

Rules of the PhD Programs 2009/2010

Department of Economics
Boston University

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These rules apply to all students beginning PhD degree programs in or after the 2009/2010 academic year. Some are university rules; the remainder are those of the Economics Department. Departmental rules are administered by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and a Graduate Instruction Committee comprised of several departmental faculty members. It is understood that special circumstances may warrant exceptions to these rules. As such, students may petition to waive any departmental rule or any ruling by the Graduate Instruction Committee. Denial of such a petition may in turn be appealed to the full Department faculty by petition. For more information, see the Graduate School Bulletin.

The graduate degree programs covered by these rules are:

1. MAPE/PhD: A 16-course program leading to both the MAPE and PhD degrees. For the MAPE degree, the student must complete all the PhD requirements except for those associated with the PhD dissertation.
2. PhD: Students who possess Masters degrees are admitted directly into the PhD program with a 14-course requirements (13 if EC705 is waived). Departmental requirements are the same as for the MAPE/PhD program.

1 Overview

The program contains a series of requirements each with its own deadline. A student who satisfies each requirement by its specific deadline is *in good standing*. **All offers of**

financial support or fellowships by the department are conditional upon the student remaining in good standing.

If a student fails to meet some requirement, he is placed on *probation*. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the DGS, a student on probationary status may be allowed to maintain a fellowship or other financial support previously awarded by the department. Generally, students on probation will be much less likely to receive teaching, grading, or other positions in the department. Students placed on probation will remain on probation for at least the balance of the current semester. After that, the student may be restored to good standing by the DGS if he determines that the student is again in compliance with program requirements.

Finally, students who fail to meet certain crucial deadlines will be terminated from the program.¹

The following section describes the sequence of the most important program requirements and the sanctions associated with failure to meet specific deadlines.

2 Program Requirements

2.1 First Year

In the first year of study, students must take and pass at least the six core courses in economic theory and econometrics. These courses are:

- 701 — Advanced Microeconomics I
- 702 — Advanced Macroeconomics I
- 703 — Advanced Microeconomics II
- 704 — Advanced Macroeconomics II
- 707 — Advanced Statistics for Economists
- 708 — Advanced Econometrics I

In addition, students must take and pass EC 705 Mathematical Economics, unless a waiver is obtained at the beginning of the semester.

NOTE: All incoming students take a placement examination in mathematics. If a student's performance suggests that he does not need to take EC 705, this requirement

¹To be precise, the department will recommend to the GRS that the student be terminated. In general, these recommendations are followed. All subsequent references to termination should be understood to mean a recommendation of termination.

may be waived by the DGS.² For a PhD student, such a waiver reduces the number of required courses to 13; for an MAPE/PhD student, 16 courses are still required if EC 705 is waived.

Graduate courses are graded by letter grades. “A” is the highest grade; “B-” is the lowest official passing grade; and grades of “C+” or lower are failing grades. In addition, a “permanent incomplete” (see section 3.6) is considered a failing grade. While passing, “B-” grades are considered unsatisfactory in the sense that they are below the required grade point average. See Section 2.6 for an explanation of how grade point averages are computed. Students are expected to have a grade point average of π (3.14...) or better in the six core courses and a grade point average of at least 3.0 in all courses.

To be in good standing at the end of the first year, a student should pass the core courses with a grade point average of π or better. More precisely, the requirement of passing all core courses and EC 705 (if not waived) is essential; the grade point average of π is largely a (temporary) substitute for passing one core exam in June, as explained below. (Good grades in the first year are also useful for maintaining the grade point average requirement in the second year; see below.)

In June following the first year of study, all students take the core examinations in micro and macro theory. Each qualifier has three possible grades: pass with distinction, pass, and fail. A student may pass micro only, macro only, both, or neither. Students who fail the micro and/or macro core examinations will normally be allowed to re-take the relevant exam(s) in September. Any student who does not pass both exams by September following the first year will be on probation. Students who have not passed both exams by June following the second year will be terminated.

Decisions regarding financial aid are generally made in June, while decisions regarding continuation in the program are usually made in September. Hence in June, the key issue is whether the student is in good standing or not; in September, the key issue is whether the student is terminated or not.

The standing of a student in the program as of June or September following the first year is determined by which of the following criteria are met at that point: (1) passing all core courses and EC 705 if not waived, (2) having a grade point average of at least π in the core courses, (3) passing the micro core exam, (4) passing the macro core exam.

