2016-2017 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
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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 two and a half years ago.

3. (Optional) Program Goals:

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 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. **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 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.

> Have these PLOs been revised in the last few years? Yes. These were established a few 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
   2016-2017?

   In every April we have 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. But by keeping them constant, we can understand how learning and achievement of program outcomes is evolving over time in the program.

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**…

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**…

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**…

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 Program Manager, very helpful.**
h. Exit (end of program) Interview **X Also done upon program exit by Program Manager, 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 from our oral defenses from 21 students in April 2017 are summarized below:**

Evaluation Criteria: Did this student's Masters Project defense:	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%	6.7%	48.9%	44.4%
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?	0.0%	7.0%	44.2%	48.8%
3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodology utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?	2.3%	4.7%	48.8%	44.2%
4) Explain, use, and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?	0.0%	13.6%	31.8%	54.5%
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?	0.0%	9.5%	33.3%	57.1%
6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?	0.0%	13.6%	40.9%	45.5%
7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?	0.0%	2.3%	47.7%	50.0%
8) Respond well to questions?	0.0%	6.8%	40.9%	52.3%
9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful powerpoint presentation?	0.0%	2.3%	38.6%	59.1%

Overall: Fail-0, Pass Subject to Revisions-0, Pass-58.3%, Pass with Honors-31.7%

<u>What were the direct data results</u>? The direct data results show that students overall did outstandingly well on their masters theses, an improvement even over the year before in which we felt like we had one of our very best classes.

<u>What were the indirect results</u>? Unlike previous years, we really didn't have a single weak category in the results; perhaps in explaining the data collection methodology or in explaining implications from the results, but overall they were excellent. I was particularly impressed with the degree of confidence the students showed in interpreting the results of their estimations. There is clear evidence of improvement from the year before, and as mentioned, the year before was one of our best classes up to that point.

<u>What surprised you</u>? In fact I was not surprised about this particular class, because to a person they were an outstanding group, with essentially zero students who had trouble with their thesis or who failed to grasp basic concepts. We didn't have any students who I would consider to be the strongest that we have ever had, nor theses that were "the best ever" but many theses that were in the top 20% of theses that we have had before. Indeed I do not expect to have this few problems theses in years ahead; this class was exceptional and learned concepts very well.

<u>What aligned with your expectations</u>? This particular class had a lot of natural ability and desire to learn so that they absorbed econometric concepts quite rapidly. In this sense the results aligned with my expectations. I do not expect all classes in the future to be this problem-free.

<u>What do you understand these results to mean</u>? I think that we are doing a better job teaching the basic tools to our students, but I also think that we were very fortunate with this particular crop of students. Essentially every faculty member said that these were some of the best students that have as a whole. We have seen students from this class go on to get very good jobs when they graduate. They were a very highly motivated group and I think we serve them well with good teaching and good training.

<u>What are the implications of the data</u>?   We need to keep doing what we are doing well, but I think that we can also improve a little bit in helping students understand at an even deeper level the econometric methodologies they are incorporating into their theses. This is something that we can always improve on and should continue to strive to do, as well as prepare them even more deeply in the theory and existing literature that provides the context for their studies.

9. **Closing the Loop**

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

I think that we can do more to prepare the macro students for their thesis work, and we hope to have a set of internships available for macro-oriented theses in the future. We also would like to establish a set of research field stations that students can return to so that they experience fewer problems with data collection and focus more on econometric tools and inference from the data.

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**
g. Designed measurement tools more aptly suited for the task
h. Improved within and across school/college collaboration **X**
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

One of the key ways that we can serve our students better, and that will ultimately show up on the grades for oral defenses is to have our summer research coordinated more smoothly. This will ultimately depend on the capabilities of not only the faculty in International and Development Economics, and especially the faculty director, but most importantly on our new Program Manager who we hope to hire to coordinate the program. I would also like to see more collaboration with the masters degree in International Studies that will help facilitate coordination in the field. Ultimately this will result in the program that is more smoothly running and where students are able to get the most out of their field research experience, their data, and the analysis of the data in their theses.

APPENDIX:

Comparison with Previous Year's Results:

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

Evaluation Criteria: Did this student's Masters Project defense:	Poor/ Unacceptable	Fair/ Acceptable	Good	Excellent
1) State clearly the purposes, research question(s), and hypotheses appropriate to the topic and area of study?	5.4%	5.4%	46.4%	42.9%
2) Show appropriate preparation and knowledge through the review of literature?	3.5%	7.0%	40.4%	49.1%
3) Clearly and thoroughly explain the data collection methodolgy utilized, and present descriptive statistics in a useful way?	1.8%	12.3%	52.6%	33.3%
4) Explain, use, and competently implement econometric methods appropriate to the area of study and to the purpose and question(s)?	5.8%	17.3%	46.2%	30.8%
5) Illustrate appropriate means for evaluating and interpreting the results?	9.6%	11.5%	48.1%	30.8%
6) Discuss and arrive at appropriate and logical conclusions from the results?	7.3%	18.2%	40.0%	34.5%
7) Demonstrate fluent verbal communication?	5.4%	3.6%	44.6%	46.4%
8) Respond well to questions?	3.6%	21.8%	34.5%	40.0%
9) Have a clearly understandable and visually useful powerpoint presentation?	1.8%	12.3%	40.4%	45.6%