



RICE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

DOCTORAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2022-2023

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Introduction

The following departmental rules and regulations govern the doctoral program in economics. In addition to being in agreement with the regulation stated in this departmental handbook, students must also be in agreement with the [General Announcements](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#).

In case there is conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over department-wide regulations, which take precedence over research group-wide regulations.

In doubt, students should seek help first at the departmental level (faculty advisor, graduate coordinator, director of graduate studies, and/or department chair) and then at the central administration level (office of graduate and postdoctoral studies).

The doctoral degree offered by the economics department is a research degree. The purpose of all courses and exams is to equip students with the necessary knowledge and tools for research.

The Ph.D. program is designed to enable students to complete all requirements within five years. The five years goal is attainable if students stay focused on the need to develop a research interest for their dissertation in the first two years of the program. If this goal cannot be met, students may remain in the program; however financial support beyond the fifth year is only possible through teaching or research fellowships, and such opportunities are not guaranteed.

A Master's Degree in Economics is only offered along the way to the Ph.D. The requirements are at the end of this handbook.

Program Requirements

Summary

Candidates for the doctoral degree must:

1. Attend the statistics and mathematics camp before starting the 1st-year courses.
2. Complete an approved program of at least *fourteen* courses (including approved courses in other departments, but not counting Research/Workshops courses). At least two years of full-time study must be in residence at Rice.
3. Perform satisfactorily in 1st-year economics courses. Students who receive two or more grades lower than C+ (inclusive) in the courses are required to repeat at least one of the courses with such grades. If in the second attempt a student receives a grade lower than C+, the student will be dismissed from the program.
4. Attend a research workshop every semester in the 2nd and 3rd year.
5. Write a research (3rd-year paper) proposal before the start of the 3rd year.
6. Complete and present the 3rd-year paper by the end of the 3rd year.
7. Secure a dissertation advisor by the end of the fall semester in the 4th year.
8. Submit a written progress report in every semester in which the student is enrolled in Econ 800 (Graduate Research). For students in the 4th year and beyond, this should take the form of a dissertation progress report.
9. Defend thesis proposal to the faculty and students in a seminar during the Spring semester of the 4th year.

Important milestones

First year: Complete core courses with a grade point average of no less than 2.67. Obtain no more than one C+ or lower grade in economics courses.

Second year: Take field courses and Econ 504. Attend research workshops. Write a proposal for the 3rd-year paper, obtain approval of the proposal from at least one faculty member, and list the faculty name in the proposal.

Third year: Complete field coursework, complete and present the 3rd-year paper.

Fourth year: Secure a dissertation committee chair by the end of the fall semester in the 4th year, write a prospectus, petition for candidacy, submit a dissertation progress report, present thesis proposal in a seminar open to all faculty and students.

Fifth year: Complete the job market paper, present job market paper, final oral examination.

[INSERT SAMPLE PROGRESSION TABLE HERE]

Academic Requirements for the Ph.D.

Core courses:

1. Mathematics and statistics camp in the summer, and seven core courses in the first year are mandatory (in rare cases, students may submit a request for waiver to the Graduate Committee). These courses are: Introduction to Analysis (Math 321), Microeconomics 1 (Econ 501), Macroeconomics (Econ 502), Econometrics (Econ 510) in the Fall; and Microeconomics 2 (Econ 508), Financial economics (Econ 505), Econometrics 2 (Econ 511).

Students who have taken real analysis courses in the past should consult the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss whether to take Math 331, Math 425 or Math 515 instead of Math 321.

The 2nd-year mandatory core course is Computational Economics (Econ 504).

2. To continue in the Ph.D. program, a student needs a grade point average of no less than 2.67 (that is, an average grade of B-) by the end of the first year.
3. Students who receive at least two C+ or below grades in first year economics courses will be asked to repeat at least one of the courses with such grades. If in the second attempt they still receive a grade of C+ or below, they will be dismissed from the program.

Field courses and workshops:

During the 2nd and 3rd year, students need to complete the remainder of elective (non-workshop) field courses. In addition, students must (i) enroll in at least one of the weekly workshops (Econ 593 and Econ 594) in each semester of the 2nd and 3rd year, (ii) enroll in Econ 597 & 598 in the 2nd-year, (iii) present their own research in a research workshop (Econ 599 or Econ 596) at least once every year after their second year.

Students must maintain a GPA of 2.67 to remain in the program.

