

Ph.D. Handbook
Ottawa-Carleton Graduate School of Economics (OCGSE)
Departments of Economics
Carleton University & University of Ottawa
2025–2026

Welcome to the Doctoral Program of the Ottawa-Carleton Graduate School of Economics (OCGSE)! This program is unique in Canada because it is offered jointly by two universities: Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. As such, you have access to the professors and resources of both institutions. The purpose of this handbook is to help guide you through your program.¹

Students are expected to know the rules contained in this handbook and in their relevant university calendar. If a student has a problem meeting a particular requirement, he or she should meet with the Coordinator or Associate Coordinator of the OCGSE. For the 2025-26 academic year, the Coordinator is Minjoon Lee from Carleton University and the Associate Coordinator is Louis-Philippe Morin from the University of Ottawa. A complete list of individuals charged with the management and administration of the Joint Doctoral Program of the OCGSE is provided at the end of this handbook.

Descriptions of the courses offered by the two departments are found in the graduate calendars of the two universities:

Carleton: https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradprograms/economics/#PhD_Economics

Ottawa: <https://catalogue.uottawa.ca/en/graduate/doctorate-philosophy-economics/>

¹ Note that nothing in this handbook supersedes the general regulations of the graduate studies faculties of Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. Students are subject to the calendar regulations of the university at which they are registered and should consult the graduate calendar of their university for their particular rules and regulations.

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Registration and Funding Requirements

The Joint Doctoral Program is a full-time program. In their first two years students register in three courses per semester. In subsequent years students register in the Thesis Workshop courses and/or the Ph.D. Thesis course. Registration in any of these courses is sufficient for maintaining full-time status.

The graduate schools at the two universities award financial assistance to qualified full-time students for a period of 4-5 years. To be eligible to receive funding students must (1) be registered full-time in the degree program; (2) progress at an acceptable rate through the program as determined by their department and the relevant dean of graduate studies; (3) remain in good academic standing for the duration of their funding.

Program Requirements: Coursework Stage

For courses in the Joint Doctoral Program, a minimum grade of B- (70–72 %) for Carleton University students or B (70–74 %) for students at the University of Ottawa is required for program credit. (Note that students are graded according to the system in use at the university at which they are registered.)

The program requirements changed for the 2021-22 academic year and so a student's program requirements will differ depending on when they were admitted to the program. These requirements are outlined below.²

Admission in Fall 2021 or Later

In their first year, students take six courses. The three courses taken in the Fall semester are Mathematical Foundations for Economic Theory (ECON 6019 or ECO 7119); PhD Microeconomic Theory I (ECON 6501 or ECO 7922); and PhD Macroeconomic Theory I (ECON 6503 or ECO 7923). The three courses taken in the Winter semester are PhD Microeconomic Theory II (ECON 6502 or ECO 7924); PhD Macroeconomic Theory II (ECON 6504 or ECO 7925); and Econometrics II (ECON 6027 or ECO 7126).

There are no theory comprehensive exams. Instead, students must pass the above six courses within 12 months of starting the program. Students who fail one or more of the above courses during the Fall or Winter semester write one or more supplemental exams in early August. These exams must be passed in order to progress to Year 2 of the program. More details on these supplemental exams are provided later in this handbook.

In their second year, students take four elective courses from the eight approved fields of specialization listed below. At least two of these courses must be taken from the same field. They also take the Second Year Research Paper course (ECON 6513 or ECO 7001). From the start of their second year and up to the thesis defence, students regularly attend Departmental seminars and workshops. University of Ottawa students must keep a personal log of their year-long attendance to be attached as an appendix to their yearly progress report. For Carleton students, the Ph.D. program supervisor keeps track of attendance at seminars and workshops.

Admission in Fall 2020 or Earlier

In the first year students take Mathematical Foundations for Economic Theory (ECON 6019 or ECO 7119); Economic Theory: Microeconomics (ECON 6020 or ECO 7922); Economic Theory: Macroeconomics (ECON 6021 or ECO 7923); and Econometrics II (ECON 6027 or ECO 7126). They also write Comprehensive Examinations in Microeconomics (ECON 6900 or ECO 7990) and Macroeconomics (ECON 6902 or ECO 7991).

In their second year, students take four elective courses from the eight approved fields of specialization listed below. At least two of these courses must be taken from the same field.

² Two course codes are listed for each course mentioned in this handbook. In each case, the first is the code at Carleton University and the second is the code at the University of Ottawa.

They also write the Comprehensive Examination in Primary Field (ECON 6905 or ECO 9990). Students are also expected to begin participating in Departmental seminars and workshops from the start of their second year.

All comprehensive exams are offered in May and August of each year. The comprehensive exams in Microeconomics and Macroeconomics must be passed within 12 months of starting the program. The field comprehensive exam must be passed with 24 months of starting the program.

