

**Typical Timeline for completion of the GWU Economics PhD program.**

**Table 1:** Typical timeline for meeting PhD requirements Electives are ECON courses coded 8000-8997. “X” indicates either a 3-credit course or (usually) 3 credits of research credits. Research credits are coded ECON 8998 in Unit I, and ECON 8999 in Unit II. Students past the 4<sup>th</sup> year register for one credit of continuous enrollment CCAS 0940 every semester until they complete the PhD.

	Fall	Spring	End of year requirements	Credits
1	Micro 1 Macro 1 Econometrics 1	Micro 2 Macro 2 Econometrics 2	Comprehensive exams	18
2	Elective Elective Elective	Elective Elective Elective	None	18
3	Elective Elective ECON 8397	Elective Elective X	3 <sup>rd</sup> year paper proposal (may be done earlier)	18
4	X X X	X X X	None	18
5	CCAS 0940	CCAS 0940	Dissertation proposal defense (best to be done in the 4 <sup>th</sup> year)	2

The PhD degree is divided into 2 parts: Unit 1 (pre-candidacy) and Unit 2 (candidacy). Unit 1 is primarily devoted to coursework at the beginning, transitioning into research towards the end. Unit 2 is devoted to developing and completing your dissertation.

GWU counts student progress in terms of credits, not courses. Almost all courses are worth 3 credits. As a result, it is important to keep track of credits in order to measure your progress towards completing the PhD program.

The PhD degree requires a total of 72 credits. These credits must also meet certain requirements, in particular:

1. certain courses are required.
2. a minimum of 48 credits (16 courses) must be devoted to coursework.
3. a minimum of 6 credits must be devoted to “dissertation research” ECON 8999.

Below is an outline of the requirements and of a typical timeline for completing them.

**Unit I requirements**

The first year of the program students should take Micro 1+2, Macro 1+2 and Econometrics 1+2. Micro and Macro are important because, in late May or early June of the first year, students have

to take the Comprehensive exams in Micro and Macro. If a student fails the Micro and/or Macro comprehensive exam, it must be retaken in late August and passed in order to remain in the PhD program.<sup>1</sup> Econometrics is important because many of the electives assume students already possess a thorough understanding of Econometrics. Econometrics is an essential tool of Economics research.

After the first year, students take electives. An elective is a PhD level Department course. It may also be a PhD level course in another Department (subject to approval by the Unit 1 Chair).<sup>2</sup> PhD level courses have codes in the 8000-8997 range (except for 8397). MA courses in the 6000-6999 range in other Departments may qualify also, depending on the relevance and level of their content for research in Economics. These typically are courses in the Statistics, Data Science and Mathematics departments. This does not mean that any course in those Departments counts, however: students must supply the syllabus to the Unit I Chair for approval well before the beginning of the semester, and courses that were not approved do not count towards the degree requirements.

Students may also take Economics PhD electives in another Department in the “Consortium” (usually Georgetown or U. of Maryland.) This would have to be a course that GW is not currently offering or does not offer at all. It would require the approval of the instructor at the other University, as well as the approval of the Unit I Chair. In general students should take at most 2 courses outside the department, or 3 in exceptional circumstances. This includes courses outside Economics and outside GWU.

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 at all times. Students who do not are placed on probation and have one semester to raise their GPA above 3.0. Students on probation may lose funding.

Students may take up to 3 credits of ECON 8997 instead of one elective course. This is an independent study course, which must be supervised by a faculty member, for a letter grade. It requires the student and the faculty member to develop a comprehensive plan for the semester.

The number of credits required to complete Unit 1 is 48, including required courses and electives. This means that students must take at least 4 courses in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

Three of the remaining 6 credits of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year should be ECON 8397, which assist students in preparing the 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper proposal. This course is generally offered in the Fall.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department recently approved that having a 3.0 GPA or better in any given course sequence (e.g. Micro 1+2) means a student is deemed to have passed the corresponding comprehensive exam.

<sup>2</sup> The Unit I Chair’s approval is required as, in order for any course other than PhD level Economics class to count towards your degree, the Unit I Chair must enter a “petition” to this effect into DegreeMap. If the Unit I Chair does not agree that a course is appropriate he/she will not make this petition and it will not count. Sample petition:  
**CCAS, PHD, ECON: Apply the following course currently in Fallthrough to the Electives block: MATH 6318.**

The remaining 3 credits of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year could be an elective course, or could be ECON 8998, which are pre-dissertation “research credits” that stand in for the fact that at this point students should be working on their 3<sup>rd</sup> year papers.<sup>3</sup> Students may ***not*** register for ECON 8998 instead of any of the 48 credits of required coursework. Students may ***not*** register for ECON 8999 (Dissertation Research Credits) at any point in Unit 1, with one exception.