Three weekly seminar workshop sections are offered under Econ 593 and 594: Applied Microeconomics, Macro & Finance, and Econometrics/Empirical Micro. Students must take one workshop every semester in the 2nd year and 3rd year. Students may take any combination of workshops but it is wise to concentrate on the workshop closest to the field in which one is planning to write a dissertation. Naturally, regular attendance to at least one workshop after the first year is an important component of the dissertation work. Taking a workshop course entails attending weekly seminars and possibly meeting the seminar organizer (or other relevant faculty members) for explanation and discussion of seminar material.

Econ 800 Research Seminar:

The purpose of Econ 800 is to assist students in the dissertation writing process. The primary objective of the course is to have students write an independent and original piece of research that is of sufficient quality to merit publication in an academic economics journal.

Each student enrolled in Econ 800 must have a faculty member as her/his Econ 800 supervisor. **The supervisor should be the same person as the mentor for the 3rd-year paper, or the student's dissertation advisor if the student has already chosen one.**

Students are expected to meet regularly with their Econ 800 supervisors, and make satisfactory progress in their research. At the end of each semester, the students are expected to submit a report to their Econ 800 supervisors as well as to the graduate coordinator. The report should detail the progress made during the semester, including the research topics the students pursued through the semester, the names of the faculty members they interacted with regarding these topics, a description of the results they obtained and a discussion of the roadblocks they faced if they did not obtain any new results. The grades will be assigned by Econ 800 supervisors on a pass/fail basis. In addition, the department may use the progress report to decide on funding priorities in future years.

Third-year paper:

Each student must complete a research paper and present it in a seminar environment prior to the end of Spring Semester in the 3rd year. The students must initiate the research idea independently with guidance from faculty members. It should have the potential to become a chapter in the doctoral dissertation.

1. The students must submit a proposal for the third year paper, obtain approval of the proposal by at least one faculty member, and list her/him as the faculty mentor for the 3rd-year paper in the proposal. Third-year paper proposals are due on Aug 15 prior to the start of the 3rd year.

Suggested Guidelines for the proposal of 3rd-year paper:

- Define and motivate your research question(s) clearly.
- Summarize the related literature, and explain your intended contribution.
- For a proposal aiming at methodological/theoretical contributions, specify your model and methodology, as well as their required assumptions. Explain the novelty and the challenge you face. Provide some preliminary result; if none at this point, then explain why you think it is feasible to make your planned innovation.
- For a proposal aiming at empirical contributions, specify your data source and empirical strategy (i.e., ideas for identification, estimation, and counterfactual/policy simulations if applicable). Explain why this model,

methodology and data allow you to address the question you define at the beginning.

- Empirical projects need to be tied to specific data source(s). If you do not have access to the data yet, present your knowledge of the data structure and its relevant fields, and explain why you expect to get access to it in due course. If you already have access to the data, at least provide exploratory analysis of the data (e.g., report a few interesting patterns that motivate your research question).
- The proposal should include contingency plans, i.e., how to proceed if the steps proposed above do not work out (e.g., collect new data, simplify the model, add more assumptions).
- At the very minimum, the proposal should serve as evidence that you are familiar with the related literature, and have given careful thoughts about the value of your research question, the challenges you need to meet, and why it is feasible.
- A reasonable length of the proposal is around 15 pages (double-space, 12 pt fonts, A4 page)."

These guidelines are not mandatory in the sense that specific instructions from faculty mentors should take precedence over them.

2. Two faculty members, including the mentor selected by the student and a faculty member selected by the director of graduate studies, will grade the 3rd-year paper. These two evaluators must sign a form attesting to their willingness to evaluate the student's 3rd-year paper; this form must be turned in to the department's graduate coordinator no later than January 31st during the 3rd year. An additional grader for the 3rd year paper, appointed by the director of graduate studies, will be used if there is a disagreement between the first two evaluators. The final draft of the 3rd year paper is due on Aug 1 in the summer between the 3rd and 4th year.
3. The work will be marked as follows:
A Good
B Satisfactory
F Unsatisfactory
4. The students who obtain a grade of A or B for their 3rd year paper will be given priority in future funding. Those students obtaining an F will be deemed as not making satisfactory progress. A student with a departmental guarantee of funding therefore loses that guarantee upon receiving an unsatisfactory grade. However, those students will have the opportunity to revise their paper and resubmit it for another time, with a deadline of the end of the fall semester of their 4th year. After resubmitting, the grade is either changed to an A or a B, or it remains an F. In the latter case, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Dissertation:

1. The Dissertation Committee:

The Dissertation Committee should consist of:

- i. A chair from the economics department
- ii. A second member from the department
- iii. An outside member from another department who is not jointly affiliated with the economics department.