Students admitted in Fall 2020 or earlier who have yet to complete the field comprehensive exam by September 2021 are encouraged to take the Second Year Research Paper course in place of the Comprehensive Examination in Primary Field.

Fields of Specialization

The eight approved fields of specialization together with their associated courses are:

- Econometrics: Micro-Econometrics (ECON 5712 or ECO 6175), Time-Series Econometrics (ECON 5713 or ECO 6176), and Advanced Topics in Econometrics (ECON 6714 or ECO 7177).
- Economic Development: Theory of Economic Development (ECON 5500 or ECO 6170), Economic Development: Domestic Aspects (ECON 5504 or ECO 6171), and Economic Development: International Aspects (ECON 5505 or ECO 6172).
- Economics of the Environment: Economics of Natural Resources (ECON 5803 or ECO 6143), Economics of the Environment (ECON 5804 or ECO 6151), and Topics in Environmental and Resource Economics (ECON 5805 or ECO 6134).
- Industrial Organization: Industrial Organization I (ECON 5301 or ECO 6140), Industrial Organization II (ECON 5303 or ECO 6142), and Topics in Industrial Organization (ECON 5304 or ECO 6135).
- International Economics: International Trade: Theory and Policy (ECON 5601 or ECO 6160), International Monetary Theory and Policy (ECON 5602 or ECO 6161), and Topics in International Economics (ECON 5603 or ECO 6162).
- Labour Economics: Labour Economics I (ECON 5361 or ECO 6191), Labour Economics II (ECON 5362 or ECO 6192), and Advanced Topics in Labour Economics (ECON 5363 or ECO 6193).
- Monetary Economics: Foundations of Monetary Economics (ECON 5606 or ECO 6180), Topics in Monetary Economics (ECON 5607 or ECO 6181), and Explorations in Monetary Economics (ECON 5609 or ECO 6183).
- Public Economics: Public Economics: Expenditures (ECON 5401 or ECO 6130), Public Economics: Taxation (ECON 5402 or ECO 6131), and Topics in the Theory of Public Economics (ECON 5403 or ECO 6133).

Students planning to do empirical work as part of their thesis are strongly encouraged to take Advanced Topics in Econometrics (ECON 6714 or ECO 7177) as one of their four electives.

It may be possible to specialize in other fields such as Health Economics or Behavioural and Experimental Economics depending on course offerings. Students who wish to explore this

possibility or wish to take an elective course from outside the eight fields of specialization for another reason should discuss this with the Coordinator or Associate Coordinator to request Departmental permission.

Further Details on Supplemental Exams

A student who fails a course in the Fall or Winter semester of their first year must pass a supplemental exam for each failed course. These exams take place in early August of the first year and only one supplemental exam can be written for each failed course. Supplemental exams as a whole are administered by a committee consisting of all first-year course instructors and the program supervisors from each department. Supplemental exams will be set by the professor teaching the course. They are graded by two professors, one from each department. One grader is the professor who taught the course and the second is another member of the committee (or an expert in the area from outside the committee if necessary). Both graders will make independent and confidential recommendations to the committee as to whether the student's performance in the supplemental exam was satisfactory. Based on these recommendations this committee will decide if the student passes or fails the supplemental exam(s). A student who is deemed to have passed the supplemental exam will be assigned the minimum passing grade for the course. A student who is deemed to have failed the exam will be withdrawn from the program.

Further Details on the Second Year Paper Course

The course is jointly taught by one faculty member from each department in Fall and Winter semesters. The class meets once per week for 90 minutes (split between the two campuses). The instructors match each student with one or two faculty readers who will assist the student with the 2nd Year Paper. Note this person is a reader and not a supervisor. Students will work largely independently on their papers. If things go well, a reader could become a student's thesis supervisor. However, at this stage there is no commitment either by the faculty members or the student.

There are no comprehensive exams for students admitted in Fall 2021 and after. Therefore, these students register in the Second Year Paper course in the Summer of their first year. In May and June of the first year they attend workshops given by Faculty, Senior PhD students and visiting scholars. There are no scheduled activities in July and August to allow for preparation for Supplemental Exams if required. Students who are not required to take any Supplemental Exams are encouraged to begin independent reading in their area of interest.

In the first 2-4 weeks of the Fall semester the instructors discuss the research process, how to structure a paper, how to give a presentation etc. The students also attend the presentations of 2nd year papers by students in the previous cohort. In October students meet with faculty readers to discuss areas of mutual interests, start to identify key papers and agree on the focus and scope of a literature review. For the remainder of fall term and the winter term students will present. Initially this will be critical assessments of papers from literature they are interested in; later will be their own work as they build towards their proposals.

During this course students are required to submit a critical literature review, a paper proposal, and first draft and a final draft. See the course outline for more details on the expectations for each of these deliverables. Students then present their papers in September of their third year.