²In rare cases, a student will have sufficient preparation to not need some other core courses. Such a student may petition the DGS for relief from the relevant course requirements.

Standing in June:

1. **Good standing:** To be in good standing as of June of the first year, a student must satisfy the first and at least two of the last three criteria above.
2. **Probation:** Any student who is not in good standing in June of the first year is on probation.

Standing in September:

1. **Good standing:** To be in good standing as of September after the first year, a student must pass all core courses, EC 705, and both core exams.
2. **Probation:** A student who is not in good standing is on probation as of September after the first year if the first and at least one of the last three criteria above is satisfied.
3. **Termination:** A student who has not satisfied the first and at least one of the last three criteria above by September after the first year will be terminated.

2.2 Second Year

By the end of the second year, students should have

- (1) Made substantial progress toward completing the required courses, including passing EC 709. See Section 2.7 for details. A student will be terminated if he does not pass EC 709 in the second year.
- (2) Achieved an overall grade point average of at least 3.0.
- (3) Passed the core exams in micro and macro theory. A student will be terminated if he has not passed both by June after the second year.
- (4) Passed two different two-course fields. To pass a field, a student must pass the two courses in the field with at least a B average.

In addition, each student must prepare a research paper during the second year and the following summer. By April 1 of the second year, the student must ask a faculty member to serve as an advisor on this paper; have this faculty member agree to serve in this manner; and inform the DGS of the topic of the paper and the advisor's name. The paper is due in the third year as described in the next subsection.

Summary: A student is terminated if he has not passed EC 709 and both the micro

and macro core exams by June following the second year. Otherwise:

1. **Good Standing.** To be in good standing in June of the second year, a student must have an overall grade point average of at least 3.0, have passed two two–course fields by earning at least a B average in the two courses in each of two fields, and have submitted the required information on his research paper to the DGS.
2. **Probation.** A student who is not in good standing in June of the second year will be on probation if he (1) has either passed at least one two–course field or has an overall grade point average of 3.0 or above and (2) has submitted the required information on his research paper to the DGS.
3. **Termination.** Otherwise, the student will be terminated.

2.3 Third Year

By the end of the third year, a student should have

- (1) Passed two two–course fields with an average grade of B in each field.
- (2) Received a passing grade on his research paper. The paper is due by October 1. By October 15th of that year, the faculty advisor must provide (i) a grade for the paper; and (ii) a brief written evaluation the paper. These documents will be sent to the DGS and the student.
- (3) Completed the required courses (see Section 2.7 for details) with a grade point average of 3.0 or better.

Any student who fails to complete these requirements by June following the third year will be terminated from the program. In light of the tuition reduction upon completion of course work and the value of focusing on research early, it is recommended that all students finish courses as quickly as possible.

When all course requirements and examinations have been completed, students must enroll in one of the research workshops each semester until completion of all degree requirements. (Exceptions are granted for students who are on leave of absence or are conducting research away from campus.) Such enrollment is normally required for students residing in Boston beginning the first semester after completion of both PhD comprehensive examinations and continuing until the semester in which the formal defense of the dissertation is held.

2.4 The Dissertation

Beginning in the third year, a student prepares a dissertation proposal under the supervision of a primary faculty advisor. This proposal, normally not to exceed 20 pages in length, describes the problem(s) to be studied, the method(s) to be used, the nature of the study's proposed contribution to existing knowledge, the data sources likely to be employed, and a brief bibliography of relevant work. The proposal should be thought of as a contract between the student and the faculty, specifying what research the student will complete for his/her dissertation. The proposal should be completed no more than one year after passing the second comprehensive examination.

When a dissertation proposal has been approved by the primary advisor and by a secondary faculty advisor chosen by the student, the DGS appoints a third faculty reader. If the third reader gives consent, the candidate submits his/her proposal for review at a proposal seminar attended by the three readers. Notice of the seminar is circulated in the Department and is open to all interested faculty and students. At the end of the proposal seminar, the student's proposal committee must unanimously decide whether the proposal is accepted or rejected. If a 2–1 split occurs, the decision is referred to the Graduate Instruction Committee.

After the dissertation itself has been written and has received preliminary approval by the candidate's primary and secondary advisors, the DGS again appoints an independent reader, who need not be the same person as the independent reader for the proposal. If the independent reader finds the dissertation acceptable, the final oral examination is scheduled. The examining board consists of five faculty members: usually consisting of the two advisors, the independent reader, plus two additional faculty members designated by the DGS. Following the examination, the faculty members vote on final approval of the dissertation. Any faculty member or graduate student may attend the final oral examination.