The student takes the initiative to ask a professor to chair his or her dissertation committee. The student should propose a thesis topic, or an original piece of work that could be developed into a thesis, and the (prospective) chair should agree to advise the proposed work. Students should make their selections of dissertation committee chair *no later than the end of Fall Semester in the 4th year.*

2. The Prospectus:

The student should then write a prospectus, describing in 10 to 20 pages the background and goals of the proposed dissertation as well as its methodology, data sources, etc. Alternatively, the student can submit a substantial piece of original research that can form the core of, and is possible to develop into, a complete dissertation. After the prospective dissertation committee chair has approved the prospectus, at least two copies should be placed in the departmental office for the faculty to examine. There will be a 10-day period during which the prospectus is under the scrutiny of the rest of the faculty. After any problems resulting from faculty suggestions are resolved, it is for the student to form the entire thesis committee. At this point the department automatically grants approval to the thesis topic developed in the prospectus.

3. Dissertation Proposal

At the end of the 4th year, any student intending to remain in good standing for the next academic year must defend her/his dissertation proposal by May 15. Ideally this proposal should take the form of a preliminary draft of dissertation chapters. At the very minimum, it should include: (i) the title of the dissertation and its component chapters; (ii) the names of at least one dissertation adviser who is familiar with the dissertation and its current status; (iii) completed chapters (if any); (iv) a summary of the chapters in progress, with sufficient details about the research question, the relation to the literature, the research methodology and the data used; and (v) expected completion date. The director of graduate studies will seek an evaluation of the student's progress from her/his dissertation advisers.

The students must defend their thesis proposal in a seminar format during Spring semester of the 4th year. The defense must be open to all faculty and students and must be publicly announced at least a month prior to the scheduled date.

The director of graduate studies will survey the faculty periodically to monitor students' progress. Students should be in sufficiently close contact with dissertation advisors so that the latter can provide a reasonable up-to-date report on the student's progress.

4. Ph.D. Candidacy:

Advancing to Ph.D. candidacy requires:

- i. Completion of required coursework
- ii. Satisfactory performance on the required courses
- iii. Satisfactory completion and presentation of the third-year paper
- iv. Satisfactory completion of Econ 596 and 800 every year after the second year
- v. Approval of the prospectus and defense of the thesis proposal

The University requires a petition for candidacy, naming the committee and the thesis topic. ***This must be completed prior to October 31 to permit granting of the degree at Commencement the following spring or before the start of ninth semester (whichever comes first).***

Approval of candidacy for the Ph.D. is valid for three years. If the dissertation is not completed within the three years, a time extension must be requested and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Upon approval by the department chair and the relevant faculty members, the department may file a petition for candidacy before the departmental procedure for forming a committee and accepting a prospectus is complete. This is done as a convenience for the student (who may face the University October 31 deadline), and in this case the filing (and/or approval) of a petition for candidacy is not a substitute for the process described above to assemble a thesis committee. Students who have not achieved candidacy by the end of their eighth semester will be given a grade of unsatisfactory in Econ 800 and will be put on probation.

University rules require that students must achieve candidacy by the beginning of the ninth semester of their residency at Rice or be dismissed from the program. Students with exceptional circumstances may petition the University Graduate Council for a waiver from this rule.

5. Final Oral Examination:

The dissertation committee chair schedules the final oral exam when the dissertation is substantially complete. Since the oral exam may result in a requirement of substantial rewriting of the dissertation, it is prudent to schedule it several weeks prior to Commencement to permit time for necessary revision. The deadline for the oral examination is the last day of classes in the Spring semester.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep all members of the committee informed as to the progress of the dissertation. In order to give them sufficient time to prepare for the defense, the applicant must give members of the committee a copy of the relevant version of the dissertation no less than one month before the date of the defense. An additional copy must be given to the graduate secretary at least one week before the defense. This copy will be made available to members of the faculty and students who may wish to attend the defense. The time, date and place of the defense must be posted and announced

in the Rice News prior to the defense. Students must notify the graduate secretary at least 15 days prior to the defense so that this requirement can be satisfied.

The defense is open to all members of the university community. In the oral exam or thesis defense the candidate presents her thesis and is then questioned by the committee. The result is then announced. A student may be asked to revise or alter some parts of the dissertation; the committee may recommend that the candidate retake the oral exam if the needed revisions are substantial.

5. Dissertation Schedule:

A student should write his or her dissertation within three years. Thus, along with the first two years of course work, the Ph.D. program should take no more than five years. Note that a student who finishes in five years is normally on the job market in the Fall of the fifth year. By this point, the student needs to have a substantial part of the dissertation complete, including the job market paper.

The department recognizes that setbacks in dissertation research sometimes make it difficult for a student to complete the program in five years. In such cases, a student may remain for a sixth year. However, sixth-year students will generally receive reduced financial aid.

