

Academic Degree Programs Assessment Template



**Northern Illinois
University**

Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation (AAE)

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Department of Economics

Master of Arts in Economics

M.A.

September 6, 2019

Jeremy R. Groves, Associate Professor
Director of Graduate Studies

1. Introduction

The MA in Economics program serves as both a terminal M.A. degree program and a supplement to the department's Ph.D. in Economics program. As a result, many of the students enrolled in the M.A. program, including most of the students covered by this report, have been part of both the M.A. and Ph.D. programs. As the value of undergraduate degrees is slowly decreasing and the demand for M.A. degrees is increasing, the program is attempting to adjust itself to address these demands while at the same time being able to still serve as part of the Ph.D. in Economics program. Another source of higher demand includes professionals returning to school to earn a Master's degree in order to advance in their existing career. Finally, as the available of large datasets is increasing, there is an increase in the demand for data analysts that are able to manipulate, analyze, and interpret the results from this data. These are the areas that the M.A. in Economics program are seeking to further advance. At this stage the program has been able to implement changes to attempt to address the needs of students in these different groups while at the same time addressing the needs of the students already enrolled in the program.

The first major change within the program is the modification of the first year of courses for students within the M.A. program. The first change is the expansion of the Economics 591 class from three weeks to a full semester. In most Ph.D. programs at peer and higher ranked programs, there exists a similar class where the topics of mathematics that will be necessary are reviewed to ensure students are up to speed. Since most programs count this as a "review", the course typically spans three weeks and is an intense study either just before the fall semester starts or during the first three weeks of the semester. As discussed later, we found that in many cases this was not a review and for some of the areas into which the program hopes to grow, this would be a review of materials typically last seen by the students several years prior. Therefore, the program expanded the class to a full semester so that it is both less intense and is flexible enough to fill in gaps the students may have in the material to better prepare them for success and to meet the SLOs of the program.

The second change was the creation of a new course that covers basic introductions to the software and research tools students will be using to do data analysis. This course is being taught for the first time in the 2019-2020 academic year by five of the program's faculty and is required for all students in the M.A. program. The hope is that this course, which covers basic introduction to languages and programming skills needed to do data analysis, will free up time in the econometric classes to focus on the actual interpretation of the analysis. A third change has been the creation of an Accelerated BS/MA program which allows undergraduate students with majors in Economics to earn their M.A. degree in just one year after their undergraduate graduation. This change aims to retain the top students within the major who seek to increase their marketability or continue on to more advanced degrees to capitalize on their undergraduate studies and seamlessly move into the M.A. program.

Finally, to ensure the highest quality of the program and in response to program assessment update feedback, we have reworked the SLOs of the program to be more direct and easily measured, expressed program-level targets (which did not exist prior) to measure the program's own success, and we have modified the evaluation mechanism used to ensure we are truly measuring the SLOs and not tying the assessment results to unrelated class experiences. We have also added an indirect measure taken at the end of the first year to allow students to communicate with the program about what they feel is working and is not working in the program to ensure that we are conveying the material we are trying to convey. We hope these changes will

strengthen the foundation of the program as we move forward and begin to develop more interdisciplinary connections across the university.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic economic theory to analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.

SLO 2: Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic econometric techniques to empirically analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.

SLO 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to perform basic research, writing, and data analysis to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.

3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

N/A

4. Curriculum Map

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes		
	1. Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic economic theory to analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.	2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic econometric techniques to empirically analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.	3. Students will demonstrate the ability to perform basic research, writing, and data analysis to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.
ECON 590		D	B
ECON 591	B	B	
ECON 691		B	B
ECON 660	P		P
ECON 661	P		P
ECON 690		P	P
ECON 692A		P	P
<i>Note.</i> Course supports the outcome at the B=beginning, D=developing, or P=proficient level.			

5. Assessment Methods

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Economics 660 Final Examination Essay Questions	Students complete a set of open-ended essay response questions to demonstrate their ability to apply specific microeconomic theory to: (1) determine current equilibrium states; (2) determine the impact of changes to the initial conditions or assumptions on that state; and (3) comment on their results and methods.	A student will receive an average score of 3 or better across all relevant questions asked on the examination. Any student who fails to achieve this target will sit for the M.A. comprehensive exam in microeconomics and the outcome of that exam (evaluated in the same method) will be used in place of the course final exam.	At least 90% of all terminal M.A. students will meet the student-level target of an average score of 3 or better.	At the end of the semester in which ECON 660 is offered.	Course instructor will report the results to the Director of Graduate Studies.	1
Economics 661 Final Examination Essay Questions	Students are required to complete a set of open-ended essay response questions to demonstrate their ability to apply specific macroeconomic theory to: (1) determine current equilibrium states; (2) determine the impact of changes to the initial conditions or assumptions on that state; and (3) comment on their results and methods.	A student will receive an average score of 3 or better across all relevant questions asked on the examination. Any student who fails to achieve this target will sit for the M.A. comprehensive exam in macroeconomics and the outcome of that exam (evaluated in the same method) will be used in place of the course final exam.	At least 90% of all terminal M.A. students will meet the student-level target of an average score of 3 or better.	At the end of the semester in which ECON 661 is offered.	Course instructor will report the results to the Director of Graduate Studies.	1

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
First-Year Survey	Students to complete a short, online survey assessing their opinions on the (1) sufficiency of their preparation prior to starting the program; (2) the level of course rigor; (3) the perceived relevance of the material covered in each course; (4) the sufficiency of the fall courses preparing them for the spring courses; and (5) their plans moving forward.	Students will answer each of the questions of the survey.	At least 75% of all students will respond to the survey.	During the final week of the spring semester of the student's first year.	Director of Graduate Studies will conduct the survey.	1,2,3
Economics 690 Final Examination Essay Questions	Students complete a set of open-ended essay response questions to demonstrate their ability to apply the correct econometric techniques to empirically evaluate data of different types and interpret and communicate those results.	A student will receive an average score of 3 or better across all relevant questions asked on the examination.	At least 90% of all terminal M.A. students will meet the student-level target of an average score of 3 or better.	At the end of the semester in which ECON 690 is offered.	Course instructor will report the results to the Director of Graduate Studies.	2

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
M.A. Research Paper	Students complete a research paper while under the supervision of a faculty member within the department to demonstrate their ability to research, collect and evaluate data, interpret empirical results, and communicate those results. The paper will be evaluated by that professor using a five-point rubric (see attached) evaluating the students: (1) development of their thesis; (2) research of the existing literature; (3) formation and execution of the econometric methodology; (4) the organization of the paper; and (5) the quality of the writing.	A student will receive a score of 3 or better on all five evaluation criteria. Students who score below a 3 on any criteria will be required to revise the paper until they reach the score of 3 or higher.	90% of graduates will have met the student-level achievement target within two years of starting the program.	During the final semester of the student's M.A. program.	The faculty supervisor will submit the evaluation form to the Director of Graduate Studies.	3

ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome		
	1. Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic economic theory to analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.	2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use basic econometric techniques to empirically analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.	3. Students will demonstrate the ability to perform basic research, writing, and data analysis to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.
Economics 660 Final Examination Essay Questions	S,D		F, D
Economics 661 Final Examination Essay Questions	S,D		F, D
Economics 690 Final Examination Essay Questions		S,D	F, D
First-Year Survey	F, I	F, I	F, I
M.A. Research Paper			S, D
<i>Note.</i> F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment.			