

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

Agricultural & Consumer Economics

Graduate Program Policies and Procedures

**Academic Year
2025-2026**

Graduate Program Policies and Procedures, 2025-2026

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MAAE Program

MAAE Program

The non-thesis Master of Agricultural and Applied Economics (MAAE) is a professionally oriented degree designed to prepare graduates for a wide variety of careers in the private or public sectors in the U.S. or internationally.

Core coursework will train students in advanced microeconomics and econometrics, and additional quantitative tools such as data science and system optimization. Field coursework provides graduate level training in a specialization area chosen by the student. The program also requires a professional internship or research apprenticeship to provide students with work experience prior to degree completion.

The MAAE is designed for students from any other major or with a bachelor's degree to complete over a 1-to-2-year period based on their interests and ability to take partial to full course loads during each semester of study; it is open to any student with a bachelor's degree that meets the program admission criteria.

Undergraduate students in Agricultural and Consumer Economics (ACE) have the option of pursuing the MAAE as a combined degree with their undergraduate studies (BS/MAAE). The BS/MAAE allows students to “share” 6 of the advanced (400-level) coursework taken as part of their undergraduate program and apply them towards the MAAE elective requirements. This effectively reduces the number of additional or unique hours needed for the MAAE to 26 hours, and allows ACE undergraduates to complete the MAAE in one additional year (2 semesters) beyond their undergraduate requirements.

Advising

Academic Advising

- The MAAE Director serves as academic advisor to all MAAE students. During the recruitment process or immediately following admission and acceptance, students work with the Director and program coordinator to develop a course plan to meet program requirements within the targeted graduation timeline. Graduation timelines are typically 2-3 semesters. Combined program (BS/MAAE) students should complete MAAE requirements in 2 semesters.

Assessing Progress

- MAAE students are required to submit a report of progress toward degree each year. Reports follow a template provided by ACE. These annual reports are reviewed by the MAAE Director and program coordinator who then communicate with the student about their progress in the program.

MAAE Program

Financial Assistance

- The MAAE is a fully self-supporting program; students are assessed the application tuition and fees. Limited scholarships are available through ACE. MAAE students are ineligible for assistantship positions that provide tuition and partial fee waivers. However, hourly course assistant positions maybe available.

MAAE Requirements Summary

Total Credit Hours: 32 hours of graduate credit*

500-Level Credit Hours: A minimum of 16 hours at the 500-level

ACE Credit Hours: A minimum of 20 hours in ACE courses

Microeconomic Theory: 4 hours

ACE 500, Applied Economic Theory

Quantitative Methods: 8 hours

ACE 562, Applied Regression Models I

ACE 564, Applied Regression Models II

An additional 4 hours in approved quantitative methods course(s)

Field Courses: 12 hours

12 hours of approved graduate field courses, must include at least 8 hours in ACE

Professional/Research Internship: 2 hours

ACE 592 GIE, Graduate Internship

ACE 591, Independent Study

Graduate Electives: 6 hours*

Minimum program GPA: 3.0

*Students pursuing the combined BS/MAAE are allowed to share 6 hours of coursework among their undergraduate and graduate degrees, reducing the additional hours needed for the MAAE to 26 total hours.

M.S. Program

M.S. Program

The Master of Science in Agricultural & Applied Economics (M.S.) program offers considerable flexibility to fit students' educational goals. If students use the degree as a foundation for a doctorate, they will emphasize economic theory and analytical research tools. If students seek a terminal professional degree, they will focus their studies on the concepts and analytical techniques used by analysts and managers in industries, governments, and other organizations.

Advising

Academic Advising

Each student is assigned an initial advisor(s) when they arrive in the program. Students may request advisor changes by emailing the [Graduate Program Coordinator \(GPCo\)](#), who will coordinate the process and provide updates. Each student should meet with their advisor(s) at least twice a year to review their progress. Each candidate for the master's degree must complete at least 32 hours of graduate coursework. This coursework should be carefully selected in consultation with their advisor(s) to meet their educational goals and interests and to satisfy the M.S. degree requirements.

Thesis Advising

An M.S. student writes a thesis under the supervision of a thesis committee. This committee consists of at least three University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC) professors. At least two of them must be members of the Graduate Faculty. One member of the committee serves as the student's thesis advisor and chairperson of the committee. Each student should select a thesis advisor(s) from among the ACE faculty and send a request to the GPCo by the end of their second semester of study. Non-Graduate Faculty members serving as advisor or committee chairperson require prior Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) approval. Requests must be submitted through the GPCo.

Thesis

Thesis Defense/Final Oral Examination

An M.S. student must defend their thesis in an oral examination which coincides with an open departmental seminar. The thesis committee administers the oral examination. The thesis advisor, in consultation with the student, must request formal committee appointment from the DGS through the GPCo at least one month before the intended defense date. At least a week prior to the examination, the student should submit the thesis to the thesis committee members. The advisor will arrange for the topic, time, and place of the open seminar and then communicate this with the GPCo. The GPCo will secure the location, date, and time through a calendar invite, which will also be utilized to make the announcement to the academic community. After the final examination, the committee chairperson reports the "pass" or "fail" result to the GPCo, who informs the DGS. If the committee awards a "fail,"

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it will specify the additional work necessary to earn a "pass" or will recommend the student's continuation in the program be terminated.

Thesis Deposit

An M.S. student is responsible for preparing and depositing their thesis in accordance with the [Graduate College \(GC\) thesis requirements](#) and departmental formatting requirements. The GC requires that master's theses be approved by a member of the Graduate Faculty. After the thesis is approved, the student must provide an electronic copy by email for format review to the GPCo at least two weeks before it must be deposited with GC. Once the GPCo approves the format, they will provide further instructions on depositing with the GC. The student must also provide to the GPCo a final copy of the thesis as accepted by the GC. M.S. degrees are awarded in May, August, and December. Students must apply to be on the degree list through [student self-service](#) using the graduation tab and deposit the thesis by the [GC deadlines](#).

