

Graduate Handbook for the Doctoral Program in Economics

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Welcome to the Graduate Program in Economics at Michigan State University. This Handbook lays out the official rules and regulations of the PhD program. Please inquire with the Graduate Secretary if any issues remain (110 Marshall-Adams Hall; ecgrdsec@msu.edu).

The rules laid out in this document are binding in full upon students entering the program in Fall 2018 or later. For students entering the program earlier, students are expected to follow the pertinent rules going forward (i.e., fourth year students will follow the procedures laid out for fourth years), unless they make a compelling case to the Director of Graduate Studies that a rule change would be unduly burdensome; in such cases, the rules laid out in earlier Handbooks will be binding.

1. Program Overview

A PhD in Economics from Michigan State University prepares the recipient to become an active economics researcher. While the economics profession as a whole is very broad, our faculty has reached a high level of consensus regarding the traits we want our PhD graduates to share. We intend for Michigan State PhD economists to be well prepared for successful research careers. This is reflected in the research focus of our required curriculum, in the high level of professional mentoring through research collaboration, initiatives, and seminars, and in the successful placement of our students at research- and policy-oriented institutions.

1.1. Overview of Academic Components

Students must complete the following major academic components for a doctoral degree in economics, each of which is discussed in more detail in Section 2.

1. Core course requirement (6 courses in the first year)
2. Qualifying examination (May and August after the first year)
3. Advanced course requirement (7 courses in the second and third year)
4. Comprehensive examination and Red Cedar conference presentation requirement (normally in the third year)
5. Departmental research seminar requirement (normally in the fourth year)
6. Dissertation proposal (normally in the fourth year)
7. Dissertation and final defense (normally in the fifth year).

A typical program that satisfies these requirements is provided in Table 1.1.

Several additional requirements exist, including grade requirements, residency requirements, and training in the responsible conduct of research. These additional requirements are discussed in more detail in Section 3.

Table 1.1: Typical PhD Program

Year 1	Fall: EC812A, EC813A, EC820A Spring: EC812B, EC813B, EC820B	20 credits
Year 2	Advance course requirement (6 courses)	18 credits
Year 3	Advanced course requirement (1 course) EC999 for 15 credits	18 credits

Year 4	EC950 and EC951 for 1 credit each EC999 for 7 credits	9 credits
Year 5	EC999 for 2 credits (1 each semester)	2 credits
Year 6+	EC999 for 2 credits (1 each semester)	--
		Minimum for PhD: 67 credits

* A minimum of 24 EC999 credits must be taken. For students who have completed their Comprehensive Examination, only one EC999 credit is required to be full-time. A maximum of 36 EC999 credits may be taken. A student must be enrolled for at least 1 credit in the semester they defend.

1.2. Overview of Professional Components

Although a doctoral degree in economics can be a pathway to a multitude of careers, the focus of the MSU doctoral program is to train students to be able to undertake research. An important part of developing these skills is to actively participate in departmental and professional activities beyond the academic program requirements. These activities include seminar attendance (departmental seminars, graduate student seminars, brown bag seminars), conference attendance (international, national, and regional conferences), and appropriate presentations at these seminars and conferences.

1.3. Departmental Personnel

The department employs a Graduate Secretary and a Director of Graduate Studies. These two people handle much of the day-to-day operations of the program and should be the initial points of contact for questions or concerns that arise for graduate students. In cases where additional information is needed, graduate students may contact the Department Chair.

2. Academic Program Components

This section lists the required academic program components of the Economics PhD program. While some flexibility may be provided to meet the specific needs of a student (see Section 3 for more details), it is expected that most students will meet the requirements that are listed in this section.

2.1. Core Course Requirement (1st Year)

The first year of study in the program is used to establish a foundation from which students embark on their specific training in becoming PhD economists. The complete sequence of core courses covers Microeconomic Theory (EC812A/B), Macroeconomic Theory (EC813A/B) and Econometrics (EC820A/B). Students are required to satisfactorily complete six courses (EC812A, EC813A, EC820A, EC812B, EC813B and EC820B) during their first year in the program.

Two of the core courses, 812A and 813B, are augmented with two weekly lab hours to include additional instruction in mathematical methods. Lecture and lab hours are equally important parts of the courses.

2.2. Qualifying Examination Requirement (1st Year)

Students must earn a PhD Pass on the Economics and Economic Methods Qualifying Examination before the start of their second year. This is a written examination covering the material contained in the core courses and other material deemed necessary to commence further training at the PhD level. The exam consists of three sections, one each in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. Each section is given in a four-hour block, one per day across three consecutive days.

The exam is administered in May and August. Any departmental faculty member may suggest questions for this examination. The exam may be taken at most two times.

The exams are created and graded by a committee appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies. The names of the committee members will be announced at least two weeks (but generally one month) before the scheduled date of the exams. It is generally the case that at least some committee members will have not taught core courses and the composition of the committee is changed between the May and the August exam dates.