By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students must submit the 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper proposal, which is a paper outline including some results to demonstrate the viability and promise of the project. Students may use a course paper for these purposes, but only if there has been substantial progress beyond what was submitted as a course paper. The requirement is similar to the dissertation proposal requirement in Unit II, but applies to only one paper. Students should present their paper proposal to their paper advisor and to one other faculty member (or reader) who decide if the requirement has been met or not and provide feedback.

Students who do not submit an acceptable paper proposal by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year receive an Academic Warning or Probation and must do so the following semester in order to remain in the program. Academic Warning may entail loss of funding. Students in the 4<sup>th</sup> year Fall and who are on an Academic Warning while working on their 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper may need to register for ECON 8999 instead of 8998 (even though they are not yet in Unit II) to make sure they have taken the minimum 6 required credits of 8999.

### **Unit 2 requirements**

The remaining credits students must take towards the degree can be research credits (ECON 8999) or more electives. There is a minimum of 6 credits that must be taken as ECON 8999. Students may ***not*** register for ECON 8999 until they are entering Unit II. At this stage of the program students should be working full-time on their dissertations, and typically take research credits rather than electives.

The 72 credits of the degree should be completed by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> year (18 credits each year for 4 years). Students past the 4<sup>th</sup> year register for one credit of continuous enrollment CCAS 0940 every semester in order to remain in the program. Notice this means you are not technically a full-time student at this point. This means you may have to fill out the Full Time Certification (FTC) form and have the Unit II Chair sign it. You may need the FTC form approved earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> year if you transferred any credits from a previous MA program (see below).

Within 2 years of entering Unit 2 (i.e. by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year), students must defend a dissertation proposal. This involves a draft, along with a presentation of about 20 minutes outlining the proposal, as well as a proposal of roughly 20 pages including the motivation, research plan and preliminary results, which must be circulated to the proposed dissertation director as well as two “readers”. After a successful defense, together the director and the

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<sup>3</sup> From the accounting perspective of the University, research credits correspond to the use of University resources outside of the classroom to perform research, such as faculty time, the library, GW computers, Jstor, etc.

readers form the student's Dissertation Committee. Students who do not submit an acceptable dissertation proposal within 2 years of entering Unit 2 (generally the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year) receive an Academic Warning and must complete this requirement the following semester in order to remain in the program. Academic Warning may entail loss of funding.

The final program requirement is the Dissertation Defense. All students must defend a dissertation within 8 years of starting the program.

### **Efficient Unit II timelines**

So far, this document has described the deadlines students face for meeting program requirements. However, it is desirable for students to complete their dissertations within 5-6 years. This is reflected in the fact that students with full funding only have a funding commitment up to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year, and that the 72 credits that constitute the PhD program are completed within 4 years, except for some part time students.

Considering that students likely spend much of their last year in the program preparing for the job market, this means a student's job market paper must be largely ready the summer *before* their last year. This then entails aiming to defend a proposal sometime before that. Thus, a student aiming to finish the program in their 5<sup>th</sup> year should be performing research intensively throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> year, as well as earlier, with the aim of defending a dissertation proposal sometime in the 4<sup>th</sup> year. Indeed, this is the purpose of 4<sup>th</sup> year students taking research credits instead of coursework.

### **Part time students**

Part time students must meet the same requirements as full-time students. The difference is that they may do so at a slower pace. They must still pass the Comps at the end of the first year, so they should take Micro I+II and Macro I+II in the first year. Like other students, they must also finish the program in 8 years.

Part time students may get an extension on the 3<sup>rd</sup> year paper up to 2 more years, subject to approval. Full time students may not. Full time students may not get an extension by switching to part time status in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

### **Students who transfer credits**

According to University rules, students with a prior MA degree may transfer up to 30 credits. Students who transfer credits must still satisfy all the above requirements, either through transferred credits or credits taken at GW. These credits substitute for elective coursework, or for required courses, or for ECON 8998/8999. They do not substitute for ECON 8397, however, nor for the minimum 6 required ECON 8999 credits.

Credit transfers are typically done sometime in Unit I: the University prefers if it is done upon enrollment. To transfer credits for a given course requires the approval of the Unit I Chair. The student must send the Unit I Chair the syllabus for any course for which he/she wishes to transfer

credits, so the Unit I Chair can verify that the course was indeed at the level of a PhD Economics course. In the case of non-Economics courses, the syllabus is important for determining the relevance of the course to Economics as well. For example, an MS-level course in machine learning might be fine, depending on the details, whereas an MA or PhD course on Shakespearean sonnets would not.

Students may not in general take a course at GW for which they transferred credits. As a result, students should not transfer credits for Micro I+II or Macro I+II. Doing so significantly raises the risk of failure on the Comprehensive exams.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> GW course equivalents on the transfer form can be UNIV 0961, unless the transferred course is intended as a prerequisite for another GW course.