Non-Thesis M.S. Degree

Only rarely and in exceptional circumstances may the M.S. thesis requirement be waived. A student who has been admitted into either the standard Agricultural and Applied Economics M.S. program (requiring a thesis) or the Agricultural and Applied Economics Ph.D. program and has completed the doctoral core sequence may transfer into the non-thesis M.S. program. Students must apply and request DGS approval by contacting the GPCo after completing at least two semesters of graduate coursework.

Assessing Progress

Reporting Progress Towards Degree

Master's students are required to submit a report of progress toward degree each year using a template provided by GPCo. These annual reports are reviewed by the student's advisor(s) and the DGS. Based on this report, the student's advisor or the DGS will communicate with the student about their progress in the program.

Milestones to Completion of Degree

The following guidelines and limits are intended to result in the expeditious completion of the M.S. degree requirements. If a student needs to extend one or more of the limits, they must request approval from the DGS through the [GPCo](#). The request, endorsed by the student's advisor(s), should indicate the reasons for the delay and include a plan and a specific date for completion.

M.S. Milestones	Normal Progress	Limit
Select Thesis Advisor	End of 2 nd semester	18 months
Final Examination	End of 4 th semester and contiguous summers	3 years (ACE Limit)*

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* [See GC handbook for details.](#)

Continuing for the Ph.D. Degree

M.S. students wishing to continue for the Ph.D. degree, must apply through the regular Ph.D. application cycle via [ACE Ph.D. Admissions](#). ACE will evaluate the student's credentials and inform them in writing of the admission decision. Enrollment in the Ph.D. program is not guaranteed and becomes official only after completing all M.S. degree requirements.

Standard M.S. Requirements Summary

Total Credit Hours: 32 hours of graduate credit*; A maximum of 8 hours of thesis may count towards the total.

*Graduate credit is given for 400-level courses (unless the Catalog or Course Schedule specifies undergraduate credit only) and 500-level. 100- 200- and 300-level courses do not earn credit toward a graduate degree in ACE.

500-Level Credit Hours: 8 hours of ACE 500-level coursework. Excluding independent study (ACE 591), thesis credit (ACE 599) and required quantitative methods courses.

Microeconomic Theory: 4 hours - ACE 500, Applied Economic Theory

ACE 500 is the standard course for M.S. theory requirements. Ph.D.-level theory course(s) are more intensive and provide less focus on applications of theory that would be useful for M.S. thesis development. To request a substitution, you must first consult with your advisor(s), DGS, and then email [GPCo](#) with your request, copying your advisor(s) on the correspondence.

Quantitative and Research Methods:

(a) 4 hours in applied econometrics

ACE 562 Applied Regression Models I, 2 hours

ACE 564 Applied Regression Models II, 2 hours

Equivalent or more advanced econometrics courses can be used to satisfy this requirement by consulting your advisor(s), the DGS, and emailing the [GPCo](#) with the request, copying your advisor(s).

(b) At least 2 hours in additional quantitative methods:

Various courses can be used to satisfy the additional quantitative methods requirement. Students should consult their advisor(s) in selecting appropriate quantitative methods coursework to support their thesis research, career aspirations, or other goals upon completing the M.S. program. Coursework to satisfy the additional quantitative methods requirement should be

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approved by the DGS via email request to the [GPCo](#). Advisor(s) should be copied on the email request.

Independent Study: Up to 8 hours of independent study may count towards total credit hours but shall not be used to satisfy specific degree requirements except in unusual circumstances in consultation with your advisor(s) and DGS approval requested through the GPCo.

Grade Point Average (GPA): A minimum overall graduate GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. All courses taken to fulfill a specific requirement must be taken for a letter grade.

Thesis: Students register for ACE 599-Thesis Research, complete an approved thesis supervised by an advisory committee, defend the thesis in an oral examination administered by the thesis committee during, an open departmental seminar.

Summary of Requirements for Non-Thesis M.S. Option

The differences between the two M.S. degree options are summarized in the table below:

Required Courses	Thesis Option-Required Hours	Non-Thesis Option-Required Hours
Total Hours	32 (Minimum)	32 (Minimum)
Microeconomic Theory	4	N/A
Quantitative & Research Methods	6	N/A
Courses from the ACE doctoral core sequence, including at least 12 hours in applied economic theory and 8 hours in quantitative methods	N/A	24
Thesis Hours Required-ACE 599 (min/max applied toward degree)	8 (ACE 599 hours beyond 8 do not count towards the 32-hour requirement)	N/A
Minimum Hours Required Within the Unit	8, excluding ACE 594 (seminars and workshops) or ACE 599. ACE 591 hours must be approved for application toward the degree.	20, excluding ACE 594 (seminars and workshops) or ACE 599. ACE 591 hours must be approved for application toward the degree.
Minimum 500-Level Hours Required Overall	12	20

Straight Through Ph.D. Option

Straight Through Ph.D. Option

Entering M.S. students with exceptional academic backgrounds and Ph.D. goals may consider the straight-through Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural and Applied Economics (Ph.D.) option. Students are admitted as M.S. candidates but begin taking doctoral courses during the M.S. program. Strong performance may lead to direct transfer into the Ph.D. program without completing the M.S. degree. Those who successfully pursue this option generally do not complete the M.S. degree.