Each of the three sections of the Qualifying Examination will be graded separately and assigned one of three grades: Pass with Distinction, Pass, and Fail. The criteria for assigning grades are left to the discretion of the exam committee, but generally, a grade of Pass is assigned to students who have demonstrated sufficient competency that they are likely to complete the PhD program successfully. A student's overall grade on each section is determined by their highest grade between the May and August examinations, and thus, students who receive a grade of Pass on the May exam on a certain section need not retake that section during the August exam. Unless prior approval is obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies, a student must take all three sections in May.

To earn a PhD Pass on the Qualifying Examination, a student must receive a grade of Pass or above on each individual section during the May or August test.

A grade of Master's Pass will be given to a student who receives either one Pass with Distinction or two Passes across the three sections of the exam. A grade of Master's Pass is insufficient to continue in the doctoral program, but sufficient to satisfy the comprehensive examination requirement for the MA degree. A student who receives a Master's Pass by the start of the second year will be reclassified as an MA student.

An overall grade of Fail is given to students who do not earn a PhD Pass or a Master's Pass. An overall grade of Fail is insufficient to continue in the doctoral program or to satisfy the comprehensive examination requirement for the MA degree. Thus, students who receive an overall grade of Fail will be dismissed from the program.

In the absence of unusual circumstances (such as serious illness), a student is required to take the Qualifying Examination in the May (and, if necessary, August) following their first year of enrollment. If a student does not take the exam at these specified times, the department will record a failing grade for the student for all sections that are not taken. If a student believes his

or her circumstances qualify for an exemption, the written approval of the Director of Graduate Studies must be obtained.

2.3. Advanced Course Requirement (2nd and 3rd years)

Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in advanced material by completing seven advanced courses, earning a grade of at least 3.5 in three of the courses and a grade of at least 3.0 in all seven courses. These courses must be selected to meet the following distributional requirements, and any one course can only be used to satisfy one of the requirements.

NOTE: Students may use no more than four advanced econometrics courses (currently numbered 821A, 821B, 822A, 822B, and 823) towards the seven advanced course requirement.

Advanced Core Course Requirement

Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in advanced core material by taking at least three advanced core courses, earning a grade of at least 3.5 in two of the courses and 3.0 in all three of the courses. The following courses may be counted towards this requirement: Cross Section 1 (821A), Time Series 1 (822A), Public (835 and 836), Labor (880 and 881), Development (850 and 851), Industrial Organization (860 and 861), Macro (830 and 831), Trade (840 and 843), Natural Resources (923 and 925), and Advanced Theory (911 and 912).

Advanced Methods Course Requirement

Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in advanced methods by taking at least one advanced methods course, earning a grade of 3.0 or better. The following courses may be counted towards the advanced methods requirement: Cross Section Econometrics (821A and 821B), Time Series Econometrics (822A and 822B), Applied Econometrics (823), Advanced Macro (830 and 831), and Advanced Theory (911 and 912).

Additional Advanced Course Requirement

Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in additional advanced material by taking at least three additional advanced courses, earning a grade of 3.0 or better. These courses can be any advanced economics course, chosen from all economics courses numbered in the range 815 to 925 or 992. With prior permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, students may substitute courses outside the economics department to fulfill this distributional requirement (for example, appropriate math or statistics courses). Students must earn a grade of 3.0 or better in these courses.

2.4. Comprehensive Examination and Red Cedar Requirement (3rd year)

After students have substantially completed their course work, they must satisfy the Comprehensive Exam Requirement. This requirement is normally satisfied during the third year of study. This requirement is an important milestone in a student's progress towards completing a dissertation because it demonstrates the ability of a student to (a) synthesize the economic knowledge gained across a variety of courses, (b) consider critically and constructively the state of research on a particular topic, and (c) produce a written work that demonstrates original research.

To satisfy this requirement, students must produce a written work that demonstrates original research and conforms to typical professional standards of evidence, argument, and style. Usually, this written work will contain a well-targeted review of the literature related to the research topic, which critically and constructively assesses the state of knowledge related to the topic. The written work must also have an original research component that goes beyond a review of the literature. This original research component should be sufficiently well-developed to convince the guidance committee that, with reasonable revisions, the original research component would result in a publishable-quality paper or report.

In addition to this written work, a student is required to present the original research component at the Red Cedar Conference. The Red Cedar Conference is offered as a forum for the graduate students to receive feedback on this research and for the evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination. The Red Cedar Conference will normally be held during the second week of February and is organized by the Graduate Secretary.

A student may not present their research at this conference without prior written approval from three guidance committee members, one of whom agrees to serve as Chair, certifying that the written work is sufficiently developed that the student could receive a “Pass” on the Comprehensive Examination after appropriate revisions are made (see the following paragraphs for more information on assigning grades). These signatures must be obtained no later than four weeks prior to the conference. Please note that this deadline is for guidance committee approval to present at the Red Cedar Conference, not a suggestion as to when faculty become involved. A student should be frequently seeking faculty input on their research throughout their second and third years, including the summer in between. See Sections 4 and 5 for more information about the construction of the guidance committee.

Consistent with the standard research process, students are often required to make revisions to their written work after the Red Cedar Conference presentation. In some cases, particularly when a student was not able to present at the Red Cedar Conference, the guidance committee may additionally require that the student make another presentation. When an additional presentation is required, the organization of the presentation is left to the student and her committee.

