Department of Economics
PhD Handbook
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Academic Advisement & Registration

Before your first year in the program and in every semester you are required to have academic advisement before you will be able to register. Each student must meet with the Director of Graduate Studies in determining what courses you will be taking the following semester. Students must sign a form in accordance with the DGS and submit it to the graduate advisor. Some entering students may also have “Holds” on their files which may prevent them from registering for courses. Below are some of the most typically common hold code names and what they mean:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOLD</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>HOW TO REMOVE HOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STU50</td>
<td>Restricts registration and USCard application for graduate students</td>
<td>Complete Passport Verification (PPV) with OIS upon arrival in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STU60</td>
<td>Restricts USCard application for undergraduate students</td>
<td>Complete Passport Verification (PPV) with OIS upon arrival in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALI01</td>
<td>Conditional Admission based on English Proficiency</td>
<td>Take the International Student English (ISE) exam before registering for classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADM40</td>
<td>Degree Verification</td>
<td>Verify previous degree with USC Office of Degree Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADM20</td>
<td>Conditional Admission</td>
<td>Contact Department Advisor to find out the conditions of the admission and satisfy those requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Economics

Program Unit Total: 70
Total Course Work Units: 60
Seminar Units: 6
Dissertation Units: 4

In addition to the first year course sequence, there is also a breadth requirement, which may be satisfied by taking either ECON 523 Economic History and Development or ECON 527 Theory of Value: Classical Origins and Neoclassical Critique or ECON 538 Values and Social Analysis.

After passing the core theory examination, the student should consult the director of graduate studies on the appointment of a PhD qualifying exam committee.
The student should complete two advanced fields of study with the approval of the qualifying exam committee and the director of graduate studies. The requirements for completing each advanced field of study consist of (1) at least two courses numbered 600 or higher in that field with a minimum grade of A- in each, (2) satisfactory completion of one of the seminars related to the field and (3) presentation of a research paper in a class or seminar. In addition, the student should complete a minor field, which consists of a course numbered 600 or higher with a minimum grade of B. The signing of the student's Permission to Take the Qualifying Examination form will signify the satisfactory completion of the field requirements.

The remainder of the courses to total 60 units must be preapproved by the qualifying exam committee. However, not more than four units of ECON 590 and/or ECON 790 can be taken in each semester. Courses taken outside the department or USC cannot count toward the completion of a field and are not allowed before at least one advanced field is completed. Waivers to the course requirements based on equivalent work at another university may be made upon petition to the director of graduate studies up to a maximum of 12 units. Waivers for any other reason require the approval of the department graduate committee.

**GPA Requirements**
Students are expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA every semester. Failing to meet the minimum GPA requirement may jeopardize your graduate assistantship, research assistantship, fellowship and/or status in the program.

In addition to the Graduate School requirements, a minimum GPA of 3.0 on all course work taken toward the 60 units requirement must be achieved. **ECON 615 or a higher-level course in econometrics must be completed with a grade of B or better.**

**Before the First Year Begins**

**Math Camp**
The department holds a “math camp” prior to the beginning of the semester for first year incoming PhD students. The math camp typically begins the first week of August and last for about two and a half weeks. No books are required and classes are typically offered in the late afternoon or early evening. The math camp is not an officially enrolled course however you will be graded. The purpose of this course is to evaluate and assess everyone’s individual math skills upon beginning their doctoral studies and to prepare math skills needed for the core courses.
**Passport Verification for International Students**

All new international students are required to complete Passport Verification (PPV) with the Office of International Services (OIS) upon arrival to the US. PPV is a procedure that verifies a student’s immigration status to ensure that the student is eligible to start an academic program at USC for the upcoming academic semester.

Immigration regulations allow students to enter the US 30 days prior to the start date on the SEVIS I-20 (for F-1 students) or DS-2019 (for J-1 students). If students plan on entering the US within this 30-day time frame, they can complete Passport Verification (PPV) at one of our PPV sessions. Please call the Office of International Services at (213) 740-2666 for detailed information. Their website is: https://ois.usc.edu/.

Graduate students must first complete Passport Verification (PPV) with OIS in order to register for courses and receive their USCard.