To be considered for the straight-through Ph.D. option, within three semesters of enrolling in the ACE M.S. program, students must complete the following requirements:

1. *At least two courses from among:*
 - ACE 504 – Foundational Microeconomic Theory, 4 hours
 - ACE 501 – Risk and Info: Theory and App, 4 hours
 - ACE 503 – Equilibrium and Welfare Econ, 4 hours
 - ACE 505 – Empirical Methods in Applied Economics, 4 hours
 - It's strongly encouraged to complete ACE 504, 501, 503, and 505 in the same academic year.
2. *One from among:*
 - ECON 532 – Econometric Analysis I, 4 hours
 - ECON 535 – Econometric Analysis II, 4 hours
 - STAT 400 and 410 – Statistics and Probability I and II, 4 hours
 - Students may substitute other advanced quantitative methods courses by submitting a request for DGS approval to GPCo.
3. *16 hours of courses satisfying requirements 1 & 2 above, or other 500'level courses, but not any independent study courses.*
4. *24 hours of graduate credit overall with a GPA of at least 3.0 for both the courses used to satisfy requirements 1 & 2 above and all hours completed.*

Students who satisfy these requirements may apply for transfer into the ACE Ph.D. program using a [Graduate College petition form](#). The petition must include a recommendation from the student's advisor(s) and will be reviewed by the DGS in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate Admissions and Recruiting Committee. After review, students will be notified of approval or denial into the Ph.D. program. Students transferring via the straight-through option must complete the Ph.D. core examination (based on courses listed in section 1-above) within five semesters of their ACE graduate program enrollment. The core examination is described in the Ph.D. program requirements. Students must also complete all other GC and ACE requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Ph.D. Program

Ph.D. Program

The Ph.D. degree prepares successful candidates for positions in academia, the private sector, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The program typically follows a four-year structure. The first year focuses on core course requirements and a written core examination; second year emphasizes specialization courses and the second-year research paper; third year involves preparing for the oral preliminary examination and dissertation proposal defense; fourth year is dedicated to completing research, writing, dissertation, and defense.

Students work with their advisor(s) to tailor a program to their interests, building on core courses in economic theory and quantitative methods. These courses provide a solid foundation in economic theory and its application through quantitative methods—the essential tools of applied economic analysis.

Academic Advising

Each student is assigned an initial advisor(s) upon program entry. Students may request advisor(s) changes by emailing [GPCo](#), who will coordinate the process and provide updates. The student's advisor(s) and other faculty in their fields will help determine appropriate coursework and activities to achieve expertise in their fields of research. DGS conducts annual progress assessments through GPCo and may recommend additional coursework, independent study, or other activities if weaknesses are identified. Students whose performance or progress consistently falls significantly below expectations may be advised to terminate the program and seek other opportunities.

Courses

The core courses cover the theory and quantitative methods upon which advanced research is based. Field courses build on the knowledge gained in the core courses. In addition to the core courses and field courses, Ph.D. students are required to complete ACE 561, Advanced Research and Scholarly Communication. ACE 561 is normally taken in the 4th semester of the program.

Core Courses

Typically, Ph.D. students complete core course requirements during their first year. Students must complete core courses in two consecutive semesters beginning with their first fall semester unless a delay for remedial courses or graduate-level non-ACE courses is approved by their advisor(s) and the DGS via GPCo. Core courses must be taken for a letter grade.

- The core courses are:
 - ACE 504 – Foundational Microeconomic Theory, 4 hours (Fall)
 - ACE 501 – Risk and Info: Theory and App, 4 hours (Fall)
 - ECON 532* - Econometric Analysis I, 4 hours (Fall)

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- ACE 503 – Equilibrium and Welfare Econ, 4 hours (Spring)
- ACE 505 – Empirical Methods in Applied Economics, 4 hours (Spring)
- ECON 535 – Econometric Analysis II, 4 hours (Spring)
 - *Students who have completed STAT 400 and STAT 410 or equivalent may be exempted from ECON 532.
 - Students may be exempted from ECON 535 based on similar coursework requesting DGS approval via GPCo.
 - Students exempted from ECON 532 and/or 535 must take additional 500-level courses to replace those credit hours

Quantitative Methods Courses

Students must complete at least 4 hours of quantitative methods courses beyond those in the core.

Field Courses

By the end of their first year, each student consults with their advisor(s) to select field courses and must submit a “Ph.D. Course Plan and Approval Form” to GPCo as part of their annual review. After approval, this course list is incorporated into their progress report and may only be modified with consent from the student, advisor(s) and DGS.

Students may design their own fields or select from pre-designed areas (examples below). Each field requires at least eight hours at the 500 level, resulting in recognizable expertise in two coherent areas of study and research. This results in a minimum of 16 hours of 500-level coursework, excluding the core courses, independent study, and thesis credit. Of the 16 hours of field coursework, at least 8 hours must be ACE courses. Below are some examples of Ph.D. specialization fields and potential courses (not an exhaustive list of potential fields or courses; course offerings vary by semester).

- *Agricultural Economics (Markets, Finance, and Price Analysis)*
 - ACE 527 – Advanced Price Analysis, 4 hours
 - ACE 528 – Research in Futures Markets, 4 hours
 - ACE 542 – Advanced Agricultural Finance, 4 hours
- *Consumer and Household Economics*
 - ACE 571 – Household Economics, 2 hours
- *International, Policy, and Development Economics*
 - ACE 557 – Food, Poverty, and Development, 2 hours
 - ACE 559 – Food, Trade, and Development, 2 hours
- *Natural Resources and Environmental Economics*
 - ACE 510 – Advanced Natural Resource Economics, 4 hours
 - ACE 516 – Environmental Economics, 4 hours
- *Regional Economics and Public Policy*

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- ACE 532 – Network Econometrics and Supply Chain Analysis, 4 hours
- *Quantitative Methods*
 - ACE 520 – Time Series Econometrics for Price Analysis, 4 hours
 - ACE 531 – Impact Evaluation, 2 hours
 - ACE 532 – Network Econometrics and Supply Chain Analysis, 4 hours
 - ACE 592
 - (SAE) – Data Science for Applied Economics, 4 hours
 - (EV) – Environmental Valuation, 4 hours
 - (EM) – Empirical Methods

Requirements for Continuation in the Ph.D. Program

Written Core Examination

Ph.D. students must pass a written core examination during the summer after completing core courses. The examination covers materials from ACE 501, 503, 504, and 505, requiring students to integrate theory and analytical tools to analyze problems or concepts. Understanding of ECON 532 and ECON 535 may be required to complete the exam. The examination must be taken within two years of Ph.D. program entry unless a request for an extension is approved by a student's advisor(s) and the DGS via GPCo.