A student’s performance on the Comprehensive Examination, which is comprised of both the written work (including revisions) and the presentation, is evaluated by the three faculty members on the guidance committee. Based on majority vote, the student is judged as receiving a “Pass” or “Fail” on the Comprehensive Examination. To remain in good standing for funding, the student must receive a “Pass” on the Comprehensive Examination by the last day of final of the Spring Term of a student’s third year. The grade for the Comprehensive Examination is recorded on a form that is submitted to the Graduate Secretary by the Third Year Committee Chair.

Although every effort should be made to have all three Third Year Committee members attend the public presentation physically or virtually, it is allowable to have a faculty member be absent for the public presentation. An absent faculty member is still expected to vote on whether the student has satisfied the Comprehensive Exam requirement, basing their decision on reading the paper. The absence of a committee member must be approved by the Third Year Committee Chair and the DGS.

Students who do not receive a “Pass” on an attempt at satisfying the Comprehensive Examination Requirement (including the initial submission and a revision) may only re-attempt to satisfy the Comprehensive Examination Requirement with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

2.5. Departmental Research Seminar Requirement (4th Year)

Students are required to complete one of the sections of 950 and one of the sections of 951, the departmental research seminars. Students cannot enroll in 950 until after they reach candidacy and 951 until after they complete the dissertation proposal. The requirements for both seminars are determined by the instructor, but generally, 950 requires at least attendance throughout the semester, and 951 requires at least attendance throughout the semester and the presentation of a paper. Students must earn a grade of 3.0 or better in the seminar.

2.6. Dissertation Proposal Requirement (4th Year)

Students are required to prepare a written proposal outlining their intended research program. The proposal must be approved, in writing, by the guidance committee, following a satisfactory presentation of the proposal to all committee members and interested members of the department. The proposal presentation must be scheduled at least 4 weeks in advance.

Approval by the guidance committee will be contingent on the written proposal and presentation, whereby the student completes a sufficient amount of work to demonstrate that an acceptable dissertation topic has been identified (see the next paragraph). In order to schedule a presentation, a student must provide the approving signatures of *at least three* guidance committee members (including the Chair of the Dissertation Committee). The dissertation proposal is considered approved after a presentation in which *at least four* regular MSU faculty members, with at three of whom are from the department and one of whom is not, have approved and signed the requisite forms.

Although there is no fixed metric by which a student demonstrates “a sufficient amount of work that an acceptable dissertation topic has been identified,” most successful proposals include one core paper and a detailed discussion of the direction in which the research will be expanded to complete the dissertation. The proposal must represent substantial progress beyond the research paper presented at the Red Cedar Conference.

2.8. Doctoral Dissertation Research (EC999)

Students are required to accumulate at least 24 but no more than 36 credits in Doctoral Dissertation Research Credits by enrolling in EC999.

2.9. Dissertation and Final Defense Requirement (usually 5th year)

See Section 6 for a complete discussion of the Dissertation and Defense.

3. Degree Requirements

3.1. Program Component Requirements

The primary academic program requirements are outlined in Section 2.

3.2. Grade Requirement

Students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0, and may not accumulate more than two courses with grades below 3.0. According to College policy, graduate students are only allowed to repeat courses with the explicit approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies; approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

3.3. Residency Requirement

The doctoral program requires a minimum of three years in residence.

3.4. Enrollment Requirement

It is expected that active students in the PhD program are enrolled in Fall and Spring semesters. Students who do not enroll for three straight semesters (including the summer semester) are terminated from the program.

Generally, fulltime enrollment is 6 credits for graduate students who are not serving as graduate assistants, 3 credits for graduate students who are serving as graduate assistants, and 1 credit for graduate students who have read “All But Dissertation” (ABD) status. Enrollment requirements can vary depending on a student’s circumstances; students should discuss their specific situation with the Graduate Secretary.

Students typically fulfill their enrollment requirements after completing their mandatory course work by enrolling in EC999. Students should carefully plan their EC999 enrollment to satisfy the various constraints they may face (fulltime status issues, VISA issues, fellowship issues, etc.).

3.5. Responsible Conduct of Research Requirement

In accordance with Graduate School requirements, the department requires all students to undertake training in the responsible conduct of research. This requirement generally entails about five hours to be completed each year the student is in the program. See the Guidelines for the Responsible Conduct of Research Requirement for details regarding how this requirement can be satisfied.

3.6. Program Flexibility

In order to accommodate the diverse nature of our students and their goals, the Director of Graduate Studies may adapt the course requirements and schedule of academic good progress to suit the particular circumstances of a student.

Examples of students with special circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Students who are unable to enroll for the normal first-year courses because of a language deficiency or for the need of additional preparatory work, with the written approval of the Director of Graduate Studies;
- Students who are trying to obtain a joint degree with another department;
- Students who have severe medical or family emergencies; and
- Students who transfer from other programs and have significant prior coursework.

There are several program rules where no flexibility is allowed: (a) under no circumstances is a student allowed to substitute another examination for passing the Qualifying Examination; and (b) under no circumstances is a student permitted more than two attempts to pass the Qualifying Examination.