**Glacier Paperwork for International Students**

GLACIER is a comprehensive tax compliance system used by USC University Payroll Services for international students and scholars working for USC or receiving certain scholarships and fellowships. Its purpose is to monitor and manage information regarding internationals’ tax liability at the federal and state level as well as tax treaty benefits. GLACIER is used when students and scholars either have jobs through USC or are receiving scholarships and fellowships. Here is the link to the Glacier website: https://www.onlinetax.net/.

**Prior Degree Verification**

All graduate students must verify that they have been awarded a bachelor’s-level degree from an accredited institution in the United States or an equivalent degree from an institution outside the United States.

If you received a degree from an institution outside the United States and are required to complete degree verification, please follow these instructions:

- Students whose admission is conditional on having their previous degrees verified will have an "Activity Restriction Warning," identified as an ADM40 or RNR40, placed on their records. Failure to complete the verification process in the allotted time may result in delayed or cancelled registration, and late fees. Your previous degrees must be verified before your graduate degree can be awarded.
- This requirement is separate from, and in addition to, the credential review conducted for admission. Therefore, you may be required to submit another set of credentials in addition to the materials submitted with your application for admission.
• Most students will have to satisfy this requirement before the end of their first term at USC.
• Verification of prior international degrees requires a "Certification of Studies for USC" from the International Education Research Foundation. This service is not offered on campus. Please visit the IERF website for more information about required documents and fees. Their website is: http://www.ierf.org/.
• Address Updates: Domestic students can update their current addresses in OASIS and international students can update it through USC Workday. The USC Workday address is https://employees.usc.edu/.

The First Year in the PhD Program

During the first year, all incoming PhD students will be taking the required first year sequence. This comes out to three courses each semester, equaling 24 units total. Below is the first year sequence:

ECON 601 – Microeconomic Theory I (Fall)
ECON 602 – Macroeconomic Theory I (Fall)
ECON 611 – Probability and Statistics for Economists (Fall)
ECON 603 – Microeconomic Theory II (Spring)
ECON 605 – Macroeconomic Theory II (Spring)
ECON 609 – Econometric Methods (Spring)

PhD Core Theory Examination
The student must pass both Micro and Macro exams to pass the Core Theory Examination. If a student fails one of the two exams, the student is only required to retake the section of the exam he or she did not pass. The students who failed the first examination in June are required to re-take the examinations in August in the same year.
The first Core Theory Examination is given during the second week of June:

Micro: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday

Macro: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Wednesday

The second Core Theory Examination is given during the second week of August:

Micro: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Monday

Macro: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Wednesday

Each student will be assigned an examination ID number in order to be anonymous to the faculty who are grading. Each faculty on the Core Examination Committee grades independently and discusses the results afterwards. Students remain anonymous to the committee members until after the results are announced. Students who pass the core exam will be instructed to begin forming a PhD Qualifying Examination Committee.

The Second Year in the PhD Program

Choosing Second Year Course-work
Prior to beginning the second year of the program, students will be required to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss students’ performance over the previous year and expectations for the second year. Students can begin taking field courses and seminars. Field courses taken will be chosen in consultation with the DGS and your Qualifying Examination committee should you have one already formed.

Forming a PhD Qualifying Examination Committee
Regarding the Qualifying Exam Committee and Dissertation Committee, there are two sets of policies to keep in mind:

a. USC policies are stated on the Graduate School section of the USC Catalogue and repeated on the committee form found here.
b. Dornsife policies are stated in the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences section of the USC Catalogue.
   
i. An “outside” member is a USC professor who is not with the Department of Economics. One “outside” member must be on your QE Committee and one must be on your Dissertation Committee.

   ii. An “external” member is a non-USC professor. Adding an external member does not satisfy the outside member requirement.

The qualifying exam committee is normally composed of five members, although additional members may be included at the student’s and committee chair’s discretion. The committee chair and at least two additional members must be affiliated with the student’s program. Faculty eligible to serve as committee chairs and members include tenured and tenure-track faculty. Non-tenure-track faculty of outstanding stature who have a documented record of exceptional expertise and superior achievement in their field, and whose appointment has been approved by the dean of the student’s school, may also be serve on a committee. USC Dornsife requires that all PhD qualifying exam and dissertation committees contain an outside member. At least three members of the committee must be tenured or tenure track. Visiting faculty may not serve on qualifying exam committees. By the end of the second year, students should have their qualifying examination committee form signed and turned into the department or at least have an idea of who will be on the committee.

