

Economics, PhD (Boston)

The PhD program in economics offers specializations in *industrial organization, competition policy, and regulatory economics* and *labor economics*.

Timeline

The PhD program for each student has two phases: the coursework phase followed by the dissertation phase. The coursework phase consists of required coursework and field courses, as well as taking and passing the three qualifying examinations.

A student moves into the dissertation phase upon successful completion of required coursework and upon passing the qualifying examinations. In the dissertation phase the student must prepare a dissertation proposal and present and defend the dissertation proposal before the student's proposal review committee. A student who successfully defends the dissertation proposal achieves candidacy. At the end of the dissertation phase, the student must defend their completed dissertation.

Coursework

Students entering the doctoral program will take seven core classes (28 semester hours), two classes in each of two doctoral fields (16 semester hours), and one elective (4 semester hours), for a total program requirement of 48 semester hours.

Core courses are focused on developing an advanced theoretical and quantitative foundation (macroeconomic theory, microeconomic theory, and applied econometrics). The remainder of the coursework is focused on the sophisticated application of analytical tools in the chosen field of concentration.

PhD students are expected to take three classes per semester as necessary to meet the degree's coursework requirements in the minimum number of semesters.

Field Coursework and Grade Requirement

Students must take four field courses, and they are strongly encouraged to take as many field courses as possible. Students should plan to take the two labor and two industrial organization courses, even if they arrange to do a field in development or health economics. Students interested in customizing their fieldwork should consult the PhD Program Guidelines on the website.

To maintain satisfactory standing in the PhD program, students must earn a grade of B or higher in at least four field courses. Students who do not earn a B in at least four field courses will be offered one opportunity to meet the grade standard. Consult PhD Program Guidelines on the website for further details.

Examinations

THREE QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS—MACROECONOMICS, MICROECONOMICS, AND ECONOMETRICS

Three qualifying examinations are required upon completion of Macroeconomics 2, Microeconomics 2, and Econometrics 2. Students must receive a minimum grade of B– in the associated theory class to sit for its exam. Students are given a maximum of two attempts to pass each exam to continue in the program. Failure to sit for an exam at the appropriate time without prior consent of the graduate program director will result in an automatic fail on that exam.

Proposal Review

Students must complete the proposal review within two years of finishing their coursework; however, the department expects that a doctoral candidate's **dissertation committee** will be formed and the dissertation proposal presented within one year of reaching degree candidacy, which is normally by the end of the student's third year.

A **dissertation proposal** states the question or hypothesis, reviews the relevant literature, and explains how the proposed work will contribute to that literature and general understanding. The proposal sets forth data sources, models, and econometric issues in sufficient detail so that any faculty member not in the field will be able to assess its merits. Normally, the proposal should not exceed 30 double-spaced pages. The proposal is first approved by the dissertation committee and then presented at an open seminar.

Consult PhD Program Guidelines on the website for further details.

Doctoral Degree Candidacy

Upon successful completion of the proposal review, the student becomes a degree candidate. Candidacy may make the student eligible for a higher stipend and is an essential step in making satisfactory progress. Degree candidacy must be achieved within two years of completion of required coursework.

DISSERTATION

Students must complete their dissertation defense within five years of finishing their coursework, and postponing the proposal review does not alter the total time that students may use to complete their PhD. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may request an extension of this time frame from the Graduate Office.

One month in advance of the prospective date of the defense, the completed dissertation that is to be defended must be circulated to the committee members. At that time, all members of the committee must sign off on their agreement that the dissertation is ready for defense. Each student will have a dissertation committee chaired by a faculty member with an appointment in the economics department and at least two other members. Committees may have two cochairs. Committees should not have more than four members (except at interim stages if faculty are leaving the committee). Committees may include members outside the economics department, but at least two committee members must have an appointment in the economics department. The composition of the committee should be set before the proposal review and again, if changes occur, before the dissertation defense. Committee compositions must be approved by the graduate program director and department chair.

The dissertation defense normally takes place during the student's fifth year. Those who have not defended by the end of their fifth year must submit a status report and timetable for approval by their dissertation advisor and the PhD program director. Consult PhD Program Guidelines on the website for further details

WRITING THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Writing the dissertation entails working with the principal advisor and other committee members until it is determined that a dissertation is complete and the candidate is ready to present and defend the work at an open seminar. Candidates must arrange a date and time for the defense at least three weeks in advance. Students must familiarize themselves with the Theses and Dissertations Formatting Guidelines (<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/resources/theses-and-dissertations/>). The guide provides links to formatting tips, sample introductory pages, sample approval record, and deadlines. In addition, a checklist is provided to ensure students have fulfilled the required steps in the commencement clearance process.