Students may request the Director of Graduate Studies for a leave of absence in order to fulfill obligations unrelated to their academic progress. Examples of such obligations include military service, financial distress, health-related issues, and family obligations. Leaves may also be granted for students whose scholarly activity requires their absence from the University. Examples include research or teaching abroad. Leaves of absence do not necessarily “stop the clock” on good progress or on the maximum time limits allowed; such matters are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Graduate Studies and must be addressed directly. Any deviations from the standard program rules must ultimately be requested in writing by the student and must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies in writing. A copy of this correspondence is placed in the student’s academic file for future reference.

3.7. Master’s Degree Requirements

While the Department of Economics does not offer a stand-alone Master’s Degree, we do offer a Master’s Degree for students who enter the PhD program. The following are the requirements for a Master’s Degree.

- Credit requirement. The student must complete 30 credits, with at least 15 credits from the first year courses in the PhD sequence. All additional economics courses at the 800 level can be applied towards the 30 credits. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, other courses may be used as well.
- Grade requirement. The student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 across all courses and cannot obtain a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses.
- Exam requirement. The Department only offers a Plan B Master’s Degree. To satisfy the exam requirement for the Plan B Master’s Degree, the student must receive a Master’s Pass or PhD Pass on the Qualifying Exam.

Like all other degrees, Master's Degrees are conferred just three times a year. Students who require a Master's Degree should be to apply early enough to satisfy any requirements that might exist. For example, it is often the case that graduate students who are to be appointed as instructors are required to have a Master's Degree. It is the graduate student's responsibility to have the appropriate qualifications for any departmental position they wish to hold.

3.8. Dual Majors

Ph.D. students may pursue a dual major with another department or program. Because a dual major is one PhD that satisfies the requirements for both departments/programs, the various departments/programs must coordinate with each other to be sure a single academic plans will satisfy both. The general model for dual majors with Economics is that the student must complete the Qualifying Exam in economics, the Comprehensive Exam in their home department (the department that admits the student), and a set of courses that satisfies both departments, and dissertation that satisfies both departments (judged by a committee that has two members from each of the departments). The home department generally retains the responsibility for funding and placing the student. Areas in which a dual major may be possible include AFRE, ESPP, the Economics of Education, and Finance.

Interested students should contact the Director of Graduate Studies of both departments in their first year so that an appropriate academic plan can be formulated.

4. Advisor/Chair of Dissertation Committee

The role of the Advisor/Chair of Dissertation Committee goes beyond narrow research consultation. He or she serves as a mentor to the student in the student's training as a professional research economist. As such, students are encouraged to communicate frequently with their advisor and chair concerning professional issues outside their dissertation. These include – but need not be limited to – issues concerning coursework, teaching, research integrity, professional service (e.g., conduct at conferences, when peer-reviewing others' works, etc.), as well as professional conduct in general.

As research interests crystallize, each student is responsible for shaping the composition of his or her committee, including selecting a new Advisor/Chair that is appropriate for his or her research interests.

The Advisor/Advisee relationship is voluntary. The student must ask a faculty member if he or she is willing to serve, and the faculty member must agree. Either the student or faculty may terminate the relationship. However, this termination must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Although the Director of Graduate Studies is the presumed default Advisor when one is needed, the Director of Graduate Studies will actively seek to find a new Advisor for a student that will meet the student's research needs.

4.1. Years 1 and 2

Recognizing that graduate students in economics spend their first two years primarily focusing on course work to satisfy departmental requirements, the Director of Graduate Studies normally serves as Advisor for all students during their first two years, and thus is assigned to be Advisor for all students upon matriculation.

Without need of explanation, a student may select a faculty member other than the Director of Graduate Studies to serve as Advisor during the first two years. Students simply need to alert the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Secretary of such an alternative selection. The other faculty member must explicitly agree to serve. The Director of Graduate Studies will remain available to the student to answer any questions that may exist.

4.2. Year 3

During a student's third year, he or she normally replaces the Director of Graduate Studies with another tenure-stream faculty member to serve as Third Year Committee Chair, and thus become the primary advisor. The Third Year Committee Chair will oversee the student's third year paper requirement/comprehensive exam requirement. This advisor is normally a faculty member who is well suited to direct and evaluate the student's research. It is the student's responsibility to identify and establish the advising relationship with a suitable faculty member.

The transition from relying on the Director of Graduate Studies to a Third Year Committee Chair should be completed by November 1st of the third year.

While not ideal, it is possible for the student to replace the initial Third Year Committee Chair as the student's interests evolve. To name a new Third Year Committee Chair, the student must obtain the explicit agreement of the new faculty member and the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. See Section 9 regarding the appropriate actions if any disagreements arise regarding Chair selection.

4.4. Year 4 and Beyond

During a student's fourth year, he or she chooses a tenure-stream faculty member from the Department of Economics to serve as Chair of the Dissertation Committee and be the primary advisor. The Dissertation Committee Chair is normally a faculty member who is well suited to direct and evaluate the student's research. It is the student's responsibility to identify and establish the advising relationship with a suitable Dissertation Committee Chair.