DGS appoints the examining committee. The committee normally consists of the faculty who instruct the four ACE core courses (ACE 501, 503, 504, and 505), one additional faculty member, and the DGS as an ex-officio member.

The chair of the examining committee reports the results of the examination to students by email within two weeks of the examination copying the students' advisor(s), Graduate Program Coordinator, and the DGS to the email. The grading is "pass" or "fail," although additional qualitative remarks, such as "high distinction" that represent a consensus of the examining committee may be included. A copy of the examination and answers becomes part of students' departmental academic file.

Students who fail may take a January make-up examination graded by the first day of the following spring semester. Students cannot register for classes after the second attempt until results are reported. Failing twice or missing a scheduled make-up results in dismissal from the doctoral program. Make-up requests must be emailed to [GPCo](#), copying their advisor(s) and DGS. These requests are scrutinized and decided case-by-case. Students failing the core exam may be eligible to receive the non-thesis M.S. degree based on coursework.

Research Paper

Purpose

Ph.D. Program

The research paper requirement is designed to develop and evaluate student's ability to conduct and communicate original, independent research suitable for scholarly publication. It verifies expertise in frontier research in at least one of their areas of specialization and helps prepare students for the research, writing, and oral defense efforts required to complete a dissertation successfully. Students must complete a written research paper and present their research at the research celebration event or another approved ACE event. Participation in ACE 561, Advanced Research and Scholarly Communication, is required and supports the development of students' research papers.

Research Paper: Guidelines and Requirements for Development of a Successful Paper

- **Style**: The paper must follow journal article format appropriate to the student's area of specialization. Length: 20-30 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins) with a firm 35 pages limit, including figures and tables. Papers must pose a research question, place that question in the relevant literature, work towards answering the question using appropriate tools (e.g. econometric analysis, numerical simulation, operations research methods, or theoretical modeling), and discuss the results of that investigation.
- **Source and Authorship**: Papers may build on second-year field courses or research assistantship work at UIUC but cannot be based on work conducted before entering the ACE Ph.D. program. Students must be sole authors conducting largely original work, notwithstanding that the paper may subsequently be published in co-authorship with advisor(s) and/or other researchers. University academic integrity policies strictly apply.
- **Research Question and Originality**: Papers must be well conceived, justified, and communicated. Papers must represent original research addressing a substantial issue in one of the student's areas of specialization. Research question selection is part of the requirement. Papers must be motivated by and distinguished from previous related work but need not be publishable quality to satisfy this requirement, modest departures from previously published work are acceptable. Examples of exercises which, if carefully and professionally executed, would yield papers appropriate to this requirement are presented in the Illustrative Approaches section below.

Research Paper: Illustrative Approaches

Research may develop from a student's Ph.D. coursework, assistantships, or personal interests. The following examples of suitable research undertakings are meant to be illustrative but not limiting; greater departures from established literature are encouraged.

- Begin with a previously published empirical analysis:
 - Use the same data set to estimate, simulate, or optimize different functional relationships, control for endogeneity, conduct novel simulations, or otherwise use the data to correct previous work or address new questions.

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- Use a new data set to test previously proposed econometric equations, simulations, or optimizations to assess whether results are stable across countries, time periods, etc.
- Begin with a previously published theoretical analysis of an applied problem:
 - Change model assumptions, in a non-trivial and empirically relevant way, to examine how results change.
 - Conduct a numerical analysis of the model (if not previously conducted) to determine if the effects identified in the model are likely to be large and/or important.

Research Paper: Procedures

- Timing of Research Paper: The research paper must be completed in the calendar year following the student's first core examination. There is a single annual cycle with deadlines: topic proposals due by the last day of spring classes, completed papers due August 16, minor revisions due October 1, and papers requiring significant revision resubmitted by the last Friday before Fall Break. Weekend deadlines move to the next business day. All deadlines are firm.
- Topic Selection: Students submit a 3-page proposal including key literature references to the DGS by email by the last day of spring classes in their second year. A faculty committee reviews proposals. Each committee member either approves the proposal and informs the [GPCo](#) for inclusion in the student's file or requests revisions required for approval. Approval certifies the topic's significance in the student's area(s) of specialization. The proposal and the comments from the committee on the proposal will be conveyed to the reviewers of the paper in August.
- Research Support: Students may request DGS grants up to \$250 for data, software, or basic research resources to meet the research paper requirement. Applications must be filed at least two months before the paper deadline, endorsed by advisor(s), and specify needs, rationale, and costs. Purchased items become UIUC property.
- Certification of Independence: Research ideas, the research design, and the empirical approach may be developed collaboratively. However, the student is expected to execute the formal analysis and write the research paper independently. On the title page, the student should include the following statement and certify its applicability by signing and dating the statement:

I certify that the contents of this paper are my own work except as specifically noted within the paper, that it was prepared specifically for the Ph.D. Research Paper requirement of the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, and that it is not based on work done prior to joining the ACE doctoral program.

