



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

# Ph.D. Student Handbook

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## I. Introduction

The faculty of the Department of Economics at the University of Oklahoma has a strong commitment to excellence in graduate education. It has focused its efforts on providing a solid base of core theoretical and empirical skills and the opportunity to study in a limited number of field areas. More than 190 Ph.D.'s in Economics have been graduated since the early 1950s. Many of the Department's graduates have gone on to distinguished careers in higher education, government, and the private sector.

The Ph.D. program is designed with the goal of providing students with maximum support in the pursuit of their career objectives. There are three structural elements in the Ph.D. program. The first element consists of a rigorous and well-integrated core curriculum of economic theory and statistical analysis. The Ph.D. program in Economics at the University of Oklahoma is distinctive in its effort to prepare the student to do applied economic research. The second element consists of concentrated study in selected fields. The department offers fields in development economics, industrial organization, international economics, and public economics. The third element consists of training designed to prepare the student to undertake independent research. This process culminates in a significant work of original research in the form of a dissertation. Having completed all three elements, our students are fully qualified to pursue academic, professional, or governmental careers.

The program is also subject to all the requirements of the Graduate College as outlined in the [Graduate College Bulletin](#). The Graduate College can be reached through e-mail at [gradinfo@ou.edu](mailto:gradinfo@ou.edu), the internet <http://gradweb.ou.edu/> or by phone (+1) (405) 325-3811.

## II. Admission Requirements

### *Previous Coursework*

Applicants usually have a bachelor's degree in economics, but this is not a prerequisite. Some coursework in economics including both intermediate micro and macroeconomics is required prior to starting the program. All applicants need a good working knowledge of mathematics and basic statistics. At least two semesters of theoretical calculus and one semester of basic statistics or their equivalents are required. A previous course in linear algebra is highly recommended.

### *Application Requirements*

The Department of Economics evaluates each applicant individually to select those who have the aptitude, perseverance, academic and analytical skills necessary to successfully complete an advanced degree. We require the following information for application to the Ph.D. program:

1. Official transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate coursework.
2. Scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) aptitude test. (To ensure that these scores are current, the exam must have been taken in the last two years.)

3. Three (3) letters of recommendation.
4. Scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for applicants from non-English speaking nations.
5. Statement of Purpose (SOP).
6. Resume.

In addition, the Graduate College of the University of Oklahoma has specific admission requirements of:

1. A “B” average or better over the last 60 hours of undergraduate study or the last 12 hours of graduate study.
2. For non-native English-speaking applicants, a TOEFL score of 550 or higher (79 or higher on the IBT).
3. U.S. applicants must have earned a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education or a school that is accredited by a national accreditation agency recognized by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
4. International applicants must have received the equivalent of a US bachelor's degree, typically four years in length, from an accredited college or university in the country where the degree was earned.

For further details of the application requirements, please visit [the Graduate College of the University of Oklahoma](#) website.

The Department of Economics does not have specific admission requirements (e.g., minimum GRE scores). Rather, an admissions committee, composed of three members of the graduate faculty, recommends admission based on GRE scores, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, and prior academic record. All these sources of information are helpful in the evaluation of an applicant’s ability to pursue an advanced degree. Consequently, applications will not be considered unless all information is available.

### **III. Coursework for the Ph.D. Degree**

#### *Hours Requirement*

The Ph.D. degree requirements are determined by the Economics Department in conjunction with the requirements of the Graduate College of the University of Oklahoma as set forth in the [General Catalog](#). In cases of uncertainty, the student is advised to refer to the [General Catalog](#) and/or consult the Department’s Graduate Program Director (GPD).

The Ph.D. degree requires at least 90 hours beyond the Bachelor’s degree. A minimum of 54 of these hours must consist of formal coursework, with the remainder being dissertation research. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS, currently Dr. Qihong Liu) in consultation with the Graduate College will determine the actual number of hours that may be transferred in specific cases.