Teaching Assistant Requirements & Regulations
As a Teaching Assistant your duties will include a number of activities pertinent to the instruction and management of the course. These responsibilities will be determined by the supervising departmental faculty member and may include the following:

Reading course texts and materials, attending lectures, assisting during lectures, leading discussion sections or lab meetings, guiding and monitoring lab exercises, and grading course assignments and exams.

Teaching Assistants are expected to hold regular office hours, to respond to student concerns in a responsible manner, and to act as a liaison between the instructor and the students. In addition, the instructor may also ask the Teaching Assistant to prepare or photocopy course materials, organize and maintain audio/visual materials, procure and operate audio/visual equipment, and proctor quizzes and exams.

Teaching Assistant Workload
The standard assistantship award (50%) stipulates that teaching responsibilities occupy 50% of a graduate student’s total effort, allowing for the remaining 50% to be dedicated to the student’s individual academic pursuits. The duties of a Teaching Assistant should not exceed, on average, 20 hours per week. The time devoted to the assistantship may vary from day to day and week to week, given the fluctuation of demands during the various periods of the semester, but the total workload for the semester should not exceed the cumulative average. Furthermore, a Teaching Assistant should never work more than 8 hours a day or more than 40 hours a week, and deviations to the 20-hour standard should be kept to a minimum. If you find that you are consistently working more than 20 hours a week, consult with the instructor or seek advice from your department on how to manage your TA commitments more effectively or, if appropriate, to adjust your workload.

Additional employment is not allowed for Teaching Assistants, given the demands of full-time study, unless that work is directly related to a student’s academic development. Exceptions can be made with approval of the department chair, deans, graduate school and Provost. In general, whether from outside employment or assistantship duties, the workload should be kept to 50% of the graduate student’s total effort. In summer, however, there is no restriction on employment.

**Teaching Assistant Compensation**

Compensation for Teaching Assistants consists of a stipend, tuition remission, health insurance, and dental insurance. In addition, Teaching Assistants are entitled to bookstore and pharmacy discounts. At the beginning of each semester, ask your home department for a TA sticker for your student identification card to receive these discounts.

**Faculty Responsibilities to Teaching Assistants**

At the beginning of each semester, the supervising faculty member must outline for the Teaching Assistant the scope and nature of his or her responsibilities. Included in this exchange should also be a discussion of the overall objectives of the course and section or lab, methods and standards for assessing student performance, and the protocol for addressing any problems or issues (such as cheating or grade conflicts) that might arise during the semester.

Though faculty may offer additional professional opportunities for their Teaching Assistants (e.g., an occasional lecture), such opportunities should be regarded as optional, not obligatory. Note that the responsibilities of the Teaching Assistant do not include tasks typically assigned to the instructor, such as creating course syllabi, lecturing the primary course material, providing grading standards, or bearing ultimate responsibility for the content and grading of
examinations. If a Teaching Assistant is asked to give a lecture, the primary instructor should also be present.

Before the semester begins the instructor must also specify the criteria that will be used for the evaluation of the Teaching Assistant’s performance in the course. Following the completion of the course, the supervising faculty member will evaluate the Teaching Assistant, and his or her evaluation will become a permanent part of the Teaching Assistant’s file in the department.

**Teaching Assistant Training and Support**

All departments must facilitate training for new Teaching Assistants that will prepare them for their teaching responsibilities. Dornsife offers a two-day training session in August every year for incoming Teaching Assistants. During Dornsife’s training session, Teaching Assistants are introduced to outstanding faculty and experienced Teaching Assistants who offer advice on how best to confront the many challenges of teaching at USC. Hands-on workshops and lab sessions on relevant technology provide the new Teaching Assistants with tangible tools for meeting these challenges.