If a PhD student has not completed all degree requirements within five years, the university requires that (s)he petition each year to extend the time to complete the degree. Because of a glitch in the university rules, this annual petition is required of MAPE/PhD students beginning in the fourth year. It is routinely approved, however, until the end of the student's fifth year. Beginning in the sixth year, petitions to extend the time to complete the PhD are given serious review and are only approved if a compelling case is made that significant progress is being made and that completion is expected in the near future.

2.5 Other Grounds for Termination

In addition to the reasons a student may be terminated specified above, the DGS can terminate a student for either of the following reasons:

- Eight or more credits of failing grades.
- Having grade point average so low that, even if all subsequent grades were “B+”, the final average at the end of the program would be lower than the minimum required.

2.6 Computation of Grade Point Averages

For the purpose of computing grade point averages, the following numerical values are given to the grades:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	F
4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	0.0

Only the grade obtained in the first attempt at any course is counted in averaging. If a student retakes a course (because of a failing grade on the first attempt, for example) or takes a course equivalency for a course (s)he has taken previously for credit, the newly obtained grade cannot be used to change the average.

2.7 General Course Requirements

The MAPE/PhD student must pass sixteen courses. Six of these are the core courses, EC701, EC702, EC703, EC704, EC707, and EC708. EC709 is also required, as well as EC705 unless a waiver is obtained. Four courses are field courses (two courses per field). The remaining four courses are electives, at least two of which must be taken outside of the two field specializations. The PhD student must pass 14 courses (or 13 if EC 705 is waived). These courses are the six core courses, 705 if a waiver is not obtained, 709, four field courses, and two electives. Some of these courses can be taken as “course equivalencies” (see Section 3.3 below).

2.8 Conduct Code

According to the BU Student Academic Conduct Code, “All students entering Boston University are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity.” The Graduate School states that “Any attempt to be dishonest or deceptive in the performance of academic work, in or out of the classroom, or any attempt to alter academic records or any collaboration with another student or students in an act of academic misconduct, constitutes an offense.” For more information on violations of the code, their punishments, and the procedures for review of alleged offenses, see <http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/grad-resources/forms/discipline/>.

2.9 Residency Requirements

The Graduate Bulletin states that “Each student must satisfy a residency requirement of a minimum of two consecutive regular semesters of full-time graduate study at Boston University.” The university also requires that a student be enrolled, paying at least the continuing student fee, during the two semesters immediately preceding receipt of any degree.

3 Other Rules

3.1 Faculty Advisors

Each student will have a faculty advisor who will help in selecting the most appropriate plan of study. Each semester, the faculty advisor must approve the student’s selection of courses and sign registration forms. The faculty advisor must be continuously informed about the student’s progress and must approve changes in programs, adds, drops, and Incompletes. All incoming students will be assigned a faculty advisor. When a PhD student feels ready, the student may switch to a consenting advisor of his/her own choosing. This selection should be made no later than the beginning of the third year but can be subsequently changed. The first reader of a PhD thesis is almost always the faculty advisor.

3.2 Course Selection

Each semester, students who have not yet completed their course requirements normally select and register for four courses (16 credits). Selection should be made with a clear view of a consistent long-term study program leading to the successful completion of all course requirements for the relevant degree program. Students should not enroll in courses for which they are not adequately prepared. If necessary, they should take preparatory undergraduate or graduate courses even if such courses are not required or do not carry credit under the student's degree program. Students may drop and/or add courses during the specified periods at the beginning of each semester if the original selection of courses turns out to be inappropriate for some reason. If a student is unable to complete a course (because of the work requirement associated with a teaching fellowship, for example) a grade of incomplete may (with the explicit consent of the course instructor as to how the course will be completed) be preferable to a drop.

3.3 Course Equivalency

Some departmental requirements can be satisfied by passing course equivalencies, rather than by ordinary course enrollment. Normally, a course equivalency is taken during the same semester in which the course is offered. The student must record his/her intention to take the equivalency with the Graduate Program Administrator no later than three weeks after the beginning of the semester. The work required for an equivalency is the same as required for students who are formally registered in the course. The result of a course equivalency is a course grade used to satisfy the internal requirements of the Department. However, an equivalency does not carry Graduate School credit and does not appear on the student's official transcript. Under special circumstances (e.g., if a student has taken a similar course previously at some other university or if a student needs the equivalency for a course that will not be offered during the rest of his/her residency at Boston University), a student can petition the Graduate Instruction Committee to take a special course equivalency examination during one of the regular comprehensive examination periods.