The selection of the Dissertation Committee Chair should be completed by November 1st of the fourth year.

It is possible to replace the initial Chair as the student's interests evolve. To name a new Chair of Dissertation Committee, the student must obtain the explicit agreement of the new faculty member and the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. See Section 9 regarding the appropriate actions if any disagreements arise regarding Chair selection.

4.5. Qualifications of Advisor/Chair of the Dissertation Committee

Generally, it is expected that the Advisor/Dissertation Committee Chair will be drawn from within the department of economics from among the tenure stream faculty.

In certain situations, a student may be allowed to name a co-chair from outside the department, with the explicit approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. One such situation is when students receive a dual PhD with another department, and another such situation is when a faculty member leaves the department. The existence of a co-chair from within the department implies (a) that there exists a departmental faculty member who is clearly in charge of applying departmental standards, (b) that all university policies can easily be satisfied (e.g., the signing of various forms), and (c) that the student can appropriately be considered for departmental and University matters (e.g., Dissertation Completion Fellowships). At the same time, allowing students to name a co-chair from outside the department can allow a student to maintain and/or foster advising relationships that are instrumental to their completing the best possible dissertation.

5. Guidance Committee

During his or her first year, a student typically have two committee members beyond the Director of Graduate Studies (or other Advisor that is selected—see Section 4). The first is a departmental teaching specialist. This member is intended to serve as an additional resource for matters that arise in the course of a graduate student’s teaching duties. The second is the Associate Chair of the Department of Economics. This member is intended to provide an additional perspective on departmental and professional matters when needed, as well as serves as the first point of contact if any conflicts arise (see Section 9).

By November 1st of the second year, all students must add a fourth person to the Guidance Committee. This fourth committee member should be in the field of the student’s interest and is expected to provide guidance regarding course selection and the identification of faculty with similar research interests.

By November 1st of their third year, students are required to establish a three person Third Year Examination Committee. One member should agree to serve as Chair (See Section 4). The other two committee members are generally also members of the Department of Economics and jointly should be qualified to direct the student in their research. This committee will evaluate the student’s Comprehensive Examination and must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. All students will be assigned a fourth committee member who is a non-voting member of the committee to provide an additional perspective on departmental and professional matters when needed. Generally, this non-voting member will be the Associate Chair of the Department of Economics. When the Associate Chair is serving as one of the three Third Year Examination Committee members, the Director of Graduate Studies will identify another person to serve as the fourth member.

By November 1st of a student’s fourth year (or within one week of his or her Dissertation Proposal, whichever comes first), each student is required to assemble their full Dissertation

Guidance Committee. The Dissertation Guidance Committee must have at least four members, the Chair and two other members who are tenure-stream members of the Department of Economics and one additional member who is a tenure-stream faculty member in a different MSU department.

For the dissertation defense (Section 6), the Dean of the College of Social Science may appoint an outside representative. Generally, the committee member who is from a different MSU department serves as the Dean's representative.

As with the Chair of Dissertation Committee, service on a guidance committee is voluntary. The student must obtain the explicit permission from each faculty member regarding their willingness to serve.

The composition of the committee must be approved by Director of Graduate Studies. The Director may recommend up to one additional member for the committee in order to ensure that there exists uniform standards across the department. Subsequent changes to the composition of the committee must be approved in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies and the College and Graduate School must be informed of these changes.

With the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, students may alter the composition of their committee. The most frequent reason such alterations occur is to obtain a committee to better serve the research interest of the student. When everyone is in agreement that changes will benefit the student, including the Chair, the guidance committee, and the new committee member, approval is generally routine. Should an adversarial relationship develop between members of the committee and the student, students are urged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies immediately, potentially avoiding the need to make changes to the guidance committee. In cases where the conflict is sufficiently entrenched that changes are warranted, the Director of Graduate Studies will actively work to ensure that a student's progress is not unduly hindered and that valid substantive concerns from departing members are adequately addressed.

With the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, a student may name someone from outside the University as a guidance committee member. This person must clearly agree to be on the committee, must be judged to have suitable credentials, and must bring an expertise that doesn't otherwise exist within Michigan State University.

6. Dissertation and Final Defense

Students are required to write an acceptable dissertation containing a significant contribution to economic knowledge, conforming to professional standards of evidence, argument, and language that are apparent in the top 100 refereed economic journals and their equivalent.

After the dissertation is substantially complete, the dissertation must be successfully defended in an oral examination. A successful oral examination is defined as a student demonstrating an appropriate mastery of the substance of the dissertation.

Students must provide all members of the guidance committee and the graduate secretary a complete draft of their dissertation no later than **two weeks** before the scheduled date of the oral examination, or a longer time period if the Dissertation Committee requires it.

The dissertation and the dissertation defense must be approved by at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ of the committee voting to “Pass” and with no more than one dissenting vote.

The formatting of the dissertation must adhere to Graduate School guidelines.

A complete electronic copy of the final dissertation (in .pdf format) must be provided to the department. These electronic copies are made available to graduate students and faculty on the internal departmental website.