In almost all cases, seven years is the absolute limit for the Ph.D. program. A student who is substantially behind schedule will be given a formal warning and probationary period, after which he or she can be dismissed from the program.

Advising

The director of graduate studies is an official advisor to all graduate students and is available to consult with students about progress and help them select courses. The DGS also monitors the progress of students during their first three years. Once students start working on their dissertation, the thesis advisor becomes the main supervisor. A formal thesis advisor form must be filled at the beginning of the 7th semester.

Financial Aid Policies

Students must enroll in a minimum of six hours of Econ 800 during the summer to remain on the university payroll.

Continuation of support:

1. *Students joining the doctoral program with some funding from Rice University:* Financial awards are generally renewed so that students are funded up to the end of their fourth year. Renewal is contingent upon adequate performance: a GPA of 2.67 (B-) or higher, passing qualifiers, timely completion of the field exam, passing the

third year paper requirement, and the third year progress report. Renewal is also conditional on university budget constraints although the department has never terminated or reduced funding for this reason.

2. *Students joining the doctoral program without funding from Rice University:* In some cases the department has been able to arrange support for such students; this is based on their scholarly performance and contingent upon the departmental resources. Support is then given on a year-to-year basis.

Departmental service:

All students on Rice University fellowships or scholarships are required to perform departmental service. In the first year, students are typically assigned to grade for an undergraduate class. This work is not to exceed 10 hours per week. In subsequent years students are required to perform 20 hours/week of departmental service. The director of graduate studies determines the faculty advisor(s) to whom the students are assigned. The faculty advisor(s) assigns the student's grade for the departmental service course, Econ 700. Students who receive 9 months fellowships are required to be in Houston and available for departmental services during August 16th – May 15th. Exceptions require the approval of both the director of graduate studies and the student's advisor.

In each semester in which students perform departmental service, they need to register for the departmental service course Econ 700. Students must meet their faculty supervisors as early as possible before the semester starts and regularly during the semester to ensure there is a mutual understanding of the job responsibilities.

Outside Employment and Leave of Absence Policies

1. Students receiving full stipends are not to accept any regular employment outside the department.
2. No full-time student may accept outside work of more than 20 hours per week. The student must consult with the department chair or the director of graduate studies before undertaking any outside employment.
3. A leave of absence for one or more semesters will be granted for valid reasons to students in good standing. Leave must be requested well in advance of the semester in question. The university upon return charges a reactivation fee.
4. Non-registration without an approved leave of absence is considered withdrawal from the program. Such students will not be readmitted without reapplication and recommendation by the department, as well as the approval of the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies. A readmission fee is charged.

Probationary Status

1. A student is considered to be on probationary status whenever the GPA for a semester falls below 2.67, or they have received at least two C+ or below grades in their first year economics courses, or they have not passed the third year paper requirement, or when a grade of unsatisfactory (U) is given in Econ 800 (thesis research) or in Econ 700 (departmental service), or they have not achieved candidacy by the end of the fourth year. Students are permitted only one semester of probationary status. Automatic dismissal by the Graduate Office occurs whenever a student is put on probation a second time.
2. Students with exceptional circumstances may petition the Graduate Committee for a waiver of probationary status.

Petitions, Appeals, Grievances and Problem Resolutions

Students are encouraged to download and read the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies' guidelines for dismissal, petitions, appeals, grievances and problem resolution, that can be obtained from the web site: <http://graduate.rice.edu/dismissals/>.

In accordance with these guidelines, petitions, appeals, grievances and problems for which it is appropriate in the first instance to be handled at the departmental level will be submitted to the Department's Grievances Committee. The committee will look at every case, and if the case involves the advisee of one or more of the committee members, then they will recuse themselves from this particular case and be replaced for that purpose by other members of the departmental faculty selected in consultation with the department chair. The committee will conduct an investigation of the circumstances and reach a decision regarding the case. Their written report to the director of graduate studies, and the department chair will describe the circumstances, the decision, and the rationale for the decision. The director of graduate studies or the department chair (or the Dean) will convey the final decision to the student and include the committee report. (Redaction from the report is allowed to protect the privacy of other students.)

Title IX

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their

needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: **3311/(713) 348-3311**

Master's Degree

A Master's Degree in Economics is only offered along the way to the Ph.D. In order to obtain Master's Degree in Economics, a student must pass the first year core courses with an average of 2.5 or better, complete six field courses with any passing grade, and complete Econ 700 with a satisfactory grade in the last two semesters before graduation.

A Master's Degree in Statistics is available to the students when the original doctoral thesis and defense is related to statistics. The degree awarded in statistics is a non-thesis master's. Further information regarding the degree requirements is available from the statistics department.