

ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT – GRADUATE FAQs

Is graduate student advising mandatory? If so, how often should a graduate student meet with a faculty advisor?

Yes. Graduate students must meet with an assigned advisor at least once a year. Mandatory advising must be scheduled with the assigned advisor during the second half of the Fall semester (earlier for newly admitted students).

The faculty advisor should maintain a current record of each student's progress in an advising folder which is kept in the economics department office. Students should pick up their folder from the department office and bring it with them when meeting with their advisor.

What is the meaning of the two terms “Classified Status” and “Conditionally Classified Status”?

During the application review process, the admissions committee decides the preparation needs of each MA applicant. Depending on their needs, students may be admitted as “Classified” or “Conditionally Classified”. Classified students have completed all of our MA program prerequisites. Conditionally classified students are admitted to the MA program subject to satisfactory (grade B or better) completion of one or more of the following:

Math 226, Econ 301, Econ 302, Econ 311, Econ 312, Level 1 Written English requirement.

After satisfactory completion of all conditional requirements, conditionally classified students must apply for a change of status to “Classified”, since the status change is not automatic. Application forms are available in the Economics department office. Please bring a copy of transcript showing completion of all of the conditional requirements.

Conditionally classified students cannot take more than 12 units of MA level courses without changing their status from “Conditionally Classified” to “Classified”.

What are the Graduate English Writing requirements?

There are two levels of English Writing requirements that graduate students must satisfy.

Level 1. The Level 1 English Writing requirement is a pre-admission requirement. Students may demonstrate Level 1 English Writing proficiency in one of the following ways:

- an undergraduate degree from an institution located in a country in which English is the native language;
- a score of at least 4.0/6.0 on the GRE or GMAT Analytic Writing Assessment;
- a score of at least 4.5/6.0 on the essay test of the paper-based [PBT] TOEFL (a minimum score of 24/30 on the Writing section of the Internet-based test [iBT] TOEFL);
- a score of at least 6.5/9.0 on the IELTS writing test, or a concordant score on the Pearson Test of English.

Students who are admitted conditionally on Level 1 Written English will need to successfully complete (at additional expense) BUS 714, Elements of Business Writing or LCA 514, Preparation for Graduate Writing during their first semester. These courses are offered through San Francisco State's Open University, as part of the College of Extended Learning. For more information, please visit the [Open University website](#). Satisfactory completion of Level 1 English Writing is a must for application for Advancement to Candidacy (ATC).

Level 2. The Level 2 English Writing requirement is fulfilled through completion of a written paper as part of the culminating experience exam.

What is the total number of units required for graduation?

The total number of units required for the MA degree is 30 units. This includes 18 units of core courses and 12 units of electives. For students opting to write a Masters Thesis, the number of elective units required is reduced by 6. However, with effect from Fall 2007, the economics department has been phasing out the Masters' Thesis option.

What are the core courses an MA student must take?

- Econ 715 Mathematical Economics
- Econ 731 Econometric Theory
- Econ 701 Seminar: Microeconomic Theory
- Econ 702 Seminar: Macroeconomic Theory
- Econ 825 Applied Time Series Econometrics
- Econ 830 Advanced Econometric Methods and Applications

The above core courses fulfill **18 units** of the total requirement of **30 units** for graduation.

Do I have to maintain a certain sequence in taking courses?

Yes, some courses have prerequisites and thus, must follow in order. For example, Econ 830 cannot be taken before Econ 731. For prerequisites, please refer to the university Course Bulletin.

What is a suggested course schedule for completion of the MA degree?

The following presents a few options, depending on a student's level of preparation and number of courses per semester a student can comfortably undertake (e.g., work commitments, etc.):

• **2 Year Program** (standard full-time program for classified students)

First Year Fall: Econ 715, Econ 701, Econ 731,
 Spring: Econ 702, Econ 825, elective

Second Year Fall: Econ 830, elective(s)
 Spring: elective(s), Culminating Experience Exam

• **1.5 Year Program** (accelerated full-time program for classified students)

First Year Fall: Econ 715, Econ 701, Econ 731, Econ 830* OR elective
 Spring: Econ 702, Econ 825, elective(s), Culminating Experience Exam

Second Year Fall: Econ 830 (if not taken in Fall of first year), elective(s)

* requires instructor approval

• **2+ Year Program** (example of part-time program)

First Year Fall: Econ 715, Econ 701
 Spring: Econ 702, elective

Second Year Fall: Econ 731, elective
 Spring: Econ 825, elective, Culminating Experience Exam

Third Year Fall: Econ 830, elective

Keep in mind that a total of four electives are required in addition to the six core courses. Please note also that the suggested programs of study above do not include summer courses. Students may also wish to take an elective or two in the summer, which may enable some students to complete the program in an even shorter period of time (even as early as one year). Working students will almost certainly wish to consider a 2+ year program and students who are entering with conditional status must take the course(s) required to remove their conditional status. Conditionally admitted students may also enroll in one or more of our MA courses, provided they have met the course prerequisites.