Dissertations are often comprised of chapters that could be published as stand-alone journal articles. For such dissertations, it is required that an additional chapter be included that “ties” together the core chapters with an introduction and summary discussion.

All dissertations must include an Abstract that is suitable for a general economic audience. The Abstract should be formatted to the guidelines of the rest of the dissertation and be perhaps 1 to 3 pages in length. The Abstracts will be published on our external website.

Some of the dissertation may be comprised of co-authored work. Typically, only one chapter can be co-authored work, but the specific number is left to the discretion of the dissertation committee. Regardless of the number of co-authored chapters, the dissertation should clearly represent a single student’s unique contribution to knowledge. When a co-authored chapter is included, the chapter must include a clear statement of the co-authors and their contact information, as well as a statement confirming that the co-authors have approved that the chapter be included.

If a chapter of the dissertation is published, the chapter must begin with an appropriate citation to the publication.

7. Departmental Policies Regarding Academic Performance

7.1. Defining Good Progress

Annual academic progress reports are prepared during June and July of each year, thus we define Academic Good Progress as of June 15th at the end of each year.

- End of first year: (a) Completes the first-year core course requirements, and (b) Earns a PhD Pass on the Qualifying Examination.

- End of second year: (a) Completes the first year Good Progress requirements, (b) Completes at least five of the Advance Courses requirement.
- End of third year: (a) Completes the second year Good Progress requirements, (b) Completes remaining Advanced Courses requirement, and (c) Completes the Comprehensive Examination requirement.
- End of fourth year: (a) Completes all third year Good Progress requirements, (b) Completes the Proposal Requirement, and (c) Completes the Research Seminar requirement.
- End of fifth year and beyond: it is generally expected that students in Good Standing will have finished their PhD. If a student believes that his or her Good Standing status should be extended beyond the fifth year, they should contact the Director of Graduate Studies as soon as possible.

In special circumstances, such as relevant courses not being offered, additional Advanced Courses can be postponed until a student's third year with the advanced written permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Although the requirements specified above focus on the academic requirements, students may also be deemed to not be making good progress if they fail to appropriately satisfy other degree requirements (e.g., residency, grade, Responsible Conduct of Research, Human Subjects, and professionalism requirements).

7.2. Academic Progress Reports

The progress of every student is monitored every year to ensure that students adhere to the program requirements. The progress reports assess Good Standing as of June 1st and are normally distributed before July 15th.

A student's academic file is defined to include the following: course and examination grading information, the annual Academic Progress reports, and official departmental correspondences regarding their academic program and performance (e.g., awards that are received, warnings regarding performance or conduct, and official accusations of academic dishonesty). A student may request in writing to examine the content of their academic file in the presence of the Director of Graduate Studies. Such requests will be satisfied within 30 days. Students may challenge contents of the academic file and discuss potential differing interpretations or discrepancies with the Director of Graduate Studies or the Graduate Secretary. Should a resolution not take place to the satisfaction of the student, the student is entitled to pursue the matter as described in Section 9 and/or add a written protest to his or her file stating any remaining concerns.

7.3. Termination from the Program

Students are terminated from the Economics PhD program for lack of academic progress in the following instances:

- Students fail to earn a PhD Pass on the Qualifying Examination after two attempts.

- Students fail to satisfy any of the course requirements by the end of their 4th year.
- Students fail to satisfy the Comprehensive Examination requirement by the end of their 5th year.
- Students have not passed their Dissertation Proposal Requirement by the end of their 6th year.
- Students have not completed all requirements for the PhD by the end of their 7th year
- Students who fail to enroll in classes for three straight semesters (i.e., one calendar year)

With respect to this last requirement, a student can obtain an eighth year to complete her/his degree with the explicit permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. Extensions beyond an eighth year are considered only in rare cases and are subject to the rules and regulations of the Graduate School and College, which could require additional approvals from these offices.

8. Departmental Policies Regarding Academic Integrity and Professionalism

8.1. Academic Integrity and Honesty

Integrity and honesty is the bedrock of research, and the department will hold students to the high standards of each.

Students who are determined to have willfully engaged in an act of scholastic dishonesty by an instructor will be penalized based on the instructor's judgment and a written explanation will be placed in the student's academic file. In addition, the instructor may request that the student be dismissed from the program; such a request is acted on by a committee formed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Instruction Committee and decided by majority vote after having heard the student and other parties involved.

Students who are determined to have willfully engaged in an act of scholastic dishonesty in their research by a Chair of the Dissertation Committee will be penalized based on the judgment of the Chair. In addition, the Chair may request that the student be dismissed from the program; such a request is acted on by a committee formed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Instruction Committee and decided by majority vote after having heard the student and other parties involved.

The Director of Graduate Studies may also determine that an act of scholastic dishonesty has occurred in the course of research and assess a penalty deemed appropriate. Whenever the Director of Graduate Studies makes such a determination, the matter and its penalty will be reviewed by a committee formed by the Departmental Chair and the Graduate Instruction Committee and decided by majority vote after having heard the student and other parties involved.

