

Rules and procedures for the PhD Comprehensive Examinations
September, 2020

A. General rules

1. The PhD comprehensive exams in Econometrics (ECON 984), Microeconomic theory (ECON 985) and Macroeconomic theory (ECON 986) are held in the Summer term of each academic year. The first date for each exam is in May or June. There is at least one week between different comprehensive exams. A second date for each exam (if necessary, see part B. below) is offered in July or August. The complete exam time schedule is announced at least six weeks before the first comprehensive exam.
2. Each student must choose and write two out of the three comprehensive examinations listed in point 1. The choice is done in writing (a form must be filled out and signed by the student and kept by the Graduate Program Assistant), after the Spring term and at least two weeks in advance of the first comprehensive exam date. No subsequent changes in the initially chosen two comprehensive exams are possible.
3. The comprehensive exam questions are written by the members of the three examination committees which, for each committee, normally comprise of the instructors of the respective PhD courses (ECON 803 and 804 for Microeconomics; ECON 808 and 809 for Macroeconomics; ECON 837 and 838 for Econometrics) from the preceding Fall and Spring terms. Each examination committee selects a chair.
4. Before each exam the examination committee members provide reasonable opportunity to answer student questions in person or by phone/email. Exam questions from previous years are available from the Graduate Program Assistant and/or the department website. During each exam, one committee member is normally available in the examination room and should be reasonably prepared to answer questions about all parts of the exam. If no committee member can be present during an exam because of work-related travel or other valid reasons, then the committee chair must inform the Graduate Chair in advance. The Graduate Chair must then obtain the agreement of another faculty member to proctor the exam.
5. Each comprehensive exam is written and lasts four hours. The Microeconomics exam is based on course material covered in ECON 803 and 804. The Macroeconomics exam is based on course material covered in ECON 808 and 809. The Econometrics exam is based on course material covered in ECON 837 and 838. Both parts of each exam have equal weight.
6. The comprehensive exams are anonymous and each student is identified by a pseudonym so that student identities are not known to the examination committee.

B. Grading

1. The PhD comprehensive exams are graded as Satisfactory (Pass) or Unsatisfactory (Fail). A student who fails a comprehensive exam on their first attempt is allowed to rewrite this exam in the same academic term.

2. A student is considered to have passed the PhD comprehensive examinations requirement if the student has obtained passing grade in both of their chosen comprehensive examinations from item A.2 above, after one or two attempts. If a student fails one or both chosen exams on both attempts, then the student is considered to have failed the PhD comprehensive examinations requirement and will normally be asked by the Graduate Program Committee to withdraw from the PhD program.
3. The grading of the PhD comprehensive exams uses one of the following methods, either: (a) each member of the examining committee grades the parts of the exam that he/she wrote; or (b) each committee member grades the whole exam. If method (b) is used, each committee member provides an answer key of the parts he/she wrote to the rest of the examination committee. Each committee decides which method to use and communicates this to the students in advance of the exam.
4. The examination committee members discuss the exam marking and make a joint decision regarding the students' grades (Pass or Fail). The committee decisions and main guiding criteria are recorded in writing by the committee chair. The committee chair then informs the Graduate Program Assistant about the exam grade of each student.
5. Grading and the dissemination of results is done in a timely fashion after each exam.

C. Other

1. Each student can request to view and copy the unmarked original of their comprehensive exams.
2. Each student can enquire with the chair of the examination committee about the grading of their exam. Students should not discuss grading with other members of the examination committee.
3. Any student request for re-grading of a comprehensive exam should be specific, made in writing, and addressed to the committee chair. The committee members use their expertise to address the validity of the re-grade request and communicate the outcome to the student in writing, with a brief justification. The committee will not consider further re-grade requests.
4. Any extenuating circumstances relevant to a student's performance in the comprehensive exams should be appropriately documented and communicated to the Graduate Chair in advance.
5. Before the Graduate Program Committee makes its decision regarding a student who has failed the PhD comprehensive examinations requirement, the student has the opportunity to appear before the committee in person and/or provide the committee with documentary evidence of any additional relevant information.
6. Students have the right to appeal any decision of the Graduate Program Committee directly affecting them. Appeals must be addressed to the Senate Graduate Studies Committee and submitted in writing via the Dean of Graduate Studies office.