In addition, students must demonstrate research proficiency, which is required for all doctoral degree candidates at the University of Oklahoma. The research proficiency for the

Department of Economics is demonstrated by the ability to utilize statistical and econometric software packages, by foreign language expertise, or by demonstrated math proficiencies.

## *Formal Coursework*

**Curriculum.** The following course sequence will generally constitute the basis of the student's first three years of study:

### **Ph.D. Course Sequence**

- **First Year**

*Fall Semester*

- ECON 5153 – Mathematical Economics I
- ECON 5123 – Advanced Price and Welfare Theory
- ECON 5163 – Advanced Macroeconomics & Growth Theory
- ECON 5213 – Advanced Econometrics

*Spring Semester*

- ECON 6313 – Seminar in Macroeconomic and Growth Theory
- ECON 6213 – Seminar in Price and Welfare Theory
- ECON 5243 – Econometrics II

\*August following first year: **Core Exam I** (Microeconomics (Econ 5123 & 6213), Macroeconomics (Econ 5163 & 6313), Econometrics (5213 & 5243))

\*In case of failure, the retake will take place in January of the following year.

- **Second Year**

*Fall Semester*

- ECON 6343 – Econometrics III
- FIELD
- FIELD/ELECTIVE

*Spring Semester*

- FIELD
- FIELD/ELECTIVE
- ECON 5970 – Econometrics Seminar

\* August following second year: **Core Exam II** [one field exam of choice]

\* In case of failure, students can either retake the Exam or change their fields after consultation with the DGS.

- **Third Year**

*Fall Semester*

- FIELD/ELECTIVE
- FIELD
- FIELD/ELECTIVE

\***Complete Advisory Committee Report**

*Spring Semester*

- ECON 5960 – Readings in Selected Fields in Economics
- FIELD
- FIELD/ELECTIVE

### ***\*Complete the General Exam***

- **Fourth Year - Onwards**

*Fall & Spring Semesters*

- DISSERTATION HOURS

\* International students need to enroll in a minimum of 5 credit hours to maintain their student status for visa purposes.

\*In order to graduate, students need to have completed 36 dissertation hours, and a total of 54 credit hours of graduate-level courses.

## **IV. Qualifying Examinations**

Students in the Ph.D. program must pass two qualifying examinations which test their competency in various components of economic theory in macroeconomics, microeconomics and econometrics. Only students who pass both qualifying examinations will be allowed to remain in the Ph.D. program.

The first qualifying examination is based on the first year required classes and is administered in August, prior to the start of fall semester classes. The purpose of this exam is to assure that students have mastered the vital tools covered in first year courses prior to taking advanced courses. The exam is in three parts: microeconomic theory (ECON 5123 and ECON 6213), macroeconomic theory (ECON 5163 and ECON 6313) and math, statistics, and econometrics (ECON 5153 and ECON 5213). Each of the three parts is graded by placing the response into one of the following categories: Ph.D. pass, M.A. Pass, or Fail. All parts of the first qualifying exam must be passed at the Ph.D. level.

Students are allowed one opportunity to retake the exam. The retake is given in January, during the week prior to the start of spring semester classes. The student need only retake the parts of the exam for which the grade was less than a Ph.D. pass. If a student fails to obtain a Ph.D. pass on the second effort, that student is required to leave the Ph.D. program. In this event the student has the option of continuing their graduate studies in the Applied Economics Track of the M.A. program, provided that the student received at least an M.A. pass on all parts of the exam. Satisfactory completion of the remainder of the M.A. coursework will allow the student to earn a terminal M.A. degree.

The second qualifying examination is administered in August, prior to the start of third year classes. It covers one of the department's four field sequences (described below in Section V). The purpose of this exam is to assure students can master advanced material required to conduct independent research. Typically, two of the four field sequences will be offered each year, so students must take the courses for one of the fields offered in their second year and then be tested on those courses.

