Assessment Plan
M.A. in Economics Program - 2012

Program Goals
In keeping with Northern Illinois University’s mission in the State of Illinois, especially its northern portion, the mission of the M.A. in Economics program is to train analysts who can perform basic professional evaluations of alternative public or private economic policies from different societal perspectives. The M.A. degree can also be the first step towards a Ph.D. degree.

1. Student Learning Objectives

The objectives of the Department of Economics for the M.A. in Economics program are the following:

a) Graduates will demonstrate sufficient knowledge of economic theory to conduct basic professional economic analysis.

b) Graduates will demonstrate sufficient knowledge of econometric techniques to conduct basic professional empirical analysis.

c) Graduates will demonstrate sufficient competence in economic theory and econometrics to conduct basic professional economic analysis under supervision.

2. Methods

a) Each M.A. student is required to demonstrate competency in economic analysis. This may be done either by earning a B or better in graduate theory classes or passing a comprehensive exam in the subject. The performance of M.A. students in Microeconomics I (ECON 660) and Macroeconomics I (ECON 661) is examined each year to assess whether the students are demonstrating competency in these subjects. Each student’s performance is evaluated using a holistic scoring method on a five point scale. The rubric used is shown in Table 1. Scores of four or five indicate above average competence, a score of three indicates adequate competence, and scores of one or two indicate a lack of competence. Students who earn a score of four or five in microeconomics or macroeconomics are exempted from taking the M.A. Comprehensive exam in that subject. The initial assessment, based upon the student’s performance in ECON 660 and ECON 661, is done at the end of the semester in which the two courses are taken. Students who do not demonstrate sufficient mastery to be exempted from the comprehensive exam take the comprehensive exam(s) the next time they are offered (January or August) and are offered a second attempt if an exam is not passed on the first attempt.

b) A student’s performance in Econometrics I (ECON 690) indicates the degree to which the student has mastered econometric techniques. Each student’s performance on the exam is evaluated using a holistic scoring method on a five point scale. The rubric used is shown in Table 1. Scores of four or five indicate above average competence, a score of three indicates adequate competence, and scores of one or two indicate a lack of
c) During the second year in the M.A. program, students take field courses in economics and undertake original research under the supervision of a faculty member. This research is reported in the Master’s Research Paper. The quality of the research reported in the Master’s Research Paper indicates a student’s competence in conducting applied analytical work under supervision. Each student’s Master’s Research Paper is evaluated by the student’s faculty advisor. The evaluation includes a summary measure (using a five point holistic scoring method) of the quality of the theoretical and econometric work, as well as thesis development, organization, and writing quality. The evaluation rubric is attached following Table 3. A score of less than three in any category is typically considered unacceptable and any student who fails to reach this standard is required to revise and improve the paper until it warrants being awarded at least a three in each category. The evaluations of Master’s Research Papers are done throughout the year and the results are reviewed at the end of the spring semester every year.