

M.S. in International and Development Economics

ASSESSMENT REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 – 2018 REPORT DUE DATE: 10/26/2018

I. LOGISTICS & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Prof. Bruce Wydick, wydick@usfca.edu

2. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.

There were no changes to our mission statement since the last assessment cycle. It reads as follows: 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.

3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

Based on feedback from Alexandra Camperi, we made one small change in the wording of PLO #3 to “Develop the capability of conducting” instead of “Conduct”.

1. Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance in the context of an increasingly globalized economy, where 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. Students should develop a command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given poverty or globalization problem and test specific hypotheses.

3. Develop the capability of conducting an 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 technical research 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.

4. Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2017-2018?

We assessed all four of the PLOs through our thesis defenses, which give us information on each of them.

IDEC Program Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Mapping Worksheet

Key: C = Comprehensive Coverage, M = Moderate Coverage, I = Introduced with minimal coverage

Program Goals/Outcomes	Course Numbers															
	REQUIRED COURSES (7)							ELECTIVE COURSES								
	601	602	615	620	623	627	628	663	665	670	671	672	673	676	679	690
Primary Program Goal: To equip masters students with the quantitative and econometric skills necessary to rigorously evaluate policies and programs in the area of international and development economics.																
1. Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance in the context of an increasingly globalized economy, where 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.	C	C	C	C	M	C	C	M	M	C	C	C	C	M	M	M
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. Students should develop a command of the relevant research tools needed to address a given poverty or globalization problem and test specific hypotheses.	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	C	M	C	C
3. Develop the capability of conducting an 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.	M	M	I	C	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	M	M	C	C
4. Effectively communicate technical research 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.	I	I	I	M	C	C	C	M	I	M	M	M	M	M	C	C

II. METHODOLOGY

5. Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

For example, “the department used questions that were inputted in the final examination pertaining directly to the <said PLO>. An independent group of faculty (not teaching the course) then evaluated the responses to the questions and gave the students a grade for responses to those questions.”

Important Note – WSCUC advises us to use “direct methods” which relate to a direct evaluation of a student work product. “Indirect methods” like exit interviews or student surveys can be used only as additional complements to a direct method.

For any program with fewer than 10 students: If you currently have fewer than 10 students in your program (rendering your statistical analysis biased due to too few data points), it is fine to describe a multi-year data collection strategy here. It would be important to remember that every 3 years, we would expect you to have enough data to conduct a meaningful analysis.

Important: *Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.*

At the end of every year, graduating students defend their masters theses. Students present their project, hypotheses and econometric results in a 20 minute presentation followed by faculty questioning. 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”. Each student is given a grade by IDEC faculty members in each of these areas subsequent to the defense and response to questions by the student.

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?

Note how these criteria are related to the PLOs for the program:

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?

relate to PLO #1: Understand the application of modern micro and macroeconomic theory to the key problems of economic development, trade and finance...

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)? and

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

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

relate to PLO#3: Conduct original quantitative empirical analysis of an international or development economics problem...

7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?

8) Respond well to questions?

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

relate to PLO#4: Effectively communicate research findings both in writing and orally...

In this way, we use our masters thesis requirement—and the thesis defense—to provide the definitive assessment of our PLOs. Writing an acceptable masters thesis is impossible in our program without realizing the four PLOs. Of course throughout the program, students have midterms and final exams, a large number of problem sets and other projects, but the masters thesis and defense is where we conduct the final evaluation. (We also have an exit interview with the Administrative Program Director.)

III. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

This section is for you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:

- a. how well students mastered the outcome at the level they were intended to,
- b. any trends noticed over the past few assessment cycles, and
- c. the levels at which students mastered the outcome based on the rubric used.

To address this, among many other options, one option is to use a table showing the distribution, for example:

<i>Evaluation Criteria: Did this student's Masters Project defense:</i>	Poor/ Unacceptable	Fair/ Acceptable	Good	Excellent
1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study?	0.0%	13.1%	48.0%	38.9%
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?	0.8%	9.2%	49.1%	40.9%
3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?	0.0%	16.3%	42.0%	41.7%
4) Explain, use, and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?	1.6%	22.6%	36.9%	38.9%
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?	0.0%	21.2%	44.1%	33.8%
6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?	2.4%	23.7%	39.1%	34.7%
7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?	0.0%	13.7%	33.2%	53.1%
8) Respond well to questions?	5.2%	17.5%	43.6%	33.7%
9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful PowerPoint presentation?	0.0%	22.9%	34.9%	42.2%

***Number of Total Students: 21

Assessment of Results: Last year we had an extraordinary graduating class that probably received the highest rankings we have had on masters theses. In this year more of our students came from very low-income countries than we have had before in the history of the program. They learned a tremendous amount, but in the end their scores were just a little bit lower than the class of 2017. Overall, an excellent performance, however.

IV. CLOSING THE LOOP

- 7. Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require that any changes need to be implemented in the next academic year itself.**

One very tangible change that we are likely to make is in response to the perception that some of our macroeconomics students were a little bit weak on causal econometrics during the oral defenses. In response, we are contemplating having all students take Econ 627, which emphasizes these skills. Overall, however, we are quite happy with the performance of the students in this cohort—a very high number of the theses, maybe up to half, represented eminently publishable work, a figure that continues to climb in most years.

- 8. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2016-2017, submitted in October 2017)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?**

The main suggestions were to improve the wording slightly on PLO #3 and to include the Curricular Map. The current report includes these changes and they do represent improvements to the report. Thank you, Alexandra!