X

Signature

X

Date

- **Submission:** The paper must be submitted via email to the DGS and the [GPCo](#) no later than the deadline noted above.
- **Evaluation:** Papers are evaluated by a committee comprising the Graduate Programs Committee, the DGS, and other faculty appointed by the DGS as needed. The review standard is slightly less stringent than contributed papers at the annual meeting of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. Reviews consider literature knowledge, field standards, and research methods. Papers should address interesting questions using appropriate methods and data, be free of glaring mistakes, adequately use literature to motivate problems and justify methods, apply appropriate scientific research methods, and demonstrate full understanding of methods used. Papers should be organized as standard applied economics research.

The initial evaluation may result in a pass-with-distinction, pass, or revise and resubmit (minor or major). Requests for minor or major revisions must include clear referee reports from the reviewers specifying necessary changes to pass the second-year requirement (distinct from suggestions for future work.) Revised papers must include detailed responses to the reviews (following journal article format). Adequate time will be allowed to prepare a revised version, with the limit as noted above. Resubmission must be via email to the DGS and the [GPCo](#). A paper judged to require revisions will be evaluated a second time and awarded a pass or fail. A failing evaluation on the revised paper will cause the student to be dismissed from further doctoral study in ACE. The written evaluation of the paper will be included in the student's file.

Research Paper: Presentations

ACE holds an annual student research celebration where all students who passed the research paper requirement within the preceding 12 months must present. Students unable to present on that day must present at an approved ACE event. Students whose research papers have not been evaluated and accepted may not present at the research celebration. Presentations are not formally evaluated, although feedback to improve presentation skills is encouraged.

Preliminary Examination: Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal

The oral preliminary examination assesses a student's preparation and plans for independent research and other related topics. The examination includes, but is not limited to, the formal

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dissertation research proposal. Successful completion of this examination completes the preliminary examination requirements of GC.

A student is eligible to take the oral preliminary examination after satisfying all pre-dissertation course requirements, including the removal of all excused and deferred grades (other than thesis), passing the written core examination, and completing the research paper requirement. The date of the preliminary examination is fixed by the student's advisor(s).

The preliminary examination is administered by the student's examination committee, consisting of at least four voting members. There must be at least three members from ACE, including the student's research supervisor; and one faculty member from outside ACE in a discipline appropriate for the student's dissertation topic. At least three committee members, including the chair, must be Graduate Faculty members and at least two must be tenured UIUC faculty. A co-chair may be appointed if they meet chair requirements. Non-UIUC faculty experts on the research area may serve on the committee. A participant from outside UIUC may be nominated in a statement that justifies the involvement and identifies the resources that will be used to defray the associated expenses, if any. Non-voting members, such as an external reader, a member of the faculty who is off campus, or others who can make a significant contribution to the research, may be appointed. Requests for deviation from these membership requirements require DGS approval, and GC approval if necessary. This committee also supervises the student's dissertation research.

All voting members of the committee must participate in the oral preliminary examination, deliberation and results determination of the examination. Remote participation of the committee member(s) is permitted under the following conditions:

- Technology must allow all participants to communicate throughout the examination and to access all materials presented. Video technology is encouraged for remote committee members.
- The chair coordinates technology use and may recess the examination if technical problems prevent full participation, making arrangements to resume promptly.

Research proposals differ between traditional and three-essay dissertations. Traditional theses typically consist of a single, unified document that presents the research in a comprehensive, structured manner. Three-essay theses have modular structure that is designed around the publication of three distinct research papers. The three-essay model is becoming the norm in applied economics.

Traditional thesis research proposal. It typically includes 1) problem identification, 2) literature review, usually augmented in the final dissertation, 3) conceptual basis for the analysis, 4) data description, and 5) description of the research method. Proposals normally exclude analytical results because the analysis is to be undertaken after the examination and with committee agreement on the appropriateness of the topic and the research plan.

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Three-essay dissertation research proposal. Proposals typically include one substantially complete research paper, including results and their interpretation; a second research paper with well-identified research question, appropriate methods, and data; and a third research paper proposal with a well-defined research problem and conceptual framework for addressing a significant research question.

The research proposal should be distributed to the examination committee members at least one week prior to the proposed examination date. At least one month prior to the examination, the advisor(s) requests that the DGS recommend the members of the examination committee to the GC Dean for designation as the examining committee. This request includes the nomination of a chairperson, a director of research (generally, but not necessarily, the chair of the committee), and the proposed date of the examination.

After advisor confirmation of the committee, the student submits an exam request through the [GC system](#). GPCo then coordinates with the student to confirm location, date, time, reserves the location, and creates a calendar invite serving as the formal announcement to the academic community. The preliminary examination is open to the public. The GPCo invites all ACE faculty and graduate students to the examination.

Although the preliminary examination is public, deliberations of the committee are held in executive session. The committee determines whether the student advances to Ph.D. candidacy and whether the dissertation topic and research plan, as presented in the research proposal, are acceptable. The committee's decision must be unanimous and reported as "pass," "decision deferred," or "fail." For deferrals, the committee specifies the activities required to earn a "pass," including possible re-examination based on a revised proposal. The same committee must re-examine the student within 180 calendar days, with outcomes limited to "pass" or "fail".

Failure is typically final though committees may grant one additional examination after the student completes further coursework, independent study, or research. If a second attempt is given, the GC must appoint a new committee which may, but does not need to, include the same members. Students may take the preliminary examination only one additional time after a "fail" result.

The chair of the committee communicates the decision by email to the [GPCo](#) with all committee members copied and agreeing with the chair's decision. If a result is not communicated within six months of the exam date, the committee is dissolved.