If the act of scholastic dishonesty is ascertained after the dissertation defense has been completed, steps will be initiated in order to have the degree revoked. Such a determination will be made by majority vote of at least three individuals drawn from the following set of

people: the Director of Graduate Studies, the Departmental Chair, and the Graduate Instruction Committee.

A student who is penalized for academic dishonesty can appeal the decision to a committee formed by the Department Chair and the Department Advisory Committee, decided again by majority vote. Students who wish to appeal any decisions further must follow the guidelines outlined in Section 9.

8.2. Professionalism

The principle of professionalism is not a set of rules that specify conduct, but an overarching guideline that provides direction in identifying appropriate and inappropriate conduct. This overarching guideline is the requirement of conduct that maintains an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and research among all departmental members and the broader academic community.

Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a professional manner and to exhibit characteristics of a professional student. If a student engages in conduct that is deemed unprofessional, the department will generally treat such conduct as an additional place where students need to be taught appropriate skills to succeed in the profession, with such information generally relayed by the Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.

If the conduct persists or if it is particularly egregious, the conduct may be noted in the student's academic file and specific guidelines may be provided to guide future conduct. Repeated or egregious unprofessional conduct can be used as grounds for termination from the program. Such decisions will be handled by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Departmental Chair, in consultation with the appropriate Associate Dean in the College of Social Sciences.

8.3. Research Involving Human Subjects

Any research involving human subjects must adhere to strictly accepted guidelines and must be cleared with the department and the University *prior to* any research involving human subjects having begun. To this end, students must consult the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS).

9. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

The University has established a judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations of recognized graduate student rights and responsibilities (see Article 5 of the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook of the Graduate School). However, the first venue to resolve such conflicts, both informally and formally, rests with the department.

Students that find themselves in conflict with other students, course instructors, or committee members are advised to seek guidance and support from their Advisor/Dissertation Committee Chair or the Director of Graduate Studies. If the student believes that the Advisor/Dissertation

Committee Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies are in conflict with a particular dispute, the student should next seek council from the Associate Chair of the Department of Economics. If the Associate Chair is also deemed to be in conflict, the student should seek council from the Chair of the Department of Economics.

In addition, it is important to recognize that MSU provides the University Ombudsperson as a resource to resolving conflicts and disputes. Students should feel free to contact the Ombudsperson at any time to discuss issues that arise. The Ombudsperson is not part of the formal grievance process, but instead “listens, seeks to understand, and provide information to help solve problems.” The Ombudsperson can help students understand what violations may exist and then identify appropriate remedies.

If these informal methods prove inadequate, then the student may initiate a formal grievance. See the Graduate Student Academic Grievance Hearing Procedures for the Economics Department for details about this process.

10. Funding and Work Related Policies

The Economics Department generally relies on three types of assistantships to support graduate students, Teaching Assistantships (TA), Teaching Excluded Assistantships (TE), and Research Assistantships (RA). TA hours are assigned to an instructor to provide assistance with instructional activities. RA hours are assigned to an instructor to provide assistance with research projects.

Per University and Union rules, not all instructional activities rise to the level of a TA. In such cases, a student is assigned as a Teaching Excluded Assistant (TE) rather than a TA. While the distinctions between a TE and TA are complicated, the main use of TE in the Economics Department is for first year students who are only used as graders and in the help room, the latter of which is considered to be tutoring hours because they target multiple sections.

If any of a student’s time is used for instructional purposes that fall into the category reserved for a TA, the student must be assigned as a TA per Union rules.

TA, TE, and RA assignments are made in ¼ time blocks (i.e., 10 hour increments).

Instructors may use their assigned TA (or TE) hours for multiple courses and even for research assistance, as long as the average hours remains at or below the assigned level of hours. If a 10-hour assignment is completely redirected to research assistance, the faculty member must notify the Economics Department so the student can be re-classified from TA (or TE) to an RA.

All duties assigned to a graduate assistant should be of an instructional, administrative, or research related nature.

In addition, a student's acceptance letter may include additional stipulations about funding. All offer letter stipulations will be followed.

10.1. Good Standing for Funding

Students who are offered funding (typically in their acceptance letter) will be supported by the department for semesters in which they meet the following requirements.

1. Satisfies the academic Good Progress standards outlined in Section 7.1.

As an example, a student that successfully completes the course requirements and receives a PhD Pass on the Qualifying Examination will have satisfied the academic Good Progress requirement for their second year.

While the academic Good Progress standards are specified on an annual basis, Good Standing for Funding will be assessed semester by semester. For example, first and second year students who fail fall semester courses and fourth year students who fail to meet the fall Proposal deadline will not be considered to be in Good Standing for Funding for the subsequent spring semester. Similarly, students who earn a PhD Pass on their Qualifying Examination in August will be placed back in Good Standing for Funding for the subsequent spring semester.

2. Meets University guidelines to be employed

The University sets general standards for employment, such as requiring employees to undergo a criminal background check and meet other training requirements. Students who fail to meet University standards for employment will not be in Good Standing for Funding.

To be appointed as a Teaching Assistant, International students must satisfy University-wide language proficiency requirements. This can be satisfied through various waivers (e.g., having successfully studied in the United States previously) or passing the SPEAK test with a score of 50 or higher. Other work arrangements may be offered to an international student who has not passed the SPEAK test at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies.

