MSEcon, PhD Program Handbook

2024-2025 Academic Year

Specializations In:

Development

Econometrics

Finance

Health Economics

Industrial Organization

Labor

Macro: Labor

Macro: Trade

Public Finance

Theory

Department of Economics

The University of Texas at Austin

Table of Contents

This graduate program handbook provides an overview of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Economics at the University of Texas in Austin. For current and prospective students, it provides a comprehensive description of the PhD degree requirements, course schedule and grant programs. Current students can also find detailed descriptions of all administrative processes, such as registering for classes or applying for one of the grant programs.

The handbook works in conjunction with the Graduate Catalogue to lay out the program requirements and the requirements for both the Master of Science in Economics and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. As with the Graduate Catalogue, students finishing within six years can obtain degrees by meeting the requirements listed in any handbook published during their tenure in the program.[1] This handbook lays out the requirements for students starting in the 2023-2024 Academic Year. The 2022-2023, 2021-2022, 2020-2021 and 2019-2020 Handbooks lay out the requirements for students who started in prior years. Since the 2019-20 Handbook was the Department's first, cohorts starting before the 2019-2020 Academic Year may also graduate under the requirements listed in earlier editions of the Graduate Catalogue.

I. Key People and Committees

Many faculty and staff contribute to the PhD Program in the Department of Economics. The following is a list of the related staff positions, faculty positions and committees:

A. Department Management

Department Chair: Thomas Wiseman (wiseman@austin.utexas.edu)
The Chair of the Department of Economics is ultimately responsible for all department activities. The Chair is not the first point of contact for any student related issues, but issues raised with other staff or faculty members may be referred to the Chair. The Chair has the final decision within the Department for any academic or administrative disputes.

[1] Students who start in the 2023-24 Academic Year, for example, could choose to meet the degree requirements listed in a later handbook instead of those listed in the 2023-24 handbook. In practice, the degree requirements do not often change.

Executive Assistant: Kevin Carney (kcarney@austin.utexas.edu)

The Executive Assistant (EA) assists the Chair by taking primary responsibility for the management of all administrative activities within the Department. Like the Chair, the EA is not the first point of contact for any graduate student related issues. However, the EA may occasionally contact students to obtain information necessary to resolve issues the student has brought to other faculty and staff members.

B. PhD Program

PhD Program Administrator: Stefanie Shackleton (phd-econ@austin.utexas.edu)

The PhD Program Administrator is often referred to simply as the "Graduate Coordinator" or "GC". The Graduate Administrator handles all administrative issues related to the PhD program. As such, the Graduate Administrator is usually the first point of contact for any questions or issues that need to be addressed. The Graduate Administrator works closely with the Graduate Studies Advisor to oversee the program while also assisting the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Admissions Director and the Placement Director.

Graduate Studies Advisor: Manuela Angelucci (mangeluc@utexas.edu)

The Graduate Studies Advisor is the faculty member assigned to manage the PhD program in conjunction with the Graduate Coordinator. While the Graduate Coordinator handles the majority of issues related to the PhD program, the Graduate Coordinator may refer students to the Graduate Studies Advisor. This will typically involve issues that require the Graduate Studies Advisor's approval, subject matter expertise or professional experience as an economist.

Assistant Graduate Studies Advisor: Steve Trejo (trejo@austin.utexas.edu)

The Assistant Graduate Studies Advisor fills the role of Graduate Studies Advisor if the Graduate Studies Advisor is unavailable. From the student perspective, the Assistant Graduate Studies Advisor signs documents when the Graduate Studies Advisor is out of the office for a prolonged period of time. Students should consult the Graduate Coordinator before approaching the Assistant Graduate Studies Advisor.

Admissions Director: Brendan Kline (brendan.kline@austin.utexas.edu)

The Admissions Director is responsible for managing admissions to the PhD program. Once admitted, students rarely need to interact with the Admissions Director. But of course, the Admissions Director is often the primary point of contact for prospective students.

Placement Director: Saroj Bhattarai (saroj.bhattarai@austin.utexas.edu)
The Placement Director is responsible for guiding students through the process of applying for jobs in the field of economics. Students usually only interact with the Placement Director in their final year of the program.

Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee: Robert Town (robert.town@austin.utexas.edu)
The Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC Chair) is in charge of managing the Department's Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee consists of all assistant, associate and full professors who are active participants in the program, as described in Section I.D. The GSC Chair is responsible for determining whether students have completed the requirements for the MSEcon and PhD degrees. As a result, the GSC Chair is the final arbiter for any requests to modify the degree requirements. The GSC Chair also works with the Department Chair and the Graduate Studies Advisor to set the policies of the PhD program.

C. Other Relevant Staff

Operations Manager: Chrissy Lovell
The Operations Manager is responsible, among other things, for managing the Department's facilities including information technology and equipment. Graduate students will most often interact with the Operations Manager regarding office assignments and issues associated with University property and equipment. The latter, for example, includes any furniture provided by the University for students' offices.

Senior Administrative Associate: Ira Ochs
The Senior Administrative Associate is responsible for all reimbursements that do not involve travel or the purchase of software or IT equipment. In general, graduate students will only interact with the Senior Administrative Program Coordinator when requesting reimbursement for journal submission fees as described below in Section V.D.

D. Committees

Graduate Studies Committee:
The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) comprises all tenure-track faculty members who have a role in the Department's graduate programs. For the Economics Department, this generally includes all tenure-track faculty members whose primary appointment is in the Department. This committee is responsible for setting degree requirements and in setting the rules of the PhD

program. For graduate students, this committee is usually only relevant when a student forms a dissertation committee. As described in Section IV.E., dissertation committees must include at least three members of this committee as well as a faculty member who is not a member of this committee.

Progress Review Committee:
The Progress Review Committee (PRC) is a small committee that has been empowered by the Graduate Studies Committee to decide a number of specific issues that occur too frequently to bring to the attention of the full GSC. This includes, for example, approving the outcomes of the annual assessments of student progress such as the comprehensive exams, the second-year paper and the annual dissertation progress review. In addition, the PRC decides the allocation of TA assignments, fellowships, fellowship nominations and other types of awards. The committee comprises five faculty members directly involved with the administration of the PhD program: the Department Chair, the Graduate Studies Advisor, the GSC Chair, the Placement Director and the Admissions Director. Under normal circumstances, graduate students do not directly interact with this committee.

II. Program Requirements

The PhD program in Economics awards two degrees: the Master of Science in Economics (MSEcon) degree and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

The Master of Science in Economics degree requires completion of at least thirty-nine semester hours of coursework. The program must include the following courses: Economics 388C (Econometrics I), 388D (Econometrics II) 386C (Microeconomics I), 386D (Microeconomics II), 387C (Macroeconomics I), 387D (Macroeconomics II), and 385D (Mathematics for Economists). In addition to these core courses, the student must complete two graduate courses in each of two elective fields of specialization and two elective courses from other fields. With permission, the program may include graduate courses outside of the major area and undergraduate courses. No courses may be taken on a credit/no credit basis, and students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.00. Students must earn a grade of C or above to earn credit for any core or field course. If a student in the PhD program has competed the above requirements but is leaving the program prior to obtaining their PhD, they should apply for the MSEcon degree.[2]

[2] However, a student can obtain both the MSEcon and PhD degrees if they have satisfied the requirements for both.

If a student wishes to obtain the MSEcon degree on the way to the PhD, it is advisable that they do so in the Fall prior to graduating with the PhD. To begin the process, the student should reach out for approval from the Graduate Advisor, and have the Graduate Administrator make sure that all requirements are met. They will then have to follow the steps for graduating with the masters provided by the Graduate School.

To obtain the Doctor of Philosophy degree, students must complete the requirements for the MSEcon degree, as well as the following requirements:

1. Students must complete the comprehensive exam requirements.
2. Students must pass the second-year paper requirement.
3. Starting with the third year, students must participate in the writing seminar for their area of specialization and must make significant progress on their research by the end of each academic year.
4. Students must complete a minimum of six credit hours of dissertation.
5. Finally, students must write a dissertation of original research and have the dissertation approved by their dissertation committee following an oral defense.

Most students finish their degree in 5 years with 93 total credit hours, but some take 6 years with 111 total credit hours. This includes credits for writing seminar, research, and dissertation courses taken in the third and later years.

Exceptions to the requirements for both the MSEcon and PhD degrees are permitted if approved by the GSC Chair. The procedure for obtaining approval for some common exceptions are described below. To request other exceptions, students should contact the Graduate Coordinator.