After successfully completing the preliminary examination, students must register each regular academic term until meeting the total credit requirement for the degree. Thereafter, students may not need to register each semester if away from campus, except during the term when taking the final examination or for funding and visa purposes. Direct registration questions to the [GPCo](#) or consult the [GC handbook](#).

Ph.D. Program

Dissertation & Final Oral Examination

During the dissertation phase, students meet with their dissertation director at least monthly (typically weekly) to discuss research progress. Students are expected to complete their dissertation within one year, but not more than two years, from the preliminary examination. One year after passing the preliminary examination, and at six-month intervals thereafter, students must demonstrate reasonable progress on the dissertation research to the full committee.

A Ph.D. student must successfully defend their dissertation in a final oral examination evaluating the research quality. [For final exam requirements visit the GC handbook.](#) Generally, the same committee that administered the oral preliminary defense examines the completed dissertation, but substitutions may be made. The same membership requirements that apply to the preliminary examination also apply to the final examination committee. At least one month prior to the examination, the committee chair requests that the DGS recommend committee members to the GC Dean for designation as the examining committee. This request includes the proposed date of examination. After advisor confirmation from the DGS, the student submits an exam request through the [GC system](#). GPCo then coordinates with the student to confirm location, date, time, reserves the location and creates a calendar invite serving as the formal announcement to the academic community.

All voting members of the committee must participate in the oral final examination, this includes deliberation and results determination of the examination. Remote participation of the committee member(s) is permitted under the same conditions as for the preliminary defense. The chairperson is responsible for scheduling the examination and notifying committee members. The examination is open to the public. The student must submit the dissertation to committee members at least one week prior to the examination unless all committee members agree to a shorter reading period.

Although the final examination is public, deliberations of the committee are held in an executive session. The committee will reach a decision of “pass” or “fail.” Candidates pass if the Director(s) of Research votes “pass” and no more than one remaining committee members votes “fail.” Candidates fail if a Director of Research votes “fail” or if two or more committee members vote “fail.” The chair(s) emails the decision to the [GPCo](#) with all members copied. Committee members must communicate their decisions in the email chain. If the committee cannot reach a decision, the chairperson confers with the DGS.

[Please see the GC handbook for timeframes between the preliminary exam and the final exam.](#)

After passing the final examination and having their dissertation approved by the committee, students must provide an electronic copy of their dissertation to [GPCo](#) for format review at least two weeks before the GC deposit deadline. Please check GC website [for thesis formatting help](#) and [for deadlines](#). Students must also provide [GPCo](#) a final electronic copy of the dissertation as accepted by GC.

Ph.D. Program

Students are expected to deposit their dissertation promptly following their final exam to preserve research currency and document integrity. Please see [the GC handbook](#) for deposit expectations. Ph.D. degrees are awarded in May, August, and December. Students must apply to be on the degree list and deposit the dissertation by [GC deadlines](#).

Assessing Progress

Reporting Progress Towards Degree

Ph.D. students must submit annual progress reports using a template provided by [GPCo](#). Reports are reviewed by the student's advisor and DGS, who communicate with students about their progress in the program.

Milestones to Completion of Degree

The following guidelines reflect expeditious degree completion. Students needing extensions must request approval by sending an email to [GPCo](#) with advisor endorsement, including reasons for the delay and include a plan and a specific date for completion.

Ph.D. Milestones	Normal Progress	Limit ¹
Completion of Core Courses	End of 2 nd Semester	End of 3 rd Semester
Selection of Field Courses	End of 2 nd Semester	N/A
Written Core Examination	End of 1 st Year	End of 2 nd Year
Completion of Research Paper	5 th Semester	End of 3 rd Year
Preliminary Examination	5 th – 6 th Semester	See footnote ²
Final Examination	7 th – 8 th Semester	See footnote ³

¹Limits based on fall entry and no remedial requirements.

²[See GC handbook for limit requirements.](#)

³[See GC handbook for limits on completion of degree.](#)

Ph.D. Program

Sample Program

The following course plan satisfies the requirements of the Ph.D. program:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<u>Semester 1</u> ACE 504; ACE 501; & ECON 532	<u>Semester 3</u> 2 Field Courses* at the 500-level each both at 4 hours & Quantitative Methods Course (500-level), 4 hours	<u>Semester 5</u> ACE 599, 12 hours Present at Research Celebration	<u>Semester 7</u> ACE 599, 12 hours Final Exam
<u>Semester 2</u> ACE 505; ACE 503; & ECON 535	<u>Semester 4</u> 2 Field Courses* at the 500-level each both at 4 hours & ACE 561	<u>Semester 6</u> ACE 599, 12 hours Prelim Exam	<u>Semester 8</u> ACE 599, 12 hours Dissertation Deposit
<u>Summer Session</u> Written Core Exam (June/July)	<u>Summer Session</u> Prepare Research Paper	N/A	Graduated/Alumni
<u>End of 1st Year</u> Identify Field Courses	<u>During 2nd Year</u> Identify Research Paper Topic	N/A	Graduated/Alumni

*Graduate credit is given for courses at the 400-level, unless the catalog or course schedule specifies undergraduate credit only. 100- 200- and 300-level courses do not earn credit toward a graduate degree in ACE.

Ph.D. Requirements Summary

Students entering the Ph.D. program with a master's degree need 64 credit hours to graduate; a maximum of 32 thesis hours may count toward that total. Students entering the Ph.D. program without a master's degree need 96 hours to graduate. A maximum of 48 thesis hours may count towards that total. [See the full details of the Ph.D. program.](#)

Core Course: ACE 504 (Fall); ACE 501 (Fall); ECON 532 (Fall); ACE 505 (Spring); ACE 503 (Spring); & ECON 535 (Spring). The core courses begin in the first fall semester of enrollment unless a delay is recommended by the student's advisor/faculty. Students are encouraged to complete the core courses in two consecutive semesters. Core courses must be taken for letter grade.

