

Academic Degree Programs Assessment



**Northern Illinois
University**

Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation (AAE)

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Department of Economics

Doctor of Philosophy in Economics

Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the program underwent an overhaul of its first-year sequence of course in partial response to results from the program assessment updates and faculty concerns with the quality of the students reaching the higher-level course. Those changes included expanding the math prep class (math camp) to a full semester from its previous three-week intensive schedule, the addition of a class covering basic computational research methods, software, and programming, and the movement of the theory courses from the first and second semesters of the program to the second and third semesters. For this assessment evaluation the program is responding to many of the elements of feedback received from previous annual assessment updates and the checklist provided for this evaluation and update.

The first change is the rewording of the SLOs to make them more measurable by removing vague language such as “sufficient” and replacing such language with actual student-level targets (which were previously never stated explicitly). A second change is the replacement of the fourth SLO which involved student placement with an SLO that is actually student orientated in direct response to feedback that job placement is a program level goal, not student. A third change was the inclusion of program-level targets that were previously never stated.

In terms of the assessment methods, this updates adds the indirect assessment method of surveying the students at the completion of the first year of courses to get both feedback on how well prepared they felt with their previous coursework before starting the program and how well they feel the material in the first year was presented and relevant. The department also plans to use this opportunity to gather information about the student’s plans to help plan scheduling of the more advanced field courses. Another assessment change was making a clearer division between the rubrics used for the M.A. research paper and the Ph.D. research paper. Previously the same rubric and the same evaluation criteria were used with the assumption that the faculty member would adjust their expectations accordingly. These changes in expectations are now explicit and the evaluation criteria are redefined including the addition of a sixth criteria. Another change in rubric is the inclusion of an evaluation of the student’s presentations that are required after the completion of the Ph.D. research paper.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to use advanced 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 advanced 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 advanced, original research, quality writing, and data analysis skills to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to provide a clear and concise presentation of their research and professionally respond to questions related to their research and methodologies.

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 advanced 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 advanced 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 advanced, original research, quality writing, and data analysis to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individuals, firms, or other institutions.	4: Students will demonstrate the ability to provide a clear and concise presentation of their research and professionally respond to questions related to their research and methodologies.
ECON 648	D			
ECON 690		D	D	
ECON 691		B	B	B
ECON 692A		D		
ECON 760	B			
ECON 761	B		D	
ECON 796			D	D
ECON 798				D
ECON 799	P	P	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
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 70% 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
Microeconomic theory Comprehensive Examination	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. The questions are submitted by a committee of three faculty members who then grade the questions they submitted.	Students may earn a grade of Pass, Marginal Pass, or Fail on each section of the examination. The members of the committee then aggregate those results to determine the overall result. Students who earn an overall Pass or Marginal Pass are allowed to move forward, whereas students who earn an overall result of Fail are allowed to attempt the examination in the next exam period. Students are allowed only one retake attempt after which they are dismissed from the program.	At least 75-80% of all doctoral students will meet the student-level target of an overall Marginal Pass on the first attempt and 100% by the second attempt.	The examinations are offered during the first full week of August and the first full week of January that does not include the first of the month. Students must take the examination during the first test period occurring after they complete Economics 760	The examination committee, which is comprised of the instructors for Economics 660, Economics 760, and Economics 690.	1, 2

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Macroeconomic theory Comprehensive Examination	Students 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. The questions are submitted by a committee of three faculty members who then grade the questions they submitted.	Students may earn a grade of Pass, Marginal Pass, or Fail on each section of the examination. The members of the committee then aggregate those results to determine the overall result. Students who earn an overall Pass or Marginal Pass are allowed to move forward, whereas students who earn an overall result of Fail are allowed to attempt the examination in the next exam period. Students are allowed only one retake attempt after which they are dismissed from the program.	At least 75-80% of all doctoral students will meet the student-level target of an overall Marginal Pass on the first attempt and 100% by the second attempt.	The examinations are offered during the first full week of August and the first full week of January that does not including the first of the month. Students must take the examination during the first test period occurring after they complete Economics 761	The examination committee, which is comprised of the instructors for Economics 661, Economics 761, and Economics 590.	1,2
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.	Student will earn an overall average score of 4 or better across all relevant questions asked on the examination.	At least 90% of all doctoral students will meet the student-level target of an average score of 4 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
Ph.D. Research Paper	Students complete an original 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 the supervising professor and two other members of the faculty using a five -point rubric evaluating the students: (1) development of their thesis; (2) research of the existing literature; (3) formation and explanation of a theoretical model; (4) formation and execution of the econometric methodology; (5) the organization of the paper; and (6) the quality of the writing.	A student will receive a score of 3 or better on all six 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 doctoral students will have met the student-level achievement target by the end of the fall semester of their fourth year in the program.	Upon the completion of the Ph.D. Research Paper (which should occur no later than the end of the fall semester of the student's fourth year).	The faculty supervisor will submit the evaluation form to the Director of Graduate Studies.	3

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Ph.D. Research Paper Presentation	After the completion of the Ph.D. research paper, the student will arrange to present the research as part of Economics 798 class by producing a 1-hour research presentation to be evaluated by the faculty present using a five-point rubric in the areas of (1) clarity of presentation; (2) quality of presentation; and (3) quality of responses to questions.	A student should receive an average of 3 or better from across the individual professor scores. Students who score an overall average of 2 or below will be required to redo the presentation at a later date.	At least 90% of students will score an overall average of 3.0 or higher in their first attempt. 100% of students will have scored an overall average of 3.0 or higher after a second attempt.	The data will be collected from the faculty members after the student presentation in Economics 798. Students will present within one semester of completing the Ph.D. Research paper.	The Director of Graduate Studies will collect the results from each faculty member present at the seminar.	4

ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome			
	1. Students will demonstrate the ability to use advanced economic theory to analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individual, firm, or global wellbeing.	2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use advanced econometric techniques to empirically analyze the impact of choices and/or policies on individual, firm, or global wellbeing.	3. Students will demonstrate the ability to perform advanced, original research, quality writing, and data analysis to address the impact of choices and/or policies on individual, firm, or global wellbeing.	4: Students will demonstrate the ability to provide a clear and assessable presentation of their research and being able to demonstrate the ability to adequately respond to questions related to their research and methodologies.
First-Year Survey	F, I	F, I		
Microeconomic theory Comprehensive Examination	S,D		F, D	
Macroeconomic theory Comprehensive Examination	S,D		F, D	
Economics 690 Final Examination Essay Questions		S,D	F, D	
Ph.D. Research Paper	S, D	S, D	S, D	
Ph.D. Research Paper Presentation				S, D
<i>Note.</i> F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment.				