Finally, many students enter the program having already obtained a Master of Arts or a Master of Science in Economics. In general, such students still must complete our requirements for the MSEcon degree, and are subject to the course exceptions described below. However, accommodations can be made for students transferring from another PhD program in Economics. Students transferring from another PhD program should contact the Graduate Coordinator.

III. Course of Study

A. Classes by Program Year

The course of study for most students will begin with the free math prep course ("Math Camp") offered by the Department in August before the start of the first academic year. This course is designed to ensure that all students have the necessary mathematical tools to complete the first-year core courses. The typical first year then includes the following courses:

Fall	**Spring**
Microeconomics I (ECO 386C)	Microeconomics II (ECO 386D)
Macroeconomics I (ECO 387C)	Macroeconomics II (ECO 387D)
Econometrics I (ECO 388C)	Econometrics II (ECO 388D)
Math for Econ (ECO 385D)	
Total Fall Credit Hours: 12	**Total Spring Credit Hours: 9**

These courses constitute the "core" of the economics course requirements. Here, students will learn the discipline's basic mathematical models and statistical tools. They provide a foundation for the second-year field courses. Note that students are required to take four courses in the Fall semester. Since students' TA appointments only cover tuition for three courses, the Department will pay for the fourth course. At the end of the first year, students take the program's comprehensive exams which are described below in Section IV.A.

In the second year, students must complete two graduate courses in each of two elective fields of specialization and two elective courses from other fields as described in Section III.C.:

Fall	Spring
Field 1: Course 1	Field 1: Course 2
Field 2: Course 1	Field 2: Course 2
Elective 1: Course 1	Elective 2: Course 2
Total Fall Credit Hours: 9	**Total Spring Credit Hours: 9**

At the end of the second year, students are required to complete the second-year paper requirement described in Section IV.B. It is also important to note that the completion of the second-year courses qualifies students for the Master of Science degree. Students can apply to receive this degree in the spring of their second year, but may also wait until a later semester to do this.

Focus shifts from course work to research in the third year. Students typically will have chosen to focus on one of five broad fields of study: Applied Microeconomics, Econometrics, Industrial Organization, Macro, and Theory. (Note that Applied Microeconomics includes Development, Labor, and Public Economics.) In the third and fourth year, students take the following courses:

Fall	Spring
Research Course (ECO 680)	Research Course (ECO 680)
Writing Seminar (ECO 387M)	Writing Seminar (ECO 387M)
Total Fall Credit Hours: 9	**Total Spring Credit Hours: 9**

In practice, students will focus on three activities: dissertation research, the writing seminar, and a research seminar. The Research Course covers the students' research activities during this period. There are no meeting times for this class, but rather students will conduct independent research and meet with their advisors or other faculty as necessary. Students are expected to meet regularly with at least two faculty members to discuss their research. The Writing Seminar course is based on the five fields listed above; there will be five sections of this class each semester, and students will be told which section corresponds to each field prior to registration. As part of this class, students are required to attend their field's Research and Writing Seminars. Also starting with the third year, students are required to meet the dissertation progress requirements described in Section IV.C.

In the fifth year and beyond, the students participate in the same activities as in the third and fourth years, but register for a different research course. Because students should advance to candidacy prior to the start of their fifth year, students will register for a dissertation course rather than the research course:

Fall	**Spring**
Dissertation (ECO 699W)	Dissertation (ECO 699W)
Writing Seminar (ECO 387M)	Writing Seminar (ECO 387M)
Total Fall Credit Hours: 9	**Total Spring Credit Hours: 9**

Students are also expected to apply for jobs and graduate in the fifth year. Although in some instances, students may take a sixth year.

B. Exceptions to the Normal Sequence of Courses

Students may deviate from the typical sequence of courses with permission from the Graduate Studies Advisor. First, students may petition to waive a required core course or elective if they have already taken a similar course at a previous institution. To do this, students should make an appointment with the professor teaching the course that they wish to waive. The faculty member will review the syllabus of the previous course and decide whether it is similar enough to allow the student to waive the required class. In some instances, the faculty member may require the student to complete an assessment to determine whether the student understands the required material. Once a faculty member has agreed to waive the course, the student should send an email to the Graduate Coordinator explaining the situation and cc'ing the instructor of the course to be waived. Field courses cannot be waived.

Students may also petition to deviate from the normal field course sequences. The most common reasons for doing so include taking a course offered by a visiting professor (a course that would be unavailable at another time) or accommodating a year in which both courses in a given field are not offered (usually due to faculty leave). Students are still expected to complete the two course sequences for two fields, but would have the option of finishing the requirement in the third year.