Field Courses: 16 approved hours at the 500-level to define 2 fields of expertise, at least 8 of the 16 are in ACE.

Quantitative Methods Courses: A minimum of 4 approved hours of quantitative methods beyond core courses.

Ph.D. Program

Research Methods Course: ACE 561 for 4 hours or an approved alternative.

Other Course-Related Requirements

500-Level Courses: A minimum of 16 hours of 500-level coursework, excluding the core courses, independent study, and thesis credit.

Independent Study: 8 hours of independent study, 4 hours from any one member of the faculty, may be taken for a grade. Subsequent additional independent study credit may be taken on a credit/no credit basis. However, independent study shall not be used to satisfy specific degree requirements except in unusual circumstances and with approval by the DGS.

Grade Point Average (GPA): A minimum overall graduate GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. [See GC handbook for full information on GPA.](#)

Other Program-Related Requirements

Written Core Examination: Passing grade on a written core examination that is based primarily on material covered in ACE 501, 503, 504, and 505 but may also require integration of theory and analytical tools to analyze problems or concepts.

Research Paper: A written paper in the form of a journal article and presented at the ACE research celebration or approved ACE event. The research paper must be approved by the research paper committee. The research paper committee includes faculty evaluators appointed by the DGS, with assistance from the GPCo.

Preliminary Examination/ Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal: Pass an oral preliminary examination and defend plans for independent research. Students must complete all non-thesis course and examination requirements and remove all excused and deferred (other than thesis) grades before the oral examination.

Dissertation & Final Oral Examination: Pass an oral examination that evaluates the dissertation research. [See GC handbook for registration requirements.](#) [See GC academic calendar for deadlines.](#) [See thesis formatting information.](#)

Time Limit: Every graduate student has an expected graduation date (EGD) that is assigned to them at time of admission. This process is done within the GC and ACE doesn't set these time limits. [See GC handbook to understand how your EGD is calculated.](#) If you are confused how this is calculated contact the GPCo.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance

ACE offers graduate fellowships and assistantships on a competitive basis. This support is intended to attract and retain outstanding candidates for the Ph.D. and M.S. degrees by enriching their academic experiences.

Criteria & Procedures

Demonstration of exceptional ability in studies and/or research activities is an important criterion in selecting students for available fellowships and assistantships. Recipients are selected based on academic performance, disciplinary interests, experience, goals, skills, recommendations, standardized test scores, and match with donor intent (if applicable). To receive financial assistance, students must be enrolled in the GC at the time of the appointment and are encouraged to contact ACE faculty directly to learn about research opportunities.

Length of Appointment

Length of appointments for assistantships and fellowships vary with the type of appointment. Financial assistance is contingent upon maintaining good academic standing and satisfactory progress toward completing degree requirements, as well as on satisfactory employment performance, the availability of funding for the position, and continued enrollment in the academic program. In addition, it is required to maintain a grade point average of at least 3.25 (A=4.0) in your required academic work.

Assistantships

Research and teaching assistantships allow graduate students to assist faculty with research projects and educational programs. Funding typically comes from external contracts or grants, especially for continuing students. Appointments are based on a 40-hour week. Thus, a one-half time (50%) appointment requires 20 hours per week, on average, in research or teaching activities assigned by a faculty supervisor. The percent time of appointment depends on funding availability, responsibilities, and the student's qualifications. The assistantship stipend rates are set annually before the fall semester. [See GC handbook for further assistantship information.](#)

Research Assistantships (RAs): RAs are funded by grants and contracts. Research assistant duties generally include literature reviews, preparation of presentations, reports, data collection and analysis, or other deliverables.

Teaching Assistantships (TAs): TAs require English proficiency ([see teaching assistantship English requirements](#)). The [Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning](#) provides training opportunities for teaching assistants. Classroom TAs attend the Graduate Academy for College Teaching prior to the initial term appointment as TA. Non-classroom TAs (those grading and/or

Financial Assistance

holding office hours) may attend either the Graduate Academy for College Teaching or the Graduate Symposium on Grading and Office Hours.

Faculty Supervisor (Teaching Assistant/Research Assistant): The assistantship supervisor may differ from the student's academic advisor. Generally, the supervisor determines the student's responsibilities and with the student's advisor, provides feedback on the student's progress to both the student and ACE. Students may also consult with their advisors about sources of financial aid, funding policies, assistantship opportunities, and other matters. For teaching method questions or academic integrity issues (cheating, plagiarism), students can contact the DGS or Director of Undergraduate Programs.

Fellowships

ACE offers fellowships funded by internal resources, including generous gifts to ACE, or by successfully nominating students for competitive college and campus fellowships. These provide stipends and typically waive tuition and some student fees. Fellows are expected to participate with research and teaching in ACE. Fellows are required to register during each semester of the appointment. Fellows may, with approval from DGS, accept additional hourly or teaching/research assistantship appointments of up to 50 percent time. Concurrent appointments do not reduce the registration requirement. Fellows may not hold two major fellowships or comparable awards concurrently. Thesis deposit, withdrawal, or cancellation may affect the terms of the fellowship award, including termination. [For more information consult the GC Fellowship Office.](#)

Other Financial Support

Students without summer waiver-generating appointments who held waiver-generating appointments for the previous spring semester are eligible to receive summer automatic tuition waivers if they choose to enroll in the summer semester. For summer automatic waivers, only tuition and those fees as stated in [Section 3-503 of the Student Code](#) are waived.

Some students arrange for graduate appointments in other units on campus, such as the international area studies centers, the Office of International Student and Scholar Services, or a research institute. The GC maintains the [Assistantship Clearinghouse](#) which lists hourly positions and assistantships available to graduate students at UIUC. Students are encouraged to apply, in collaboration with faculty members, for external fellowships, grants, and contracts that will provide financial assistance.