What are the available electives that are offered to MA students?

All electives require prior approval from an advisor. In addition to core courses, students must take four electives, **one of which must be a pure stand-alone graduate level course (numbered 800+ and not paired with an undergraduate course)**. Some courses numbered 700-799 may satisfy this requirement, but must be approved by the student's advisor and the graduate coordinator. Note that all BUS 700-799 courses count as undergraduate courses. Currently, the department offers a small number of stand-alone graduate electives together with additional paired graduate/undergraduate electives. Instructors teaching paired electives ensure that there are additional course requirements and expectations appropriate for graduate students enrolled in the course. The paired courses we have offered in the past are:

- Econ 801 paired with Econ 601: Applied Microeconomics
- Econ 811 paired with Econ 611: International Trade Theory and Policy
- Econ 805 paired with Econ 505: Graduate Applied Public Finance
- Econ 811 paired with Econ 610: International Trade Theory and Policy
- Econ 812 paired with Econ 612: International Finance and Macroeconomics
- Econ 820 paired with Econ 520: Industrial Organization
- Econ 825 paired with Econ 625: Theory of Economic Development
- Econ 840 paired with Econ 640: Health Economics Analysis and Research
- Econ 850 paired with Econ 550: Economics of the Environment

Students may take up to a maximum of three paired graduate/undergraduate courses and a maximum of two pure (upper division) undergraduate courses toward the MA degree. No lower division undergraduate courses may be applied toward the MA degree. As mentioned above, one elective must be a pure stand-alone graduate level course. Students may also take certain approved electives outside of the Economics department (see below).

Can a student take one or more elective courses from another department to fulfill the graduation requirement?

Yes. The following courses have been recommended in the past to count as an elective:

- BUS 780: Financial Accounting (counts as an undergraduate course)
- BUS 785: Financial Management (counts as an undergraduate course)
- BUS 786: Operations Analysis (counts as an undergraduate course)
- DS 853: Seminar in Data Analysis
- FIN 819: Financial Analysis and Management
- FIN 825: Seminar in Investments
- GEOG 825: Seminar in Economic Geography
- IBUS 815: Seminar in International Business
- IBUS 868: Strategies in Emerging and Developing Economies
- IR 728: International Political Economy
- IR 735: Global Environmental Policy
- MATH 325: Linear Algebra
- MATH 370: Real Analysis
- MATH 441: Probability and Statistics II

If an advisor must recommend an outside course not on the above list, the decision must be based on its merit, such as the extent to which the course draws on economic theories and principles, or the extent to which the course enhances mathematical/quantitative skills useful for economics. An advisor must inform the graduate coordinator of his/her decision in such cases for record keeping purposes.

Finally, note that in some cases, a student may be approved to take one or more elective courses at U.C. Berkeley via cross registration. For more information, please see [Special Enrollment Programs](#). Note that the units taken do not count toward the maximum that can be transferred (see below).

How many course units from other departments can be counted toward the MA degree?

A maximum of **six units** from other departments can be counted toward the MA degree.

In addition to the core and elective courses, can I take one or more faculty-directed “Independent Study” courses to fulfill graduation requirements? How many units does an “Independent Study” course carry?

Yes. An “Independent Study” (Econ 899) can be planned with the formal approval of a faculty member who agrees to direct a student for a semester-long study, as per rules.

An “Independent Study” carries **up to three units**. Based on the assessment of the student’s workload, the faculty member directing the study decides the number of units the study can carry. A maximum of 6 units can be taken as Econ 899.

Only students with a GPA of **3.25 or better** are allowed to take Independent Study.

For record keeping purposes, the faculty member who directs the study should provide a half-page synopsis of the students work to the graduate coordinator, on completion of the directed study.

Can credits for some of the courses from a previous institution be transferred and used as a replacement for some of the above courses?