C. Field Courses

The Department normally offers students the opportunity to specialize in the following ten fields:

- Development
- Econometrics
- Finance
- Health Economics
- Industrial Organization
- Labor
- Macro: Labor
- Macro: Trade
- Public Finance
- Theory

Each field comprises two courses usually taken in the second year. For most fields, only two courses are offered, but in some fields, students can choose two of three or more courses. There are two fields in macroeconomics. One has a focus on labor and the other focuses more on international trade. For finance, students have the option of focusing on one of three areas of finance: Asset Pricing, Corporate Finance and Theoretical Finance. However, students can only complete one field in Finance. Finally, while the Department tries to make the fields available every year, some courses may not be available. In these years, either the Department will allow students to substitute a related course from another field or, in rare instances, the fields may not be available.

IV. PhD Program Requirements

Students in the PhD program are required to meet annual targets for satisfactory performance. In the first and second year, respectively, students are required to pass the comprehensive exams and the second-year paper. Starting in the third year, students are evaluated annually based on the progress that they have made towards completing their dissertation.

A. Comprehensive Exams

The department administers written comprehensive examinations in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. All three of these exams are offered twice a year, at the beginning and end of the summer semester. The department requires PhD students to pass all three comprehensive exams by the end of their first year.[3] However, students who pass two of three comprehensive exams may continue in the program through the end of their second year, are eligible for teaching assistantships from the department, and can submit a second-year paper for evaluation according to the second-year paper calendar. If such students pass the second-year paper requirement, the PRC will evaluate their record based on the entirety of their coursework, their comprehensive exam record (including numeric grades on the exam they did not pass), and their performance on the second-year paper. Based on this evaluation, the PRC may deem such students to have satisfied the comprehensive examination requirement.

Failure to meet this requirement will result in removal from the PhD program, but students are allowed to complete the requirements for the Master of Science degree. Students who fail to pass at least two exams by the end of their first year may continue in the program through the end of their second year in order to complete the MSEcon requirements. However, students choosing this option are no longer eligible for teaching assistantships from the Department. Students can either pay for their tuition and living expenses themselves or seek to find teaching assistantships in other departments.

B. Second-Year Paper Requirement

PhD students are required to pass the second-year paper requirement in the summer following their second year. The field courses taken in the fall and spring of the second year are designed to help students write a single-authored research paper. As detailed below, this second-year paper is evaluated by the faculty to assess a student's ability to independently create and execute a research project (in contrast to solving a well-defined problem on a theory comp). Failure to pass the second-year paper requirement results in removal from the PhD program.

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[3] Students are only required to pass each exam once. After the first testing round, students need to retake only the exam(s) they failed in the previous attempt(s). Exams are administered by the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee with the assistance of the Graduate Coordinator.

The calendar for the evaluation of the second-year paper is defined relative to the dates of the core comprehensive exams:

- Noon – Day before commencement: Abstracts due.
- Noon – Same day of the Micro Comp, at the end of May or very beginning of June: First draft of the second-year papers are due.
- During the second half of June, each student will receive an anonymous referee report with suggestions for a revision and an evaluation of the paper according to four different criteria.
- Noon – Same day of the Micro Comp, in late July or early August: Revised paper due, including the specific responses addressing the questions raised by the referees.

Students are expected to observe the following rules:

- Papers should be the result of the individual work of students. To that effect, co-authored work, or research collaborations with faculty are not allowed.
- While the exchange of ideas with faculty and other students is encouraged, direct discussion or supervision of second year papers with faculty and other students are not allowed after the last day of class of the spring semester.
- Between the end of the spring semester and the date of the revision, the only faculty contact person is the Graduate Studies Chair; any points of clarification should be emailed to both the Graduate Studies Chair and the Graduate Coordinator.
- The final Pass/Fail decision is made before the beginning of the fall semester.

To assess the student, the department implements a journal evaluation process. There is a Graduate Research Committee (GRC) composed of the Graduate Studies Chair and two or more other faculty. The GRC is chosen to be representative of the different fields in the Department. Each student paper is assigned an anonymous faculty referee in his or her field by the GRC. The revised paper is independently graded by the anonymous referee and a member of the GRC. These grades are passed along to the GRC which makes the final Pass/Fail decision. Rankings of the papers are also made by the GRC and the top paper(s) receive an award with a fellowship. For students whose passing grade on the 2nd year paper is deemed to be marginal, the GRC may recommend to the PRC that the student be put on a remediation plan at the start of the third year.

