2015-2016 Assessment Report: Masters of Science in International and Development Economics

1. **Identifying Information**

Name of Program: International and Development Economics
Type of Program (Major, Minor, Graduate Program, Non-Degree Granting): M.S.
College of Arts and Sciences Division (Arts, Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences):
Name/Title/Email Address of Submitter: Bruce Wydick
Name/Email Address of Additional Individuals Who Should Receive Feedback:
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2. **Mission Statement:**

The mission of our Masters of Science program is to equip our graduate students within the context of a Jesuit educational framework with the research and analytical tools that allow them to effectively investigate a wide array of economic phenomena related to globalization and development. Our program aims to enable them to serve effectively as junior researchers, policy analysts, and research-oriented development practitioners in a global environment.

> Has this statement been revised in the last few years? Yes, it was created about a year and a half ago.

3. **(Optional) Program Goals:**

> Have these goals been revised in the last few years?

4. **Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

1. **Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance**, this includes an analysis of market failures, poverty traps, the structure of incentives, the use of game theory to model economic behavior, open economy models of trade, models of natural resource

use, migration, foreign direct investment, financial markets, and exchange rate determination.

2. **Design a master's thesis research project based on summer fieldwork**, including formation of an original research question, planning of an effective methodology, development of field protocols / survey instruments, and data collection in a developing or transition country. Masters theses should display a strong command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given problem and test specific hypotheses.

3. **Conduct original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem**. Specifically, students should be able to understand the necessary empirical methods needed to identify causal relationships, especially related to international and development issues; determine the appropriate estimation method for an empirical model; utilize statistical software to conduct such estimation; and meaningfully interpret the results.

4. **Effectively communicate research findings both in writing and orally**, including compilation of a professional literature review, clear presentation of theoretical and empirical models, econometric analysis, and the relevance of the study's principal findings and implications for international and/or economic development theory and policy.

> Have these PLOs been revised in the last few years? Yes. These were established a couple of years ago.

5. **Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan**

In the IDEC program we assess our students at different points along the two years of study. The main goal of the program is to equip our students with the economics and econometrics they need to write an outstanding masters thesis that uses rigorous statistical analysis on first- or second-hand data to test policy-relevant hypotheses related to poverty and globalization. Students present their proposals orally at the end of the second semester, carry out fieldwork in the summer between their second and third semesters, turn in and present a paper in their econometrics class that constitutes an initial run at their data, and then receive more training in their final semester, at the end of which they make their oral defenses, which are the main criteria for our assessment of their learning outcomes.

6. **Academic Program Review**
   Date of most recent Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit:
   March 2015
   Date of most recent Action Plan Meeting: 3/24/16
   Brief Summary of the most recent Action Plan (For IDEC):
   For MS-IDEC Program:
   a. Increase Math Camp to 3 weeks, with last week devoted to introduction to
   STATA

   b. Modify fieldwork requirement for utilizing secondary data for thesis.
   Alternatives include substantive internships related to research topics.

7. **Methods**
   What did you do with regard to assessment of your program/department in
   2015-2016?

   Oral defense of masters theses. Students present their project, hypotheses and
   econometric results in a 20 minute presentation followed by faculty questioning.

   What were your questions?

   Our criteria for evaluating the students are based on the following nine
   questions that form the basis for whether a student is able to pass the oral
   defense, or receive a "pass with honors".

   Does the M.S. IDEC student…
   1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the
   topic and area of study?

   2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?

   3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present
   descriptive statistics in a useful way?

   4) Explain, use and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the
   area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?

   5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?

   6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?
   7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?

8) Respond well to questions?

9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful PowerPoint presentation?

How are these questions related to your most recent Academic Program Review and/or Action Plan?

These were questions we used for assessment even before the last APR, but are method of assessment was strongly praised by the outside reviewers and we have found it to be an effective an comprehensive list of criteria for evaluating our graduate students in this program. Of course, we may think of some new criteria in the future to add to the list.

What PLOs are these questions related to?

The criteria
1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study? and
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?
are related to PLO #1:
1. **Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance**…

The criteria

4) Explain, use and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)? and
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?

are related to PLO#3:
3. **Conduct original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem**. Specifically, students should be able to understand the necessary empirical methods needed to identify causal relationships, especially related to international and development issues; determine the appropriate estimation method for an empirical model; utilize statistical software to conduct such estimation; and meaningfully interpret the results.

The criteria 3)
Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?
is related to PLO #2

2. **Designing a master's thesis research project based on summer fieldwork**, including formation of an original research question, planning of an effective methodology,

development of field protocols / survey instruments, and data collection in a developing or transition country. Masters theses should display a strong command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given problem and test specific hypotheses.

The Criteria

5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?

6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?

7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?