Milestones

Maintaining satisfactory academic progress during doctoral candidacy requires the following:

PHD ANNUAL STUDENT PROGRESS REVIEW

Each PhD student will have an annual review of their progress toward the degree. Receipt of financial support administered by the graduate school is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress toward the degree and satisfactory performance in assigned duties. See the CSSH General Regulations (<https://catalog.northeastern.edu/graduate/social-sciences-humanities/general-regulations/>) for further details.

FIELD WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

All PhD students registered for Doctoral Dissertation or Continuation who are in residence are expected to regularly attend a field seminar in industrial organization or labor. These seminars meet roughly every week, and their purpose is to assist students in choosing and evaluating dissertation topics as well as advancing and completing their dissertation. All doctoral candidates will be expected to present their research at various stages of writing their dissertation.

SEMINAR SERIES PARTICIPATION

All PhD students registered for Doctoral Dissertation or Continuation who are in residence are expected to regularly attend academic seminars by speakers invited to campus through the Department of Economics Seminar Series. Participation in these seminars is an important component of doctoral training and is intended to expose students to current research in their field while helping to develop and hone their own presentation skills.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN APPLIED ECONOMICS PROGRAM

Participation in at least one semester of the Practical Experience in Applied Economics program is required of all students who have reached doctoral candidacy. The program is offered in the spring semester every other year. In this program, a variety of prominent practitioners working in consulting and government agencies in the fields of industrial organization and labor will describe their practical experience applying economics to a variety of consulting and policy problems, including antitrust, regulation, labor market policy, education, and health policy. This is a participatory class that will require advanced reading and preparation of questions for the practitioners in addition to other assignments.

Program Requirements

Complete all courses and requirements listed below unless otherwise indicated.

Milestones

Three qualifying examinations—microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics

Annual reviews

Dissertation committee

Dissertation proposal

Dissertation defense

Field workshops (and present following completion of coursework)

Economics Seminar Series and Job Talks

Practical Experience in Economics series

Core Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Quantitative		
ECON 6105	Advanced Mathematics and Statistics for Economists	4
ECON 6140	Advanced Applied Econometrics	4
ECON 7740	Applied Econometrics 2	4
Theory		
ECON 6110	Advanced Microeconomic Theory	4
ECON 6120	Advanced Macroeconomic Theory	4
ECON 7710	Microeconomic Theory 2	4
ECON 7720	Macroeconomic Theory 2	4
Field		
To maintain satisfactory standing in the PhD program, students must earn a grade of B or higher in at least four field courses.		
<i>Labor Economics Field</i>		
ECON 7763	Labor Market Analysis	4
ECON 7764	Topics in Labor Economics	4
<i>Industrial Organization Field</i>		
ECON 7771	Framework of Industrial Organization	4
ECON 7772	Public Policy Toward Business	4

Elective

Code	Title	Hours
Complete 4 semester hours from the following:		4
ECON 7200 to ECON 7299		
ECON 7976	Directed Study	

Dissertation

Code	Title	Hours
Proposal Stage		
ECON 9986	Research	
Dissertation Candidacy Stage		
ECON 9990	Dissertation Term 1	
ECON 9991	Dissertation Term 2	
Following completion of ECON 9990 and ECON 9991, registration in the following class is required in each semester (including the summer if the dissertation is submitted in summer) until the dissertation is completed:		
ECON 9996	Dissertation Continuation	

Program Credit/GPA Requirements

48 total semester hours required

Minimum 3.500 GPA required

Advanced Entry Program Requirements

Complete all courses and requirements listed below unless otherwise indicated.

Milestones

Three qualifying examinations—microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics

PhD annual student progress review

Meet minimum 3.000 grade requirement in at least four field classes to attain doctoral degree candidacy

Dissertation committee

Dissertation proposal

Dissertation defense

Field workshop participation throughout program (and required following completion of coursework)

Economics Seminar Series participation throughout program

Core Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Quantitative		
ECON 7740	Applied Econometrics 2	4
Theory		
ECON 7710	Microeconomic Theory 2	4
ECON 7720	Macroeconomic Theory 2	4
Field		
<i>Labor Economics Field</i>		
ECON 7763	Labor Market Analysis	4
ECON 7764	Topics in Labor Economics	4
<i>Industrial Organization Field</i>		
ECON 7771	Framework of Industrial Organization	4
ECON 7772	Public Policy Toward Business	4

Elective

Code	Title	Hours
Complete 4 semester hours from the following:		4
ECON 7200 to ECON 7299		
ECON 7976	Directed Study	

Dissertation

Code	Title	Hours
Proposal		
ECON 9986	Research	
Dissertation		
Registration in the following class is required in the fall and spring semesters following achievement of doctoral candidacy:		
ECON 9990	Dissertation Term 1	
ECON 9991	Dissertation Term 2	
Following completion of ECON 9990 and ECON 9991, registration in the following class is required in each semester (including the summer if the dissertation is submitted in summer) until the dissertation is completed:		
ECON 9996	Dissertation Continuation	

Program Credit/GPA Requirements

32 total semester hours required

Minimum 3.500 GPA required