To pass the second-year paper requirement, the student must submit a single-authored paper which meets each of the following four criteria:

1. Statement of a well-defined, important question.
2. A brief (2 pages at most) discussion which argues that the question has not been addressed and how the paper will differ from the existing literature.
3. An economic framework to address the question.
4. At least one actual result (e.g., a well-worked example leading to some propositions or testable implications of a decision problem or preliminary data analysis/simulations /experiments associated with one's question).

Parts one and two demonstrate creativity. Parts three and four demonstrate a student's ability to execute a project. All 4 criteria are necessary conditions to pass the requirement. Examples of previous second-year papers that won awards are available in the Graduate Coordinator's office.

Papers should also conform to the following formatting guidelines:

- Maximum of 20 pages of text.
- Text + appendices (including references, tables, and figures) should not exceed 30 pages.
- Use the format of an accepted AER paper. There are templates available for Latex, Scientific Word and Word at the AER website. In the Latex and Scientific Word templates, the document can be typeset in "finalmode".

Papers not conforming to these page limits and formatting style will not be evaluated and will be returned to their authors.

C. Dissertation Progress

Students in the third year and beyond must make significant progress towards the completion of their dissertation in order to continue in the PhD program. The annual dissertation progress requirements set forth the expected level of progress students should achieve by the end of their third and fourth years. The requirements are as follows:

- **Third Year:** By the end of their third year, students will have made significant progress if they have a paper of sufficient quality that could become part of their dissertation.
- **Fourth Year:** By the end of their fourth year, the student must have identified and made progress on a project that could become their job market paper and allow them to go on the job market in their fifth year.

The Department expects most students in the fifth year to go on the job market, defend their dissertation and graduate by the end of the academic year.

For both the third- and fourth-year requirements, faculty will be allowed to pass students who have not met the requirement. This exception protects students against events that may interfere with the student's progress (such as a prolonged illness or extended family crisis). It also allows the faculty to pass students who have consistently worked hard and met regularly with two faculty members in the unlikely event that they failed to meet the requirement due solely to bad luck.

The annual Dissertation Progress Survey serves as the basis for assessing whether students have completed the annual dissertation requirements. In early to mid-April, the Graduate Coordinator will contact all graduate students in the third year and beyond to complete this survey. This short survey asks students, among other things, with which faculty members they have been meeting. The survey is then sent to all tenure-track faculty, asking them to identify which students they have been meeting with regularly[4] and, of those students, which have passed the annual requirements or which should be considered for an exemption due to exceptional circumstances. This information is then compiled by the Graduate Studies Advisor and presented to the entire faculty. Students pass the annual requirement if at least two faculty members, with whom they have been meeting regularly, attest that they have passed the requirement. The criteria that two faculty members must vouch for each student is consistent with the expectation that students meet regularly with two faculty members starting in the third year.

Students who fail to complete the annual dissertation progress requirements may be removed from the PhD program. However, while the Department is cautious about removing any student, the Department is especially careful when considering the removal of students in the dissertation phase of the PhD. As a result, the Department will only remove students in the dissertation phase if it is clear that the student lacks either the ability or work ethic to complete the dissertation. So, while students may, in rare instances, be removed from the program solely for failing to complete the dissertation progress requirements, these students will usually be placed on a formal remediation plan. This remediation plan will specify clear goals that a student must achieve in order to continue in the PhD program. Most students placed on a remediation plan over the last few years have successfully completed it and continued on to graduate. However, students who

[4] The term "regularly" is intentionally vague because the necessary frequency of visits can vary by student and faculty member. Ultimately, faculty decide whether students are meeting with them frequently enough to be considered "regularly". If a student has any questions about whether or not they are meeting faculty frequently enough, they should speak to the faculty member(s). As a guide, however, students should aim to meet with at least one faculty member each week. With two faculty members, for example, students might meet faculty on alternating weeks.

fail to meet the requirements of the remediation plan will usually be removed from the PhD program. All decisions to place students on a remediation plan or to remove students from the PhD program require the approval of the Progress Review Committee. When facing removal from the program in the dissertation phase, the students and their advisors will be provided the opportunity to communicate with the committee before any final decisions are made.