Occasionally part-time hourly work is available in ACE, but it does not qualify the student for a waiver of tuition and student fees. Also, student loan information is available through the [Office of Student Financial Aid](#). Furthermore, the GC will offer emergency grants at times. This will depend on several factors and [an application is needed to be considered for an emergency grant](#).

Financial Assistance

Travel Support

Support for travel is sometimes provided by ACE for students having active roles in major national meetings such as the AAEA annual meeting. Students may apply for ACE and campus support for travel to other meetings where they also play an active role. Students can email [GPCo](#) to enquire about this application. Students working on research projects may receive travel support from project funds.

Policies & Guidelines for Graduate Study

Policies & Guidelines for Graduate Study

Campus Policies

The Campus Administrative Manual (CAM) is one of several policy manuals for UIUC. The CAM includes policies, procedures, information, forms and guidelines. [See CAM for further information.](#)

ACE follows GC policies as described in the [GC handbook](#), which is referenced several times throughout this handbook. Students must familiarize themselves with GC policies.

A GC petition request may be filed to request a deviation from these policies and procedures. [See the graduate student portal to make this request.](#) To request an exception from ACE policy and requirements, please email [GPCo](#). Deviations from policies or procedures stated herein or from other applicable regulations must be approved by the DGS and the Head of ACE. When necessary, requests may need to be approved by the GC Dean as well. It is strongly suggested that a student file the petition or request before the deviation occurs.

Departmental Policies

Advising: Faculty can help students select courses, develop a research project, and understand ACE and UIUC requirements. They can also offer career planning advice. Upon arrival, students are assigned a faculty member as an academic advisor as described in this manual under “M.S. Program” and “Ph.D. Program.” In addition to these advising assignments students are encouraged to consult with and seek advice from other members of the faculty. Furthermore, the GPCo and DGS are available to all ACE graduate students for guidance and assistance.

Students are ultimately responsible for their own academic progress and success. While advisors, ACE, and UIUC provides assistance, admission does not guarantee degree completion or obligate the institution to ensure student success.

Performance Expectations: Most students exceed minimum requirements. Students pursuing highly sought-after positions must go well beyond these minimum requirements to be competitive in the job market. Ideal candidates for an academic position must, in the M.S. or Ph.D. program, demonstrate intellectual curiosity and creativity, the ability to plan and conduct research, and the ability to effectively teach and/or deliver outreach programs. An ideal candidate for a position in the private or public sector must demonstrate intellectual curiosity and creativity, ability to formulate a research plan, to draw inferences, and to make strategic decisions from these inferences. There are no specific indicators of these abilities, but certain accomplishments suggest these abilities and help students assess their progress:

- Academic performance well above the minimum grade point average.

Policies & Guidelines for Graduate Study

- Completion of additional courses that help acquire additional research tools, competency in an additional area of expertise, or a greater depth of understanding in an area.
- Active participation in seminars and workshops as discussant and presenter.
- Teaching experience and training in programs offered by ACE, the College of ACES, UIUC, or by professional associations.
- Expeditious completion of the requirements for the degree.
- Preparation, alone or in conjunction with a member of the faculty, of a proposal for research support.
- Submission and publication of papers in referred journals and books.
- Presentation of research results in workshops; seminars; and regional, national, or international meetings.
- Work experience or internships in appropriate organizations.

Dismissal & Reinstatement: Students dismissed from the graduate program for failing to satisfy ACE degree requirements, [may petition for reinstatement](#). Petitions must include reasons for reinstatement and advisor(s) recommendations. In considering the petition, ACE's consideration may include, but is not limited to, performance in core and non-core courses; performance in teaching or research assistantships; recommendations of faculty, including the student's advisor(s); deficiencies existing when beginning the program; and work or personal difficulties that may have interfered with progress toward satisfying requirements. If granted, reinstatement is conditional on meeting specific course, grade point average, and timing requirements specified by the ACE Department Head, who notifies the student in writing of the outcome and/or conditions to be met.

Exceptions: In exceptional circumstances, specific degree requirements may be waived or altered. A student may request a waiver of an ACE requirement by submitting a request to the DGS stating: 1) the modification that is desired; 2) reasons for the modification; and 3) their advisor's recommendation. These requests will be reviewed, and decisions will be given in a reasonable timeframe. Requests will be emailed to [GPCo](#).

Solving Problems: If a student encounters problems, their advisor(s) is usually their first contact. If the advisor(s) is not able to resolve the issue, the student may consult with the GPCo, DGS, the ACE Department Head, another faculty member, an officer of the ACE Graduate Student Organization (GSO), a representative of the Graduate College, the campus Dean of Students, or the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.

Policies & Guidelines for Graduate Study

Grievance & Harassment

If a student believes that they have received unfair treatment in any matter involving ACE, they may file a grievance with the Department Grievance Committee. Grievance procedures are outlined in the ACE Bylaws. [The GC grievance policy is available here](#). If a student believes they may have been the victim of harassment of any form by any member of the UIUC community, they should notify their advisor(s), the GPCo, the DGS, the Head of the Department of ACE, or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Academic Integrity Guidelines

A number of campus policies outline ethical and professional standards. [See Article 1, Part 4 of the UIUC Student Code](#). More information and policy are found in the [GC handbook](#).

Student Governance

All graduate students in ACE are members of the ACE Graduate Student Organization (GSO). The GSO contributes to departmental governance activities; represents students on some policy matters; administers graduate student office space; posts notices of interest to graduate students; recognizes significant teaching, research, and service activities by the faculty and staff; and organizes a variety of professional and social activities. Participation is encouraged. Officers are elected each year.