

## Policy on Standards of Academic Performance and Academic Conduct for the PhD program in Economics

### Department of Economics University of Utah

The Ph.D. program in Economics at the University of Utah consists of four parts: i) the Core Program which consists of the 1<sup>st</sup> year courses in microeconomics, macroeconomics and political economy, ii) the Methodology Seminar, iii) Electives and research activity, and iv) Dissertation Research. The requirements for the doctorate degree are formulated in terms of mastery of these four components, as elaborated in sections A and B below. In addition, this document provides guidelines on evaluation procedures and recommendations on how to address the potential deficits students may encounter with respect to the program milestones outlined below.

#### Section A: Satisfactory academic progress

The following timeline summarizes the department's description of satisfactory progress in the Ph.D. program. These guideposts are set to help students pace their work in the program, and they may be taken into account in the determination of eligibility of funding and continuation in the program.

1. Students are expected to pass the qualifying exams in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and political economy by the end of Spring semester of their first year. Grades on the qualifying exams are: *pass with distinction, pass, marginal, fail*. Failure to pass the qualifying exams in the first year may affect the student's financial support provided by the department (see Section C for rules).
2. Students must pass the qualifying exams by the end of Spring semester of their second year. Failure to earn *a marginal or higher in all three* qualifying exams, and *a pass or higher on at least one qualifying exam* by the Spring of the second year will result in automatic dismissal from the program. (See appendix on logistics regarding the organization of the qualifying exams).
3. Students are expected to satisfy all course requirements, including the methodology seminar, by the end of their third year.
4. Students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year are required to participate in one of the research teams organized by the faculty. As part of their active participation in these workshops students are required to submit a research idea to their research workshop by the end of the Spring semester of their second year. Students must have an extended research abstract approved through their research workshop by the end of their third year. This proposal is then refined and developed in consultation with the faculty, with the goal of producing a publishable research product and/or a dissertation proposal. (See appendix on logistics regarding the submission and review process).
5. Students are required to have a dissertation advisor at the latest by the beginning of their fourth year.
6. Students are expected to defend their dissertation proposal by the end of Spring semester of their fourth year. The proposal should provide a clear articulation of the topic,

expected contribution to the literature, the road map for the completion of the dissertation, and substantive work in one core chapter of the dissertation.

7. Students who are asked to revise the dissertation following the dissertation defense are expected to complete the required revisions and secure the approval of their advisor (Dissertation's Committee Chair) within one academic year.
8. Students are expected to have the final defense of dissertation by the end of their fifth year.

### **Section B:** Rules on minimum grades

Satisfactory progress in the PhD program also includes the following rules with respect to minimum grades and incompletes:

1. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their graduate course work.
2. All economics courses must be taken for a minimum letter grade of C-. The Graduate School will not accept any grade below a C- as credit towards a graduate degree.
3. Students must take or retake courses to fulfill the research methodology requirement, until a grade of "B-" or better is earned.
4. Minimum passing grade in ECON 7590 and ECON 7800 is "B".

### **Section C:** Evaluation procedures and recommendations

At the end of each Spring semester, all graduate students are evaluated on the progress in their study toward the doctoral degree. The evaluation is based on the *Student Report of Progress* which must be submitted at the beginning of April by the student together with comments by the Faculty Mentor, Committee Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, or Department Chair.

Following evaluation, the Department is expected to inform students in writing of any academic deficiencies. The PhD Committee and/or the Chair of the department will also evaluate teaching performance at this time. The *Student Report of Progress* and the evaluation of teaching performance will also be used to determine:

- Teaching assignments for the coming year
- Continued financial support in the form of a Teaching or Research Assistantship (see additional rules on graduate student employment in Section D)

Failure to meet any of the expectations discussed in section A and B above means that either the student has not demonstrated competence in the discipline necessary for success within the Program, or that the student needs additional mentorship and support to achieve the milestones of the program. For these reasons, the following actions will be implemented as necessary:

- The student will be dismissed from the program if he or she fails to pass the qualifying exams as specified above by the end of the second year. This will be the case whether or not the student takes the qualifying exams at the end of the first year. The Department may grant an exception from this rule for documented medical emergencies\*, family emergencies or other emergencies that legitimately prevent the student from taking the qualifying exams. The student should bring the emergency to the attention of the PhD Committee as soon as it is known. If the PhD Committee in conjunction with the Department Chair decides that the emergency is of sufficient magnitude as to excuse the

student from taking the qualifying exam, then: if this would have been the student's first attempt at that qualifying exam, the student may take it two more times; and if this would have been the student's second attempt at that qualifying exam, the student may take it one more time.