Grades for this examination are Pass and Fail, and are assigned for each part. Both parts of the exam must be passed. One opportunity to retake the second qualifying exam is allowed. The retake is given in January during the week prior to the start of spring semester classes. A student who fails to pass this exam on the second attempt is required to leave the Ph.D. program but can continue their graduate studies in the Applied Economics Track of the M.A. program.

## V. Fields of Specialization

### *Field Courses*

The fields of specialization are designed to develop an in-depth knowledge of the theory and literature of the fields chosen. They prepare the student to become an active researcher in those fields and offer potential topics for a dissertation. Students must take a minimum of field sequences, at least one of which must be taken in the second year and is tested. The department offers field sequences in the following fields: Growth and Development Economics, Industrial Organization, International Economics, Public Economics, and Labor Economics. Field Coursework

❖ **Growth and Development Economics**

ECON 6653 – Seminar in Growth

ECON 6693 – Seminar in Economic Development

❖ **Industrial Organization**

ECON 5313 – Industrial Organization

ECON 6333 – Seminar in Industrial Organization

❖ **International Economics**

ECON 5613 – International Economics: Trade

ECON 5633 – International Economics: Finance

ECON 6613 – Seminar in International Economics

❖ **Public Economics**

ECON 5353 – Public Finance: Current Issues in Taxation

ECON 6123 – Planning and Policy Analysis

ECON 6773 – Seminar in Public Economics

❖ **Labor Economics**

ECON 6433 – Labor Economics I

ECON 6533 – Labor Economics II

The field sequences are usually offered on an alternating year basis. In cases where three courses are listed above, only two will generally be taught in a particular cycle. In this fashion, students will be able to complete their formal coursework and take any of the department's field sequences within three years of beginning the Ph.D. program. The specific courses within the fields may vary depending upon faculty availability. A field is earned by taking two courses within the sequence. In the event that certain course offerings are unavailable, the Ph.D. program director will authorize appropriate course substitutions. Under certain circumstances an elective class may be designated by the Graduate Program Director as a substitute for one of the classes listed above.

## *Elective Courses*

In addition to our field sequences, the department offers on an occasional basis several other elective classes listed below. Students may also with permission of the Graduate Program Director, or the Chair of their Ph.D. Advisory Committee take graduate courses in other departments like Data Science, Computer Science, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Political Science as electives.

## **VI. Advisory Committee Report and General Exam**

During the student's third year of coursework, the student will select four/five graduate faculty members to serve on his/her Ph.D. Advisory Committee. The Committee must consist of a committee Chair and a minimum of two faculty members from the department, and a Graduate College representative. The student's Ph.D. Advisory Committee will prepare and conduct the General Examination and supervise enrollment in ECON 5960 during the spring semester of the third year of coursework. This same committee, with changes in its composition, if necessary, will supervise dissertation preparation and conduct the final oral examination over the dissertation. The Advisory Committee will hold an advisory conference to assess the student's program of study and areas of specialization. A report of the student's approved program (the Advisory Committee Report, ACR) is submitted to the Graduate College. The ACR should be completed by the end of the fall semester of the third year or as soon as a student finds a willing dissertation Chair.

If an Advisory Committee change is needed, the student must submit the online Request for Change in Committee [form](#). Graduate students must reach out to the GPD as soon as they learn about any news that would affect the status of their committee, and to make sure they act quickly if any actions are required on their part. For further information, refer to related sections of the Graduate College Bulletin [here](#).

In addition to the department's qualifying exams, students must pass the General Examination as required by the Graduate College. Students may apply for the General Exam the semester after they complete their ACR and are expected to take the General Exam in the semester in which they complete their formal course work. A student following the standard program of study outlined here will take the General Exam in the Spring semester of their third year. With special permission from the Graduate Program Director, the General Exam may be taken during the semester following completion of coursework.