Once the 2YP is completed, students must register to PhD Thesis Workshop I (ECON 6514 or ECO7003). University of Ottawa students also register to the Doctoral Thesis (ECO9999) at this point.

Program Requirements: Thesis Stage

PhD Thesis Workshop I

The first workshop is designed to determine whether the student has made a significant start on a viable thesis topic. It is normally completed within 12 months of completion of the Second Year Paper course. To evaluate the workshop, the relevant Ph.D. program supervisor will select a committee of at least three faculty members, including the thesis supervisor and normally at least one member from the other university.

Students submit their research paper to the examining committee at least 14 days before the date of the workshop. This paper will be a complete draft of what will become a substantial thesis chapter. The workshop begins with a 15–20-minute presentation of the paper by the student. There are then two rounds of questioning. In the first round, examiners question the student one-on-one. That is, without any contributions from other examiners. The purpose of this round is to test the student's understanding and interpretation of the research that they have presented. The supervisor does not ask questions during this round. The second round is less formal, and questions and comments can come in any order and from anyone in the audience, not just the examiners. The purpose of this round is to provide further feedback to the student to help improve the paper.

The workshop is graded as Pass/Fail. When the student passes, they are given a list of required revisions to the paper coming from the questions and comments at the workshop. Prior to the second workshop, the student submits a revised draft and a document outlining the changes made to the paper in light of the comments and questions received at the first workshop.

There are currently two versions of the first workshop course being offered. Which version a student should register in depends on their date of admission. If admission was before September 2021, the student registers in ECON 6907 or ECO 7002. If admission was in September 2021 or later, the student registers in ECON 6514 or ECO 7003.

Once a student has completed the first workshop course, they must register for the second workshop course (ECON 6515 or ECO 7005). University of Ottawa students remain registered to the PhD Thesis course (THD 9999). Carleton University students register to the PhD Thesis (ECON 6909) at this point.

PhD Thesis Workshop II

The paper for the second workshop should represent a substantial portion of the research for the thesis and be presented before the end of the second year of thesis registration. Whenever possible, the relevant Ph.D. program supervisor will ask the committee that evaluated the first workshop to evaluate the second workshop as well.

As with the first workshop, students submit their research paper to the examining committee at least 14 days before the date of the workshop. This paper will be a complete draft of what will become another substantial thesis chapter. The second workshop also consists of a 15-20-minute presentation of the paper by the student followed by the same two rounds of questioning as in the first workshop.

There are currently two versions of the second workshop course being offered. Which version a student should register in depends on when their date of admission. If admission was before September 2021, the student registers in ECON 6908 or ECO 7004. If admission was in September 2021 or later, the student registers in ECON 6515 or ECO 7005.

Ph.D. Thesis Defence

Once students have finished their 2YP (University of Ottawa students) or first workshop (Carleton students), they must register for the Doctoral thesis course (ECON 6909 or THD 9999). Once registered in this course, students must maintain continuous registration until they defend their thesis.

The final defence of a candidate's preliminarily completed thesis is conducted subject to the regulations of the faculty of graduate studies of the relevant university. Students are advised that the procedures do differ between the two universities and the appropriate graduate calendar should be read closely when a defence is being considered. Thesis examining committees must include at least one thesis examiner from the other university.

Choosing a Thesis Topic and Supervisor

Students must confirm their PhD Topic and Supervisor during the first semester after completing the 2YP course. The 2YP workshop will thoroughly prepare students for this major decision.

Choosing a viable thesis topic is a challenging task. Often, students take longer to complete their theses just because they neglected its importance and failed to seek early guidance. It is essential to talk with faculty members in their field(s) of specialization. A common problem encountered at this stage is having a thesis topic that is too broad. By consulting with faculty members, students receive guidance regarding what constitutes a well-defined research question.

When defining a thesis topic, one must simultaneously find a thesis supervisor. The two decisions are inseparable. Of course, the chosen topic must fit with the supervisor's research agenda. But there must also be a mutual proclivity to embark on an intellectual journey together. This provides yet another reason for keeping close ties with faculty members while in the process of defining a thesis topic.

The progress report (University of Ottawa)

University of Ottawa students must submit a progress report at the end of August of every year. This report is written in collaboration with the thesis supervisor(s) and helps identify issues with the student's progress so that they can be addressed early on. So it is not a simple formality. It may eventually affect a student's continued funding, especially if one fails to adequately prepare the report. Some students will be asked to submit progress reports at more frequent intervals.

Program Management and Administration

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Faculty Members (with Ph.D.-level supervisory status)

Carleton: carleton.ca/economics/faculty-and-staff/regular-faculty

Ottawa: <https://www2.uottawa.ca/faculty-social-sciences/economics/about-department/faculty>