Yes. An adviser, upon a student’s request, may recommend such a replacement based on the particular merits of and student performance in the course. A Request for Graduate Program Transfer Unit form must be completed and signed by the advisor and graduate coordinator. The form should be submitted along with the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) Form. For more information and to download the form, go to the [Transfer Unit Evaluation page](#). Note that a maximum of 6 units can be transferred and that units will only transfer if the course taken elsewhere was not applied to the award of a previous degree. If the course was applied to the award of a previous degree, while we may accept the course as an equivalent to satisfy one of our own requirements, you will still need to complete the units within our program (i.e., take one or two additional electives). In this case, there is no need to complete the Transfer Unit Form.

How and when do I complete the culminating experience (comprehensive written exam)?

Students must pass a comprehensive written exam in order to satisfy the University culminating experience requirement. This exam is given only in Spring semester and will be administered to all students planning to graduate that same Spring semester or the following Summer or Fall semesters. In order to qualify to take the exam, a student must complete by the END of the Spring term in which they take the exam, 24 units toward the MA degree, of which ECON 715, ECON 701, ECON 702, and ECON 731 are included. In order to satisfy the culminating experience requirement, you will be asked to write, under timed and proctored conditions, a critical summary and assessment (“referee report”) of a scholarly article, which will be randomly assigned to you. Your examination committee will give you several articles, well in advance, to read and assess. You will write your report on one of these articles; however, you will not know which article you will be writing on until the examination period. You will also be given the specific exam questions and some other guidelines in advance, although no preparatory materials

such as outlines or notes may be brought into the examination room. Finally, please note that the quality of your writing for the exam will also be assessed as to whether or not it satisfies the Level 2 English Writing requirement. Note that the economics department will not file a report of completion for the culminating experience exam unless the student is in good academic standing. This may mean that the report of completion will not be filed until after Spring grades are posted.

If I have already planned to take the Masters Thesis route, how do I plan and organize the process leading to Thesis oral defense?

(NOTE) With effect from Fall 2007, the Economics Department has discontinued supporting Masters' thesis.

A student must allow at least two semesters to start and complete the Masters Thesis.

The student must decide his/her Thesis oral defense committee as early as in the second semester of his/her enrollment into the MA program.

The Masters Thesis committee will consist of a chairperson and two other faculty members.

The committee members must be either tenured or tenure track faculty.

It is the students' responsibility to have the Chair and the committee members agree to serve on the Masters Thesis committee.

It is the student's responsibility to schedule the Masters Thesis oral defense on a date agreeable to all the committee members. Normally, the Masters Thesis oral defense is scheduled at the end of the final semester of the student's enrollment.

What is an Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form?

The ATC form must be filled out and submitted to Graduate Division **after completing 9 units of MA level courses, but before completing the last 6 units of courses**. This form must be signed by the faculty advisor, graduate coordinator, and the Dean before it goes to the Graduate Division for final action. The form must be filled out online and can be accessed at [this link](#).

Students should submit their ATC form during the semester just prior to their final semester. The official ATC deadline is posted at the [Deadlines For Completing A Graduate Degree page](#) of the Graduate Division website.

Only students with 3.0 or better GPA and with “Classified” status can submit ATC forms.

Other Deadlines. When do students submit the Proposal for Culminating Experience and Application for Award of Degree (Graduation Application)?

The deadline for submitting the Proposal for Culminating Experience is the same as the deadline for the Advancement to Candidacy, which is normally late October/early November for students graduating in Spring or Summer. The deadline for Application of Award of Degree is normally early February for students graduating in Spring or Summer. Students must check the official deadlines posted at the [Deadlines for Completing a Graduate Degree page](#) of the Graduate Division website.

What do I do if I am notified that I have been placed on probationary status?

If you are notified that you have been placed on probation, you must meet with your advisor and have him/her sign the Mandatory Graduate Probation Advising Form. You will not be able to register for courses until this form has been submitted to Graduate Division.

If after the next semester, your GPA is still below 3.0, you will be academically disqualified. In this case, you must meet with your advisor and have him/her sign a petition for Reinstatement Following Disqualification.

If the semester after reinstatement, your GPA remains below 3.0, you will be administratively disqualified from the program, and can only be reinstated with an appeal by the department to the Graduate Studies Appeals Committee. This is the last possible appeal, and clearly can be made only in cases showing the strongest potential and progress.

The above forms can be obtained at the [Probation and Mandatory Advising page](#) of the Graduate Division website.

Where do I get all the necessary forms, such as the ATC form, Application for Award of Degree, probationary status forms, etc.?

All the necessary forms can be downloaded from the [Student Forms page](#) of the Graduate Division website. A majority of them can be filled out online.