New Teaching Assistants must also enroll in ECON-593: Practicum in Teaching the Liberal Arts in the fall semester of their second year. This is a 2 unit course that will not be deducted from the 12 units per semester you afforded by Dornsife.

**Second Year Paper (Empirical Research Paper)**

During the summer after the fourth semester of study, the student must submit a single-authored empirical paper using quantitative methods to the examination committee. The paper may use field, experimental or simulated data. In this paper, the student should demonstrate competence in using a computer programming language and software. The paper is due on the first day of fall semester to the department. An “Outstanding Second Year Paper” winner will receive summer research fund in the following summer.

**The Third Year in the PhD Program**

**Third Year Paper & Presentation**

During the summer after the sixth semester of study, the student must submit a single-authored research paper to a committee of faculty. The paper must be of publishable quality. The paper is due on the first day of fall semester to the department. The student may submit the paper electronically or submit a hard copy. Each student is required to present the paper to
the Research Paper Committee members, other faculty, and graduate students at a scheduled time at the beginning of fall semester. An “Outstanding Third Year Paper” winner will receive research funding in the following summer.

**Preparation for the Qualifying Examination**

At the end of the sixth semester, students should have their qualifying examination committee form sign and submitted to the department for approval. **Students will not be able to take their qualifying exams if this form is not submitted.** Students should begin discussing the expectations with their chairs of the qualifying examination. The qualifying exam is a major milestone in the PhD process as it helps demonstrate your ability to pursue your dissertation and register for dissertation courses. There is no single format and guidelines on how the exam is supposed to be administered. This process is highly individualized and is between you and your qualifying examination chair and committee. The exam could be organized in PowerPoint or any other method that your committee seems acceptable. There is no set length of time for the exam either but it is typically between 45 minutes to an hour.

- Please note that if a student has completed all required courses and seminars and is still not ready to take the qualifying examination, then the student will register for GRSC-800 with the Graduate School. The class is for zero units, and although there is a one unit tuition charge, it keeps your status as a full time student until you are ready to take your qualifying exam. Students can only take GRSC-800 three times.

**During the day of the Exam**

Before the exam takes place, the student will make an appointment with the staff graduate advisor who will upload the committee form to the Graduate School website to access the “Report” form. After the exam, the committee will sign the report form and the student will return the form to the staff graduate advisor. The form will then be signed by the chair of the department, dean of graduate programs and then uploaded into your STARS report. Once you have passed your qualifying examination, you will be considered a doctoral candidate and you can then register for dissertation courses.

**The Fourth Year in the PhD Program**

The fourth year of the PhD program is dedicated to taking and passing your qualifying examination. The exam should be taken no later than your seventh semester. As stated above,
if you’ve completed all course work and you still are not ready to take your qualifying exam, then you will register for GRSC-800. Once you have passed your qualifying exam, you will be able to register for ECON-794a.

**Academic/Professional Website Preparation**

As students complete their qualifying examinations and begin research, they should also be actively working on creating an online professional presence. When you enter the job market program in your final year, you will be expected to create a professional website where you will showcase your research interests and field specializations. You will also have your CV accessible on the website and detailed information about your job market paper.

**The Fifth Year in the PhD Program**

The fifth and sixth year in the program is typically when a student will be finishing his or her dissertation and preparing to go on the job market. Our department has a resourceful job placement program and every year we help to place students in both academic and private sector jobs. Every year we launch our job market website on October 15th. Students will apply to jobs throughout the fall semester and then participate in the mock interviews which are typically at the end of November/early December. Students will then attend the American Economic Association conference in early January where they will interview for positions.

**Financial Support Outside the Department**

There are many avenues of financial support located outside the department in CESR (Center for Economic and Social Research), USC Shaeffer Center and INET (Institute for New Economic Thinking). Students are encouraged to seek out financial opportunities within these centers as they may offer Research Assistantships.

**Summer Funding**

There are also opportunities for students to receive funding during the summer term. Ever year the department awards a student an “Outstanding Teaching Assistant” award that comes with a
stipend. We also provide financial incentives for “Outstanding Second Year Paper,” “Outstanding Third Year Paper,” and “Summer Research Award.”

In addition to department opportunities, there are also additional summer and final year fellowships available to apply through The USC Graduate School.