- No-shows will be treated as failed exams unless an exception has been granted as described in the preceding paragraph.
- Students who fail to meet the academic expectations of 3 through 8 in section A, or who fail to meet other requirements specified for their program, will be required to communicate with the faculty members of the PhD Committee to discuss their status in the program. The content of this communication will focus on their plan to correct the deficiency or leave the program with a degree of Master of Philosophy in Economics. Where applicable, the communication between the PhD Committee and the student may also include the student's advisor or academic mentor. The PhD Committee may accept the plan to correct the deficits, accept the plan after revisions, or propose a different approach to help the student get back on track. Note that if a student loses financial support in the form of a teaching assistantship, he or she may still be eligible for support in the form of a research assistantship, typically from his or her advisor.
- Students who receive a grade lower than a C- in an economics core course, or fail to meet the minimum required grades for the research methodology course and for ECON 7590 and ECON 7800 will be expected to work with the Department on a plan for remediation. The student will be notified in writing in a timely manner of the Department's plan for remediation of the deficiency.
- A student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, even if he/she meets the minimum grade requirements above, will be placed on Departmental probation and notified in writing of their probationary status in a timely manner. A student placed on probation must bring his/her GPA above 3.0 within two semesters. Students are advised that a GPA lower than 3.0 will automatically lead to the suspension of the Graduate School tuition benefits received under the [Tuition Benefit Program](#).
- If the student fails to bring his/her GPA above 3.0 within the specified time frame, the student will work with the Department on a plan of remediation. Although the Department will try to tailor the remediation plan to each individual case, it may, for example, involve a set of courses recommended by the faculty (or the director of the program) which the student must pass with grades that will bring the student's GPA above 3.0.

This policy applies to students enrolled in the PhD program in Economics at the University of Utah. Students seeking exceptions to Departmental rules can also seek advice from the Director of the Graduate Program as to the appropriate avenue to pursue. Actions arising from this policy may also be appealed by the student using the appeals process outlined by the University of Utah – Appeals of Grades and Other Academic Actions.

\*Any student who feels that a medical condition or disability prevents her/him from meeting any of the academic requirements of this policy must consult with the University's Center for Disability Services (CDS) in a timely manner. The CDS will determine whether academic accommodations should be granted to address the asserted disability.

## **Section D:** Policy for terminating Graduate student employment

University Policy 6-309 regulates the procedure of hiring and firing of Teaching Assistants, among other academic staff, in cases of neglect of duties. In addition, all graduate TA's, RA's and GA's must perform their duties each semester in what the Economics Department deems a satisfactory manner or they will be relieved of their designated duties which will terminate all compensation and tuition benefits for the semester, thus making the student responsible to repay the tuition fees for the semester in which they are terminated.

Satisfactory manner is defined as follows:

1) TA's/Graduate Student Instructors - Must receive midterm course evaluations which are satisfactory in the judgment of the Department Chair. If the Chair believes the Instructor's performance has not been satisfactory, the Instructor must meet with the Chair, the PhD Director, and/or the Undergraduate Director to discuss and produce a plan of action that will help the Instructor improve his/her teaching performance. Failure to meet for this purpose or to follow through on an agreed-upon plan will result in loss of all guaranteed compensation and funding, and the TA/Instructor will be obligated to repay all tuition fees that previously had been covered by the funding for that semester.

2) RA's - Professors with whom RA's have been assigned to assist with research must be satisfied with the amount and quality of the RA's production. If not, Professor and RA will meet, discuss and agree on a possible plan of action to improve the amount and quality of research. If after two weeks the RA has not made significant progress toward the plan of action agreed upon, he may be terminated from his duties as an RA and lose all compensation and tuition funding guaranteed for the semester. He will then be obligated to repay all tuition fees that were previously covered by funding for that particular semester.

3) GA's - Must provide satisfactory service to the Professor to whom the student was assigned to assist for the semester. If the professor is unsatisfied with the performance of the TA, the professor, student and chair, if deemed necessary, will implement a plan, agreed upon by all involved, that will enhance the working relationship between the student and professor. The student will have two weeks from that time to exhibit a commitment towards this plan and improvement of his working relationship with the professor. If this does not occur, student will lose all guaranteed compensation and funding for the semester. He will then be obligated to repay all tuition fees that were covered by funding for that particular semester.

Notifications of renewals or non-renewals are distributed by July 1st. Appeals of termination decisions must be made first in writing to the Graduate Committee. Further appeals may be made as specified in University Policy 6-309.

## **Appendix:**

### **A.1. Rules and organization of the qualifying exams**

1. Timing of Qualifying Exams:
  - The Political Economy Qualifying Exam will be held on the last Tuesday in May.
  - The Microeconomics Qualifying Exam will be held on the first Tuesday in June.
  - The Macroeconomics Qualifying Exam will be held on the second Tuesday in June.
  - Qualifying Exams will be held from 9 AM to 1:30 PM.
2. Qualifying Exam Committees are to base their judgments solely on the basis of the qualifying examination. Qualifying exams should not have student's name or University of Utah Student Identification Number on them; instead they should be graded anonymously.
3. Grades on the qualifying exams are: pass with distinction, pass, marginal, and fail. If a student takes a qualifying exam twice, only the second grade will count.
4. No Special Qualifying Exams: Students taking the microeconomics, macroeconomics, or political economy qualifying examinations for the second time will take the same examination as the one prepared that year for students taking the examination for the first time.

### **A.2.**

Second year students are required to submit a “research idea” to the research group faculty for review. The deadline for this submission is May 1. For these purposes, a “research idea” is a concrete proposal for future work: a statement of a concrete question to be investigated, a brief literature review and motivation, indication of likely sources of evidence and method, and a tentative timeline. The total package might be about 4 pages.

Third year students are required to submit an “extended research abstract.” The deadline is May 1. This would go beyond a “research idea” by incorporating some initial results and concrete statements of next steps. The submission might be about 10 pages. However, students might also submit a completed original paper or draft of a paper if they have one.

Submissions should be made to the faculty coordinating the research group the student took part of.

Review process: The group faculty participating in each research group will review submissions of students participating in that group, determine whether they meet these expectations, and provide feedback for further development.