3.4 Repeating Courses

Generally, students cannot receive university credit for taking the same course twice; however, students who fail a course ("C+" or less) can either retake it for credit or satisfy a departmental requirement by a course equivalency.

3.5 Nonstandard Fields

Apart from the standard fields offered regularly by the Economics Department, a student can petition the Graduate Instruction Committee to create a special “nonstandard” field from within or outside the Economics Department. In each such case, the scope of the field must be defined as part of a cohesive program. A student should not take a course for a nonstandard field before his/her petition has been approved by the Graduate Instruction Committee. If the nonstandard field involves courses from outside the Department or Boston University, the student must also obtain a written agreement stating that the professors involved are willing to prepare a comprehensive examination and grade it according to Economics Department grading standards.

3.6 Grades of Incomplete

The Graduate School Bulletin states “when the work of a course has not been completed within the semester of registration, the grade of ‘I’ is used. This automatically becomes a permanent ‘I’ (unsatisfactory grade) unless the course work is completed within the following calendar year. Grades of ‘I’ and ‘C+’ or lower are interpreted as failures.” Students with “permanent” Incompletes can petition the Graduate School Committee on Academic Standards for permission to complete the relevant courses. Such permission is granted only under very special circumstances. As a principle, the Committee on Academic Standards has stated that it will not permit completion of any Incompletes more than two years old. The completion of Incompletes more than one but less than two years old may be permitted.

3.7 Transfer of Credit

Entering students should take note of the specific terms of their admission with respect to both the degree program and the number of courses required. These terms are specified in the letter of admission. If the student has already completed graduate courses at Boston University and if such work was not considered in the course requirements stipulated by the terms of admission, the student should petition for transfer of credit immediately. Students are advised that petitions to transfer credit will be accepted only if it is determined that the course in question equals or exceeds the standard required of graduate Economics courses at Boston University. To assist in this determination, each petition must be accompanied by a reading list and syllabus, and, if possible, a copy of the final examination.

The Graduate School Bulletin states,

Graduate-level courses in other accredited graduate schools or in other Schools and Colleges of Boston University not used toward the awarding of any other degree may be transferred on recommendation of the major advisor and the chairman of the department with the approval of the Committee on Academic Standards. Credit for work to be taken concurrently with studies in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences must be approved before registration for such courses; all such courses must be taken for a letter grade (not Pass/Fail). No transfer of credit for courses taken before the senior year of college will be accepted. Petitions for credits for transfer are available in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Office.

Sometimes a student wishes to take a graduate course that is offered outside the Economics Department, intending that the course be counted towards his/her degree requirements. Whether the graduate course is one given in another department or school at Boston University or is a graduate course given in a school outside Boston University, permission must be granted beforehand. To get permission for a Boston University course, the student must submit a written petition to the Graduate Instruction Committee, include a copy of the course syllabus, and, if possible, a copy of a past final examination. For a course taken outside of Boston University, the student must also submit a Petition to Transfer Credit form (available from the Graduate School), the syllabus, and an official transcript from the outside university after the Graduate Instruction Committee has approved the course and the student has received the grade.

Only a limited number of courses may be accepted for transfer credit. Such courses cannot be used to satisfy the Departmental Core requirements for any graduate degree program. For the 14-course PhD, up to two transfer courses may be permitted; for the 16-course MAPE/PhD, four courses may be permitted.

3.8 Leaves of Absence

The Graduate School Bulletin states: “Normally, students must register for each regular semester until completion of all degree requirements. Upon written request to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, a student will be allowed up to two semesters of leave of absence without committee consideration. Leaves of absence beyond two semesters may be granted in cases of substantiated illness, one semester maternity or paternity leave, or military service. In exceptional cases, the student should petition the associate dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences with approval of the chairman of the

department or division of concentration.” A Leave of Absence form, obtainable from the Graduate School, should be completed before leaving.

Under normal circumstances, the department is no longer committed to provide financial aid to a student returning from a leave of absence exceeding one semester.

A student who overstays a leave of absence and wishes to return must reapply for admission and may be required to satisfy course and examination requirements a second time.

A student who returns from a leave of absence of more than two years' duration and who had passed the qualifying examination more than five years prior to returning must retake and pass the qualifying examination within three semesters of returning.