The General Exam consists of both a written and oral portion. The written exam is designed by the student's Advisory Committee to test the student's mastery of her field of specialization and proposed dissertation topic. Committee members will provide guidance as to the material covered by the written exam. If the performance is adequate on the written exam, an oral exam will be scheduled. The General examination is completed when the oral exam has been passed. At that point, the Graduate Dean, on the recommendation of the Economics Faculty, will admit the student to Candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

If the performance is not satisfactory in either part of the exam, the Advisory Committee will submit a report to the Graduate College indicating the failure and will advise



the student regarding the inadequacies of the exam to aid in preparation for retaking the exam. By Graduate College rule, a student who fails the General Examination a second time is disenrolled from the Ph.D. program, but may still choose to complete the requirement for the MA Degree/Applied Economics track.

## **VII. The Dissertation**

In order to facilitate the transition from formal coursework to dissertation research, students enroll in ECON 5960 during the fall and/or spring semester of the third year. The student will enroll for this class with the faculty member who has agreed to chair their dissertation committee. The objective of this course is to lead the student to define a dissertation topic and prepare a dissertation proposal. ECON 5960 can be taken for a maximum of 8 credit hours.

Successful completion of ECON 5960 requires submission of a written dissertation proposal to the student's Advisory Committee and presentation of a seminar on the topic to the Economics faculty and graduate students. The purpose of the seminar is to enable the faculty to share its collective knowledge with the candidate and to assure support for a topic that can feasibly be developed into a dissertation. Copies of the prospectus will be made available to the participants at least one week prior to the seminar (preferably with even more of a lead). After the seminar, the Doctoral Committee will meet to approve either the original prospectus or a modified version of it.

The department requires that the dissertation be completed, accepted, and the final oral examination be passed no later than five (5) calendar years after Admission to Candidacy. Failure to meet this deadline will result in termination from Ph.D. Candidacy. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Doctoral Committee, with the consent of the faculty and the Graduate Dean, may extend the five-year deadline for a short period.

## **VIII. Advising**

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS, currently Dr. Qihong Liu, will advise all incoming Ph.D. students, approve the student's field and elective course selections, and oversee all Qualifying Examinations. In addition, the GPD has final authority – within the rules of the Graduate College – over the acceptance of credit from a Master's degree program (as indicated on the Advisory Committee Report). The GPD will continue to advise the student until the student has formed his/her Ph.D. Advisory Committee, at which time the student transitions to being advised by their committee chair.

## **IX. Financial Aid**

### *Graduate Assistantships*

Each year the Economics Department typically extends financial support in the form of research and teaching assistantships for 6-10 incoming Ph.D. students. For full consideration of financial aid, applicants are encouraged to apply to the Ph.D. program by late January.

Students receiving a regular financial aid package will receive an assistantship for 4-5 years of graduate work, conditional on satisfactory progress in the Ph.D. program and satisfactory performance of assigned duties. Additional support for the fifth year is available.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, nine-month full time assistantships have a stipend of \$23,690 (with opportunities for additional funding) which includes individual health insurance, tuition waivers for up to the 90 credit hours of courses required for degree completion. Conditionally admitted students may request waivers for courses needed prior to beginning the graduate coursework. Students are responsible for associated fees. Family health insurance plans are also offered through the University. For information on current resident and non-resident and fees, please see the University of Oklahoma Bursar's website. A student on a full-time assistantship (0.50 FTE) is expected to perform approximately 20 hours of work per week and is required to attend the department's weekly seminars. Duties include serving as research assistants and assisting in the Department's teaching mission.

Accordingly, students are expected to become certified to teach courses by the OU English Training and Certification Services ([ETCS](#)) by the end of their first year of study. English Language classes are available at no cost to qualifying graduate students.

### *Supplemental Teaching*

Graduate students who become certified to instruct at the University of Oklahoma may request to teach courses during summer terms or between semesters (Intersession). Students are chosen to teach these based on teaching experience, teaching performance, and undergraduate demand for courses. To be able to teach at OU, all international scholars need to pass the English Communication Capacity (ECC) test with a grade level "A" or "A with support" before being allowed to teach at the University of Oklahoma. For further details, including support and training options as well as possible exemptions, please visit the OU English Training and Certification Services (ETCS) [website](#). We strongly advise all Ph.D. students to take the ECC test in their first semester.

