC\)](#) - support for language skills

- [Military students](#)
- g. Clubs and Organizations
 - [Graduate and Professional Student Association](#)
 - [Discover](#) – for finding graduate student organizations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Penn State is committed to providing access to students with disabilities to the University's graduate programs. The Office for Student Disability Resources (SDR) offers support specifically tailored to the needs of graduate students. The office considers the need for accommodations in the following areas:

1. Graduate assistantship accommodations
2. Coursework accommodations
3. Lab, fieldwork, and clinical work accommodations
4. Qualifying/comprehensive examination accommodations
5. Thesis/dissertation accommodations

An overview of disability resources specific to graduate students is available on the [SDR website](#).

To be considered for reasonable accommodations, students are required to contact the SDR office, participate in an intake interview, provide documentation, and complete the registration process. Students should be aware that it may take time to go through the intake process and that they may not know in advance whether accommodations will be needed for their coursework or milestone examinations. We therefore recommend that students register with SDR for any eligible disabilities in advance, ensuring that all documentation is in place should accommodations be needed at any point during their graduate program. Students can register with SDR and choose not to request accommodations once registered.

Once registered, students can approach course instructors (for course accommodations) and/or the DGS or PIC (for accommodations to other program requirements, including benchmark examinations) to request accommodations. For milestone examinations, this process is required for each milestone examination for which a student requests accommodations. Specific accommodations are determined through an interactive process and tailored to each student's needs, with the goals of upholding rigor and disciplinary expectations in each of the distinct components of graduate education.

Students who would like accommodations for academic events (such as non-course-based department colloquia or seminars) that are not covered under the official SDR categories are encouraged to express these needs to program leadership (e.g., the DGS, PIC, or program head) and/or SDR.

Details for Each Academic Plan Offered by the Program

Ph.D.:

Requirements for Graduate Degrees

The Ph.D. program has three main parts taken in sequence: the core, the fields (of specialization), and the dissertation. Most students take five years to complete the program. Occasionally a student finishes in four years, and a few take longer than five years.

First year:

Core Courses

The first year core consists of 2 semesters of coursework: a 2-semester sequence in microeconomic theory (ECON 502 and 521), a 2-semester sequence in macroeconomic theory (ECON 503 and 522), a 2-semester sequence in econometrics (ECON 501 and 510), and a course in mathematics for economists (ECON 500).

All students must also take the empirical methods course (ECON 512) in the second year and the research exposition course (ECON 597E) in the fall of the third year.

Qualifier Exams

Students are assigned a research project in the sequence of their choice (microeconomics, macroeconomics or econometrics) to complete during the summer and turn in before the beginning of the third semester, **during the last week of August**.

Students are also required to take an exam in each of the three sequences, during the last week of August. Students who obtain a grade-point average of 3.0 or above in sequences and a B- minimum grade in each of the two courses in the sequence will be exempt from the exam in that sequence.

Fields

Students must demonstrate competence in two fields. Competence in a field is demonstrated by completing two courses in the field with no grade lower than a B. In addition, all students must pass two additional field courses that may or may not be in their chosen field with a grade no lower than B. **The deadline for selecting fields and field courses is the end of year 1**, but students may adjust some of their choices during the second year. From the second year onward, students must regularly attend the seminar series of their chosen fields. Seminar series are offered in microeconomic theory, macroeconomic theory, trade and development, applied microeconomics, and econometrics. Students must also be enrolled in the (possibly student run) reading group corresponding to one of their chosen fields and present at least once in that reading group during each of their second, third and fourth years. All students must obtain email approval before enrolling in any course outside the economics department. All such courses must be within the scope of the program learning objectives.

The department offers the following field courses: two 1-semester courses in development economics (both named ECON 570), two 1-semester courses in econometrics (both named ECON 589), two 1-semester courses in microeconomic theory (ECON 534 and 597C), three 1-semester courses in industrial organization (two named ECON 543 and one named ECON 597B), two 1 semester courses in international economics (both ECON 507,) and 3 1-semester macroeconomics (ECON 517, 558 and 559). Usually, field requirements cannot be met by mixing and matching. For instance, one course each in game theory and econometrics does not constitute a field. With the permission of the student's adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies, a student may take a field in another department. For example, students have taken field courses in demography, political science, math, and statistics.

Research paper requirement

A research paper is required of all students. The purpose of this is to assess a student's ability to:

1. Identify an interesting question or unsolved problem
2. Answer the question or solve the problem
3. Write a finished paper in a form suitable for submission to a journal
4. Present a seminar about the research reported in the paper.

Each student must choose an adviser **by spring break of the second year** and must submit a short (one or two pages) proposal to the DGS **by the last day of classes in the second year**. The proposal should:

1. State the question or problem to be addressed and its place in the literature
2. Describe the methods to be used to address the question or problem
3. Name one faculty member who will serve as adviser for the paper and a second faculty member who will serve along with the adviser on the student's committee.

The DGS will approve the proposal, confirm the choice of committee members and appoint a third faculty member, typically not in the student's field, to serve on the student's committee. While the research is the student's responsibility, advisers and other faculty should be consulted regularly. The development of working relationships with faculty members is an important aspect of the research paper requirement. By default, the faculty adviser for the research paper will be the de facto thesis adviser of the student.

The research paper must be completed **before the FIRST day of classes in the third year**. The main objective of the research exposition core course is to improve written and oral presentation of this research paper.

The final version of the paper will be assessed, **before the last day of classes in December of the third year**, by the student's three-person faculty committee after a seminar presentation by the student. The outcome of the assessment will include one of the following recommendations:

1. That the student advance to the next stage of the Ph.D. degree
2. That the student revise the paper and/or do other remedial work
3. That the student be terminated from the Ph.D. program

Comprehensive Exam

All students must defend a thesis proposal (called comprehensive exam) in front of a committee of three faculty members, including their adviser, **before the last week in July after the end of their third year**. The proposal must outline the objectives pursued for the completion of the Ph.D. and the means proposed to achieve such objectives. The outcome of the committee's assessment of the thesis proposal will include one of the following recommendations:

1. That the student advance to the last phase of the Ph.D. degree
2. That the student be terminated from the Ph.D. program

The comprehensive exam and the final oral examination (dissertation defense) may be held fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely.

Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Graduate Program Head under the policies [GCAC-606 Comprehensive Examination – Research Doctorate](#) and [GCAC-608 Final Oral Examination – Research Doctorate](#)

MS:

The M.A. program is a two-year (four-semester) program, which requires a minimum of 30 credits (of which 21 credits will be required courses) and an M.A. project. The first year is devoted to 18 credits of the core courses in micro, macro, and econometrics. The second year follows with at least 12 additional credits, 6 credits of which will be in a year-long course for the M.A. project. The M.A. project will provide hands-on experience of small research supervised by our excellent faculty.

Required courses:

First Year	
Fall	Spring
501 Econometrics	510 Econometrics I
502 Microeconomic Analysis	521 Advanced Microeconomic Theory
503 Macroeconomic Analysis	533 Applied and Quantitative Economics
Second Year	
Fall	Spring
530 Master's Scholarly Essay I	531 Master's Scholarly Essay II
558 Development of Monetary Theory	596 Individual Studies
Elective	

M.A. Projects (Course number to be determined. This is a year-long course, where students do an M.A. project of their interest.)

** Please note that some of the required courses have the same course numbers as our Ph.D. courses, but the M.A. courses will be taught in separate sections.*

*** Second year M.A. students will have access to Ph.D. level field courses, assuming that they successfully complete all the required courses. ([See Ph.D. course selection here.](#))*