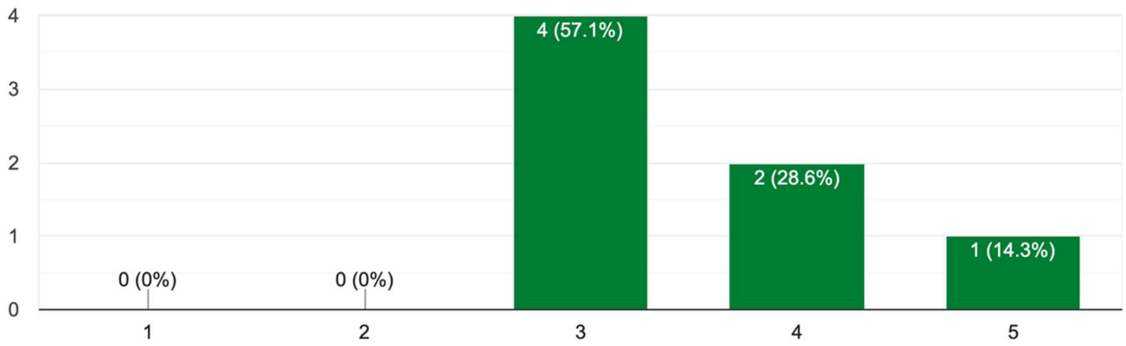
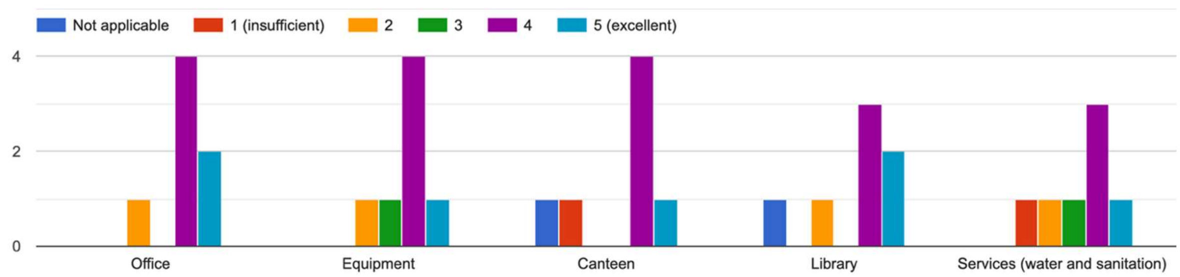
How would you rate the overall experience as a 1st year PhD student?

7 responses



Please rate the university infrastructures made available to you:



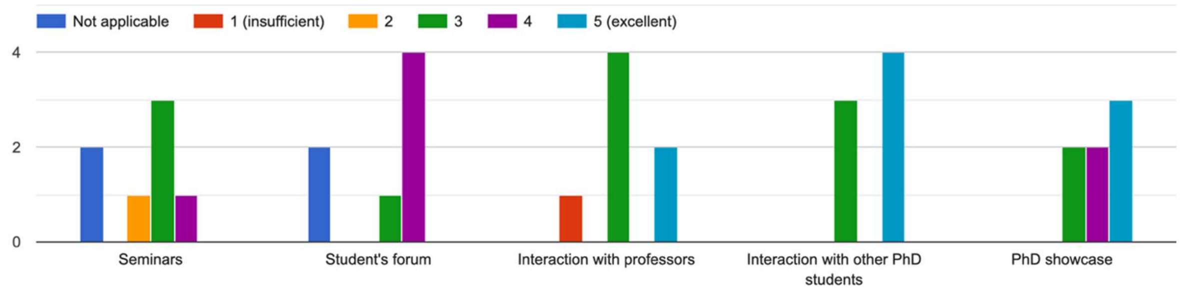
Do you have additional comments regarding the university infrastructures?

2 responses

On this side, it would be a real improvement if the bathrooms in the third floor were repaired so that they could properly function (as of now, only one bathroom is available).

In general the condition is good. For equipaments, there could be a clearer policy on how one could access or require it. For water, there could be other water fountains around the buildings. For sanitation, many toilets are out of order, permanently locked, or not in the best conditions.

Please rate the PhD activities:



Do you have additional comments regarding the PhD activities?

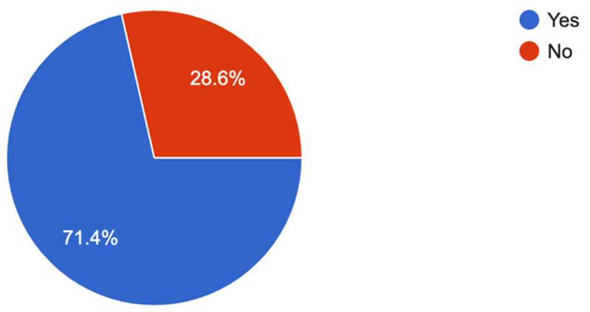
3 responses

PhD showcase seems to be an important part for the period staying. On the other hand I really appreciated the PhD advisory board conference were speakers from insitutions were invited to share their experiences as PhD outside academia. I think for many of us this represent a very improtant moment as we would like to work in some organizations after completing the PhD. I would suggest to do more often these kind of events as to keep us closer to national and international organizations.