D. Job Placement Services

When going on the job market, students may use departmental job placement services only once during their PhD. An exception to this policy is that following a post-doc at a prestigious institution, former PhD students may use department job placement services a second time; this will require approval from the Placement Director.

E. Advancing to Doctoral Candidacy

PhD students are expected to advance to candidacy during their fourth year[5]. The exact timing is to be determined by their main advisor(s). At the beginning of the academic year, students should contact their advisors and discuss advancing to candidacy with them. When they are ready to advance to candidacy, students should contact the Graduate Coordinator to discuss submitting the formal Degree Candidacy Application form to the Graduate School. Students should aim to submit the application and have it approved (referred to as "advancing") by the end of August of their fourth year.

Completing the application requires students to write a dissertation proposal and to assemble a committee. Students usually combine abstracts from some of their existing projects to create the proposal. The dissertation committee comprises at least four members: the chair/primary supervisor, the outside member and two additional members from the GSC. The student's primary advisor will usually be the chair of the committee. In instances where two individuals fill this role, one will assume the position of chair while the other member will become co-chair. Any Economics GSC member can serve as chair. The outside member of the committee needs to be someone with a PhD who is not a member of the Department's GSC. This person could be from another department at UT, another university, a private company or government agency.

[5] See here for more information on advancing to candidacy and the link to formally apply with the graduate school: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/doctoral-candidacy

Occasionally, students know someone who could assume this position, but the primary advisor usually finds someone appropriate. The last two members of the committee (other than the chair and outside member) need to be part of the Economics GSC. Co-chairs count towards these additional members. Finally, as long as these requirements are met, students may also include additional members beyond these four.

Students often feel awkward speaking to faculty members about "being on their committee". They should not. Faculty understand the process and will be happy to fill the various roles.

Finally, students should note that our process for applying for candidacy differs from that of many other departments on campus. In some departments, for example, the process of applying for candidacy often serves as a gateway requirement with students making formal presentations that are critically evaluated by their prospective committee. In the Department, these evaluations are built into the third- and fourth-year requirements.

F. Co-Author Policy

Joint papers are allowed as thesis chapters pending approval of the student's thesis committee. This includes the possibility of two students using the same co-authored work as part of each student's thesis. All details (e.g., how many papers/co-authors are allowed and what qualifies as sufficient contribution by each single author etc.) are at the discretion of the thesis committee. **Students who are considering using co-authored work as part of their dissertation should discuss this with their committee.**

- Students are responsible for providing a statement of contribution to the committee for review.

  > The contribution statement and co-author policy is described on page 12 of the formatting guidelines. Students are required to cite any published co-authored work and include the contribution statement in the footnote. In the case where the work is not yet published, students only include the footnote that explains their contribution.

- Students are responsible for acquiring all co-author signatures on the Co-author Permission Form.

  > The department asks that students acquire signatures at the time of scheduling their defense. However, students will turn in the form to the Office of Graduate Studies along with submitting all materials and uploading the dissertation after the defense.

V. Department Programs and Awards

The Department maintains four grant programs designed to defray professional expenses that students may incur during their tenure in the program.

A. Conference Travel Grants

During each student's tenure in the program, the Department will support travel to four approved conferences for the purpose of presenting a paper. For each trip, students can receive reimbursement or fellowship for costs up to a limit that can vary by academic year. For the 2023-2024 academic year, the reimbursement limit is $500. Students spending less than the limit will be reimbursed or receive funds for all expenses, but not more than the cost of their travel. Students spending more than the limit will receive the amount of the limit. They will be responsible for the remaining expenses that exceed the funding limit.

The Department will not support travel to all conferences that accept a student's paper. The Department will only support travel to conferences that offer a valuable professional opportunity for students. Students should check with their advisor (or the faculty member most familiar with their work) to determine if an individual conference is appropriate. In some limited instances (such as SOLE or NEUDC), the Department will support travel for poster presentations. The Department will not provide support for conferences primarily attended by graduate students, nor will the Department provide support for local conferences already supported by the Department (e.g., Texas Econometrics Camp, Texas Theory Camp, STATA Conference, Texas Monetary Conference, etc.).

