

Duke Economics

Development Economics Field Expectations and Requirements for 2018/19

A student who plans to write a thesis in the field of development is expected to

- (a). Complete the requirements for the three development-related modules offered this year. The modules in 2018/19 will be taught by Erica Field, Duncan Thomas and Daniel Xu.
- (b). Pass the comprehensive field exam in development. The open-book take-home exam will be on Friday 24 May 2019 and last about 6 hours. Each examinee will be required to answer 3 questions. Broadly speaking, one question will be drawn from each module. In addition to the material covered in the modules this year, reviewing key papers from modules taught in recent years and papers in development published in the last few years in leading journals would be good preparation. Reading lists for modules are available at <http://ipl.econ.duke.edu/dthomas/ec881/>.
- (c). Write a field paper on a topic that is related to development and present the paper in the International Population Health and Development Lunch by the end of the 1st semester of the 3rd year. Submit the field paper to the Development faculty for review by the end of the 1st semester of the 3rd year. Those faculty will provide feedback on the paper outlining revisions necessary, if any, for the paper to be acceptable as the first chapter of the thesis and, thereby, acceptable for presentation in the Prospectus Defense.
- (d). Successful completion of the Prospectus Defense by the end of the 2nd semester of the 3rd year. A successful defense will include (1) discussion of the 1st chapter of the thesis which is a completed paper that has been reviewed and accepted prior to the defense by at least 1 faculty member in development and (2) presentation of at least the outline of a second paper in the development field. The first chapter should have a good chance of being published in a journal that is of at least the quality of the top journals in development (JDE, EDCC or WBER).

Comprehensive Field Exam

The goal of the comprehensive field exam in development is to help each student planning to write a thesis in development develop the knowledge foundation necessary to conduct the best research in the field. Specifically, the comprehensive is an opportunity to review the research ideas and methods that fall under the general theme of “development” in economics and, thereby, develop a well-balanced and informed overview of the current state of field and synthesize the existing literature. In the course of conducting this review, it is anticipated that students will delve into specific sub-areas in greater depth, integrate insights from different lines of inquiry and develop a sophisticated sense of the strengths and weaknesses in that area. Preparation for the comprehensive exam should lay the groundwork for top flight research during the thesis-writing stage and beyond.

The exam will be graded by faculty in development who will provide a grade of Pass or Fail. Students who wish to write a dissertation in development economics must pass the field exam in development economics. A passing grade is intended to indicate that the student is in good standing to continue to write a thesis in the development field. A failing grade indicates the student is not in good standing to write a thesis in development and should identify alternatives at this point in his or her career.

The comprehensive field exam in development is designed to assess the capacity of a candidate to (1) think critically about major questions in the economics of development, broadly defined, (2) provide an informed and insightful discussion of the intellectual challenges confronting the field, (3) evaluate the quality of the evidence in the literature and (4) outline theoretical and/or empirical approaches that are likely to lead to significant progress in the field. There is no reading list for the field exam. Modules in development and the reading lists associated with those modules provide a good foundation for the field exam. Faculty who teach modules in any year will usually set and grade the examination questions. However, field exam questions will not be limited to topics covered in the modules or the reading lists and other faculty may be involved in setting and grading exam questions.

The examination questions may be theoretical, empirical or a combination of both. Questions will be designed to provide the examinees with opportunities to synthesize the literature, integrate different aspects of the literature and/or develop new approaches to address unresolved questions in the literature.

More information about the development field is available at is <http://ipl.econ.duke.edu/dthomas/ec881/>.

*Erica Field, Rob Garlick, Duncan Thomas, Xiao Yu Wang and Daniel Xu
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