3. Displays an adequate level of professionalism in their TA assignments

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, including satisfactorily completing their TA assignments and other reasonable TA obligations that are specified by the department (i.e., TA training, proctoring exams, etc.). If a student engages in conduct that is deemed unprofessional or unsatisfactory, the department will generally treat such conduct as an additional place where students need to be taught appropriate skills to succeed in the profession, with such information generally relayed by the Director of Graduate Studies. If the conduct persists or if it is particularly egregious, the conduct may be noted in the student's work file and specific guidelines may be provided to guide future conduct. Repeated or egregious unprofessional conduct can be used as grounds for losing Good Standing for Funding status. Such decisions will be jointly made by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

10.2. Teaching and Research Assistant Evaluations

All Teaching and Research Assistants will be evaluated by the instructor(s) they are assigned to. These evaluations become part of the employment file of a student.

Students who perform at an “unsatisfactory level” or worse will be required to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to establish a plan to improve performance in the future.

10.3. Alternative Sources of Funding

Students are strongly encouraged to seek outside funding for their studies. If a student defers funding that he or she would have obtained from the department, the student will receive preferential treatment for other funding opportunities (e.g., summer funding, travel funding, additional years of funding, etc.). Students should discuss such arrangements with the Director of Graduate Studies beforehand to be sure the appropriate arrangements are made and documentation is obtained.

10.4. TA/RA Level Determination

The pay for TAs and RAs is determined by the classification level (Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3). The economics department will abide by all current HR and Union guidelines for determining these levels. For the current guidelines, see the Office of the Registrar website under the Academic Programs Catalog for Graduate Education (<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s357>).

Briefly, the levels are determined according to relevant degrees and relevant teaching experience. While we review the particular qualifications of each student, the following lists the typical progression of students in the economics PhD program.

- Level 1: students without a verified Master’s Degree at the time of appointment and less than 2 semesters of relevant experience.
- Level 2: students with a verified Master’s Degree at the time of appointment and/or students with at least 2 semesters of relevant experience.
- Level 3: students with at least 4 semesters of relevant experience

Relevant experience will generally be assistantship or fellowship experience in the economics department. The experience from a different unit or institution may be applied if the Director of Graduate Studies deems the experience sufficiently relevant.

10.5. Additional Work for Pay

Students on teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and summer funding must obtain prior approval from the DGS to perform additional work for pay at Michigan State University. Approval will be given whenever the Advisor/Committee Chair and the DGS deem that the work is consistent with the student’s educational objectives and is consistent with the various other university policies that are relevant. Students who fail to obtain prior approval can be classified as not being in good standing for future funding.

10.6. The Treatment of Graduate Assistants

All Graduate Assistants should expect to be treated in a professional manner by all Departmental personnel. This treatment covers the amount of work (e.g., do the number of hours correspond to the number of hours for which the student is being paid?), the type of work (e.g., is the work reasonably related to the teaching, research, or administrative duties of the specified position?), the timing of work (e.g., is appropriate lead time provided given the nature of the task?), and the interactions about the work. Students should immediately contact the Director of Graduate Studies or other Advisor if they have concerns about their treatment by any Departmental personnel.

11. University Resources

Given the size of Michigan State University, there are many different administrative units that cover aspects of our program and that provide resources that could be useful to you. We provide links to numerous resources here, but please feel free to contact the Graduate Secretary or the Director of Graduate Studies for any questions you may have.

The Graduate School, College of Social Sciences, and the Graduate Employees Union have many of their own rules and regulations. Although we make a good faith effort to include these rules and regulations in the rules described in this Handbook, our efforts may be incomplete because of the number of such rules and regulations that exist and the frequency with which they change. Given that the department is subject to those rules, graduate students in the economics department are as well. Thus, our Handbook includes the provisions detailed in the following documents.

- MSU Academic Programs: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Default.asp>
- Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities: <http://grad.msu.edu/gsrr/>
- MSU-GEU contract: : <http://grad.msu.edu/2011-2015GEUContract.pdf>
- Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships: <http://grad.msu.edu/publications/docs/studentadvising.pdf>
- Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities: <http://grad.msu.edu/publications/docs/integrityresearch.pdf>

There is a lot of information relevant to the program and MSU on the websites of the various administrative units that our PhD students fall under.

- Department of Economics main web page: <http://econ.msu.edu/>
- Department of Economics internal Graduate Program web page: <http://d2l.msu.edu/>
- College of Social Science web page: <http://www.socialscience.msu.edu/>
- Graduate School web page: <http://grad.msu.edu/>
- Michigan State University: <http://www.msu.edu/>

Below are some specific links that may be useful.

- Office of the Ombudsperson (an office that is dedicated to helping students resolve conflicts and disputes within the university): <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/>

- Counseling Center (a confidential place for students to receive counseling services): <http://www.counseling.msu.edu/>
- Office of Human Resources (an office that provides information about employee benefits): <http://www.hr.msu.edu/>
- Graduate Employees Union (the union that represents teaching and research assistants at MSU): <http://geuatmsu.org/>