Students must complete the following tasks to receive a Professional Development Grant or a travel reimbursement:

1. Students should discuss the conference with their advisor or the faculty member most familiar with their research to confirm that the conference would be appropriate.
2. Once a conference accepts a student's paper, e-mail the Graduate Coordinator proof that the paper was accepted.
    a. At the same time, the student's advisor should email the Graduate Coordinator to attest that this conference is appropriate for this program. The Graduate Coordinator will confirm that the necessary documentation has been received.
3. Prior to travel, send the Graduate Coordinator an email with the following attachments:

   a. an abstract of the paper
   b. proof of the paper's acceptance (this can be either a letter accepting the paper, or a copy of the conference program with your talk listed)
   c. <u>the travel award application form</u>
4. As soon as the costs are paid, the student email the following to the Graduate Coordinator:
   a. Total cost of the trip.
   b. The requested amount to be awarded or reimbursed. (The request can be for up to the annual limit listed above.)
   c. Copies of receipts for all expenses included in the reimbursement request.
5. The student should *NOT* wait until the conference is over. The award may be paid in advance of travel in many cases, so the application should be sent to the Graduate Administrator as soon as possible once purchases of flights, accommodation, etc, are accrued.

Once these steps have been completed, the Department will then process Professional Development Award through the Graduate School, or a reimbursement through department funds.

Finally, students must adhere to the application deadlines imposed by the graduate school for Professional Development Awards. Those deadlines can be found here, and the deadlines for the 2023-2024 are below:

Travel Period	**Application Deadline**
Fall Semester Aug. 25 - Jan. 15	Dec. 4
Spring Semester Jan. 16 - May 31	May 3
Summer Semester June 1 - Aug. 24	July 6

Below is a list of example conferences that the Department considers appropriate:

- American Society of Health Economists conference (ASHEcon)
- DYNARE conference (annual)
- Econometric Society conferences
- European Association of Labour Economics
- European Trade Study group
- FREIT conferences
- Institute for Research on Poverty Summer Conference

- International Game Theory Conference (Stony Brook)
- International Health Economics Association conference (iHEA, annual)
- Midwest Econometrics Group
- Midwest Economic Theory Meetings
- Midwest Macro conference
- Midwest Trade meetings
- National Tax Association
- National Tax Association (NTA) annual meeting
- Northeastern Universities Development Conference (NEUDC)
- Population Association of America (PAA)
- Society for Advancement in Economic Theory (SAET)
- Society for Computational Economics conference (Computing in Economics and Finance (CEF), annual)
- Society for Economic Design conference
- Society of Economic Dynamics (SED) conference (annual)
- Society of Labor Economists (SOLE) Conference
- Society of Population Economics
- World Congress of the Game Theory Society

B. AEA Travel

In addition to travel to conferences or presentations, the Department will also help defray the costs of attending the Allied Social Sciences Association (ASSA) meetings that students must attend to interview for job openings in their final year of the PhD program. For AY2023-2024, the reimbursement limit for ASSA travel is $500. The Department will not support the travel to the ASSA meetings by students who are not in their final year in the program.

The process for requesting reimbursement for travel to the ASSA meetings differs from that of other conference travel. Specifically, students are not required to get faculty approval to attend the ASSA meetings. Students simply need to be in their final year of the program and on the job market. Students wishing to receive reimbursement should do the following:

1. Once the student is certain that they will attend the ASSA meetings to interview for job openings, students should contact the Graduate Coordinator to make them aware that they will be submitting a travel reimbursement request.

2. Students should then complete a Request for Travel Authorization (RTA). The form is available here. It is not necessary to estimate expenses, though the form asks for this. Simply leave this section blank.
3. Once students return from the conference, they should send the following to the Graduate Coordinator:
    a. Total cost of the trip.
    b. The requested amount to be reimbursed. The request can be for up to the annual reimbursement limit listed above.
    c. Copies of receipts for all expenses included in the reimbursement request.

C. Data Purchases

The Department will provide each PhD student with funding for one approved data purchase for up to the reimbursement limit of $750. In order to qualify for funding, students must submit a request to the Graduate Coordinator that includes:

1. A complete description of the data, including the cost, and an explanation of why access to this data is important for the dissertation research.
2. A forwarded e-mail from the advisor or the faculty member most familiar with the research that attests to the quality of the proposed research and importance of the data.

Once approved, students should discuss the logistics of purchasing the data with the Graduate Coordinator. Please note that If a data purchase requires a contract or agreement, students should send the document (unsigned) to the Graduate Coordinator. The document will then be sent to the Business Contracts Office to be reviewed and approved. Approval of some contracts can take several months. Therefore, if students are interested in purchasing data, they should begin this application process as soon as possible.