### *Additional Funding and Award Opportunities*

The University and the Department also offer additional scholarship and award opportunities including:

- Chong Liew Summer Research Paper Award

The Chong Liew Summer Research Award honors students in the Economics Ph.D. program at the University of Oklahoma who have displayed exemplary academic talent and that are currently engaged in promising research. It is intended to encourage progress on research. Multiple awards may be given.

- Alex Kondonassis Research Award

Students in the area of Development are also eligible for the Kondanassis Award at the time of their application for the Chong Liew Award.

## **X. Faculty**

**BURGE, GREGORY**, Professor (Florida State University, Ph.D. 2005)

Fields: Urban Economics, Public Economics, Housing Economics

**DEMIR, FIRAT**, Presidential Professor (University of Notre Dame, Ph.D. 2006)

Fields: Economic Development, Open Economy Macroeconomics, Political Economy, Heterodox Approaches, Middle East Development

**GHOSH, PALLAB**, Associate Professor (Syracuse University, Ph.D. 2014)

Fields: Labor Economics, Econometrics

**HAMORY, JOAN**, Associate Professor (University of California, Ph.D. 2009)

Fields: Economic Development

**HUYNH, NGHIEM**, Assistant Professor (Yale University, Ph.D. 2024)

Fields: Development, International

**JOHNSON, SAMANTHA**, Lecturer (Washington State University, Ph.D. 2021)

Fields: Agriculture, Education, Applied Microeconomics

**KEEN, BENJAMIN**, Associate Professor (University of Virginia, Ph.D. 2002)

Fields: Monetary Economics, Macroeconomics

**KEKEC, IBRAHIM**, Lecturer (Michigan State University, Ph.D. 2021)

Fields: Econometrics, Machine Learning, Labor

**KIM, MYONGJIN**, Associate Professor (Boston University, Ph.D. 2013)

Fields: Industrial Organization, Applied Econometrics

**KOSMOPOULOU, GEORGIA**, Presidential Professor (University of Illinois, Ph.D. 1996)

Fields: Microeconomic Theory, Industrial Organization, Information Economics

**LIU, JUDITH**, Assistant Professor (Syracuse University, Ph.D. 2019)

Fields: Health Economics, Public Economics, Labor Economics

**LIU, QIHONG**, Presidential Professor (SUNY – Stony Brook, Ph.D. 2003)

Fields: Applied Microeconomics, Industrial Organization, Applied Econometrics

**MALLOY, CHRISTOPHER**, Assistant Professor (University of California-Santa Barbara, Ph.D. 2023)

Fields: Energy Economics, Environmental Economics, Public Economics, Law and Economics

**MAO, RUOYUN**, Assistant Professor (Indiana University, Ph.D. 2020)

Fields: Monetary and Fiscal Policy, Information Frictions in Macro, Applied Time

Series

**MOOERS, VICTORIA**, Assistant Professor (Columbia University, Ph.D. 2025)

Fields: Political Economy, Social Networks, Public Economics

**NEDELESCU, DANIEL**, Assistant Professor (Purdue University, Ph.D. 2013)

Fields: Industrial Organization, Labor Economics, Experimental Economics

**NORWOOD, BRENT**, Lecturer (University of Oklahoma, Ph.D. 2020)

Fields: Public Policy, Education

**PAUDEL, JAYASH**, Assistant Professor (University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Ph.D. 2019)

Fields: Environmental Economics, Development Economics

**RANSOM TYLER**, Associate Professor (Duke University, Ph.D. 2015)

Fields: Labor Economics, Urban Economics, Economics of Education

**ROGERS, CYNTHIA**, Professor (University of Pittsburgh, Ph.D. 1994)

Fields: Public Economics, Regional & Urban Economics, Labor Economics

**SHEN, HEWEL**, Associate Professor (Indiana University, Ph.D. 2018)

Fields: International Economics, Macroeconomics, International Finance