

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS LEARNING OUTCOMES

Department Mission

Economics teaches a way to understand human behavior. Specifically, economists focus their understanding of human behavior through the lens of the rational choice model. Around this core theory, potentially important deviations from rational choice are studied in behavioral economics. While economic models have important applications to markets (for example, labor supply and demand, capital accumulation, and production.), we hold firmly to the conviction that that the economic approach to questions is broadly applicable. In sum, what unifies our department is a way of understanding behavior rather than a narrow topic area. *Our aspiration is that students develop a deep understanding of this approach that might support them in leading meaningful lives through vocations and avocations.*

Student learning outcomes

1. (“Principles”) Students who complete Principles of Microeconomics and Principles of Macroeconomics should, regardless of ultimate major, demonstrate facility with the basic models of these sub-disciplines.
2. (“Fields”) Students who complete field courses in economics should, regardless of major, demonstrate their ability appreciate the theoretical and empirical contributions that economics makes to the field in question.
3. (“Core”) Economics majors should demonstrate their ability to:
 - Interpret the results of a regression model, connecting the model coefficients to appropriate concepts in economic theory and performing hypothesis tests. This interpretation includes comprehension of the key assumptions of the linear regression model and an understanding of basic concepts such as R-squared, multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity, autocorrelation, etc.
 - Solve constrained optimization problems for individual consumers and producers.
 - Explain in detail theoretical predictions based on intermediate macroeconomic models of growth and the business cycle.
4. (“Comps”) Economics majors should demonstrate the ability to combine theoretical and empirical tools to construct and test an economic hypothesis.
5. (“Alumni Reflection”) Economics majors should be well prepared for vocations and avocations that contribute to a life of meaning.

ASSESSMENT PLAN

The assessment cycle

We plan to assess one of the five student learning outcomes each year, allowing us to examine each outcome twice between decennial reviews. The following table lays out our plan for collecting, reviewing, and acting on data in the course of a typical year. In the event we find cause for concern regarding a learning outcome such that we feel it unwise to wait five years before reassessing, the department will either delay the assessment of other outcomes or complete overlapping assessments as best fits the circumstances.

Fall term

- Review plan to collect data for the year's assessment
- Prepare/revise assessment instruments as needed

Winter term

- Collect data

Spring term

- Complete data collection
- Analyze data
- Discuss data in full department meeting and determine department response, including curricular or program changes, if any, and date of re-assessment if needed

Fall term

- Implement changes decided in previous year's assessment

Tentative assessment schedule

2013-14: Principles

2014-15: Alumni Reflection

2015-16: Core

2016-17: Comps

2017-18: Fields

Detailed plan for evidence collection

1. Principles

Professors in all sections of ECON 110 and 111 during a specified term will include a question on their final exams that provides evidence of student facility in learning outcome 1.¹ The professor of the course will evaluate each student enrolled in that term using a department rubric and save a copy of the student response to be rated by a second reader.

¹ In each term, we offer three sections each of 110 and 111 with approximately 30 students in each section. Thus, we will create a sample of about 90 examples of student work.

2. Fields

Professors in all 200-level courses during a specified term will identify a paper, assignment, class activity, or test question that provides evidence of student facility in learning outcome 2.² The professor of the course will evaluate each student enrolled in that term using a department rubric.

3. Core

Professors in 329, 330, and 331 will include a question or questions on their final exam which provides evidence of student facility with learning outcome 3. The professor of each course will evaluate each student in the cohort using a department rubric.

4. Comps

First and second readers of comps papers and examples will apply a department rubric to the student work they evaluate.

5. Alumni Reflections

We will use several sources of evidence to assess alumni preparation including the College's Alumni Surveys, the alumni database, the NSF Survey of Baccalaureate Origins for PhD recipients, and a department survey of graduating seniors.

² On average we offer seven 200-level courses per term with 20-25 students in each course. Thus, we will create a sample of about 150 examples of student work.