If data costs exceed the reimbursement limit, students should consider two options. First, students should discuss the purchase with their advisors. Some faculty members may have research funds available for this purpose. Second, if a data set might be of benefit to another student or faculty member, it may be possible to pool awards or obtain supplemental funds from the faculty member. Finally, if the data set could be of use to students or faculty in general, the Department may consider providing support beyond the reimbursement limit in order to provide public good. If a project falls into any of these categories, this should be explained in the student’s email to the Graduate Coordinator and the email from the faculty sponsor should support this.

This program can also be used to support travel for students who need to use restricted data that can only be accessed in a specific geographic location. For example, the US Government provides restricted access to detailed Census data at a number of Research Data Centers around the United States. To access these data, researchers much travel to one of these data centers and conduct their analyses on site. In this case, there is a Research Data Center available here at the University of Texas at Austin, but there are many restricted data sets that do not have local access sites. Students seeking to receive reimbursement for these expenses should send the same information to the Graduate Coordinator as students requesting reimbursement for data purchases. However, once travel has been approved, students should follow the reimbursement procedures described for conference travel.

D. Education Research Center Data

The Texas ERC data repository itself is a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) which contains a broad range of connected, student- and school-level data. If students are starting a new project that would benefit from access to the ERC, the Department requires a proposal and written endorsement from the student's advisor which will be passed on to the Progress Review Committee for approval. The process to submit a request is as follows:

1) Advisor's endorsement: Students should first speak with their advisors about the project. If the advisor determines that the ERC is an appropriate resource, they should email the graduate program coordinator (phd-econ@austin.utexas.edu), endorsing the request to access ERC data.
2) Submit a proposal: With the assistance of the advisor, students put together a proposal and email it to the graduate program coordinator (phd-econ@austin.utexas.edu).
3) The Progress Review Committee will review the request and if approved, students should submit a proposal to the ERC Advisory Board; once approved by the advisory board, the department will pay the user fee.

E. Journal Submission Fees

The Department will reimburse each PhD student for approved journal submission fees up to $300. Each student may request reimbursement for a maximum of three submissions during their tenure in the PhD program. For each of the three submissions, students may request reimbursement for expenses up to $100. To request reimbursement under this program, students should send the following to both the Senior Administrative Associate, Emily Carpenter, and the Graduate Coordinator:

1. E-mail approval from a faculty member that confirms that the student's paper is appropriate for the journal and that the journal is of sufficient quality that publication will improve the student's profile for the job market.
2. An e-mail or PDF receipt documenting the submission fee. This receipt needs to be emailed to Emily Carpenter within 30 days of purchase.

F. Graduate Student Awards

The Department makes several awards to students each academic year. These include the following:

- **TA Awards:** Every year, the Department recognizes two graduate students who have provided exceptional service as teaching assistants. Faculty nominate students who have worked as their TA for this award in the TA evaluations that they complete at the end of each semester.
- **Second-Year Paper Award:** Every year, the Department recognizes the best second-year paper(s). The Graduate Review Committee selects the recipient of this award when evaluating the second-year papers.
- **Summer Fellowships:** Every summer, the Department awards a small number of fellowships that fund graduate students to focus on their dissertation research. These awards are typically given to the most promising graduate students based on faculty nominations.

G. Teaching Assistantships

Offer letters to the PhD program guarantee student funding in the form of teaching assistantships during the fall and spring semesters for their first six years in the PhD program subject to satisfactory academic progress and satisfactory performance as a teaching assistant.

Students should be aware of all conditions for graduate student employment and they can find additional resources here.

H. Additional Jobs

Graduate school policy prevents students from working beyond 20 hours/week in the first year. This policy exists for an important reason as first-year graduate students must perform well in core coursework and preliminary exams in order to continue in the program and continue to hold academic employment.

Second-year international students need CPT approval for work beyond 20 hours/week, which requires enrollment in ECO 380P. This brings enrollment to 12 hours and the university only covers the cost of tuition for 9 hours. This means that the hiring department, hiring faculty member or student would be responsible for the additional tuition cost.

Generally speaking, additional work should align with the student's field and benefit their academic and professional career, which the department strongly supports. It is best practice to check with the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Coordinator before accepting additional work.