8) Respond well to questions?

9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful PowerPoint presentation?

are related to PLO#4:

4. **Effectively communicate research findings both in writing and orally**, including compilation of a professional literature review, clear presentation of theoretical and empirical models, econometric analysis, and the relevance of the study's principal findings and implications for international and/or economic development theory and policy.

What direct (most important) and/or indirect methods did you employ?

Some Possible Direct Methods (pick > 1 and *briefly describe*):

a.   Published (Standardized) Test (e.g., Major Field Test)
b.   Class Tests & Quizzes with Embedded Questions
c.   Class Presentations **X**
d.   Off-Campus Presentations (NGOs, clients, agencies, etc.)
e.   Research Projects Reports
f.   Case Studies
g.   Term Papers
h.   Portfolio
i.   Artistic Performances, Recitals & Products
j.   Capstone Projects
k.   Poster Presentations
l.   Comprehensive Exams **X**
m.   Thesis, Dissertation **X**
n.   Pass Rates on Certification or Licensure Exams
o.   Group Projects
p.   In/Out-of Class Presentations
q.   Competency Interviews (e.g., oral exams)
r.   Simulations
s.   Juried Presentations

t. Other

Some Possible Indirect Methods (*briefly describe*):

a. Student Survey
b. Student Interview
c. Focus Groups
d. Reflection Sessions
e. Reflection Essays
f. Faculty Survey
g. Exit (end of program) Survey **X Done upon program exit by Barbara Pena, very helpful.**
h. Exit (end of program) Interview **X Also done upon program exit by Barbara Pena, very helpful.**
i. Alumni Survey
j. Employer Survey
k. Diaries or Journals
l. Data from Institutional Surveys (e.g., NSSE, SSI, GSS)
m. Curriculum/Syllabus Analysis
n. Other

8. Results

Results from our oral defenses from 17 students in April/May 2016 are summarized below:

Evaluation Criteria: Did this student's Masters Project defese:	Poor/ Unacceptable	Fair/ Acceptable	Good	Excellent
1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study?	3	3	26	24
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?	2	4	23	28
3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodolgy utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?	1	7	30	19
4) Explain, use, and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?	3	9	24	16
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?	5	6	25	16
6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?	4	10	22	19
7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?	3	2	25	26
8) Respond well to questions?	2	12	19	22
9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful powerpoint presentation?	1	7	23	26

What were the direct data results? We use a pretty high standard to grade our students, and as can be seen from the table, they generally do very well. 39.4% of our marks were Excellent across categories this year, 43.7% were Good, 12.1% were Fair/Acceptable and only 4.8 were Poor/Unacceptable.

What were the indirect results? We found that in general this year we had more truly outstanding thesis this year than perhaps any year before. We define these, those that "pass with honors" as thesis that would be publishable in a strong international or development economics academic journal. Students did weakest in statistical inference, so that is something we should look at more carefully; they also did weakest in answering questions, so perhaps we might give them more practice at this in the earlier class presentations that prepare them for the orals.

What surprised you? While we had more top thesis this year, we also had 2-3 students who did not keep up with their advisors suggestions and who did poorly on the exam. They were a small minority, but they did not do well. These 2-3 students have had problems completing work all through the program.

What aligned with your expectations? The general outstanding performance of the IDEC students. They really are a great group.

What do you understand these results to mean? That we are consistently producing a really strong masters student graduate with very good analytical skills. The job market bears this out upon graduation. Our graduates are sought after for excellent jobs.

What are the implications of the data? We need to keep preparing our students at a high level, but also perhaps be more firm with students early in the program who are failing to turn in work, pass classes early in the program, and so forth.

9. **Closing the Loop**

   What might you do as a result of these assessment results? What curricular or programmatic changes might you implement?

   Possible Closing(s) of the Loop(s) (pick > 1 and *briefly describe*):

   a. Revision of PLOs
   b. Changes in pedagogical practices
   c. Revision of program course sequence
   d. Revision of course(s) content
   e. Curriculum Changes (e.g., addition and/or deletion of courses)
   f. Modified program policies or procedures **X We will talk about setting up some gate checks earlier in the program to identify problem students so that we can address problems early on that led to 2-3 students performing poorly on the oral exam this year.**

g. Designed measurement tools more aptly suited for the task
h. Improved within and across school/college collaboration
i. Improved within and across school/college communication
j. Revised student learning outcomes in one or more courses
k. Modified rubric
l. Developed new rubric
m. Developed more stringent measures (key assessments)
n. Modified course offering schedules
o. Changes to faculty and/or staff
p. Changes in program modality of delivery
q. Other

Have you or will you submit any course or program change proposals as a result of these results? No, but our we will talk about how to modify our internal review of students.