Only a fraction of the faculty presented at the PhD Showcase. I would have appreciated greater participation

Seminars could include more applied topics and the faculty could be more present in those type of presentations. The interaction with professors is quite limited, one factor being that many professors are not in the university most of the time, and other factor being that there is not a common space that gathers PhD students and professors in the daily routine (e.g. a coffee kitchen). Interation with other PhD students is surprisingly low, there is not a culture of one big team, one factor also being that many students do not come often to the university. There seems strangely to have low incentives to come to the university given that so many students and professors spend little time there. It could be due to the campus location, and for that the university should press the public entities to implement more transportation infraestrutcture (e.g. a metro stop closer to the university; a tram line conecting to the city center), and it could be for the lack of this environment of meeting and sharing daily, and for that a shared space could be of help.

Were the topics relevant for your interests?
7 responses



If no, please explain.

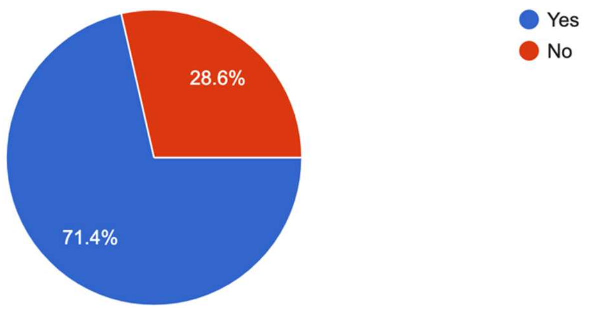
2 responses

Yes, but there is too much emphasis on finance courses. They total 60 hours, which represents 50% of the 120 hours of optional coursework available in the second year for field specialization. Taken together (60 out of 180 total hours), it's as if a student is specializing in finance by dedicating a third of their electives to that area. If reducing the number of finance courses is not an option, we could at least align the program more closely with the research interests of a PhD student in Economics. Currently, there is excessive focus on asset pricing, with little attention given to topics at the intersection of finance and economics—such as macro-finance, public finance, and financial systems and fragility. We could work on adapting the course syllabi to better reflect economics-oriented content, gaining more appreciation for the courses among the students.

There was no empirical macro lectures nor macroeconometrics stuff (like var or local projection). The macro and micro courses were fully shared with master students and so the level was that one for master students

Was the number of hours devoted to each topic sufficient?

7 responses



If no, please explain.

3 responses

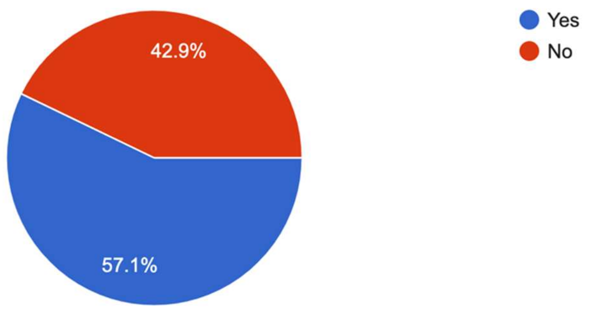
Non applicabile per assenza a Roma.

In my opinion courses should be shaped in a different way. On one hand, I comprehend the need of the faculty to level our economics knowledge by giving us lectures on main topics of economics and finance. Nevertheless, during this first year, I had the impression that courses, especially those attended together with the Master's students, were not well suited for us. Often, some courses, such as Panel Data, Macroeconomics II and Differential equations, needed more time to better explain some important concepts. It would be better for PhDs to have maybe less courses and leave some core ones, so that we and the professors could have more time to dedicate to.

There were too many courses and too few hours devoted to each topics, so every topic was covered very quickly.

Were the courses balanced in terms of contents and duration?

7 responses



If no, please explain.

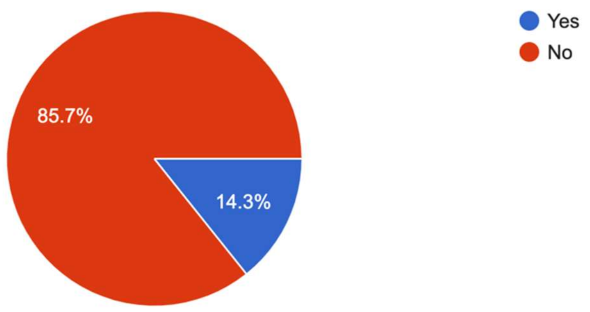
2 responses

Some courses during the year had too much material to cover and at times we had to skim through some parts just to finish in time. This I think needs to be revised as, a lot of time, more hours could have benefited us in order to better understand some concepts.

Very often the focus was given to theoretical part or to some proofs, and so we lost the focus on why it is important studying those topics. I think for the macro courses more hours are needed. The same for math

Did you find repetitions?

7 responses



If yes, please explain.

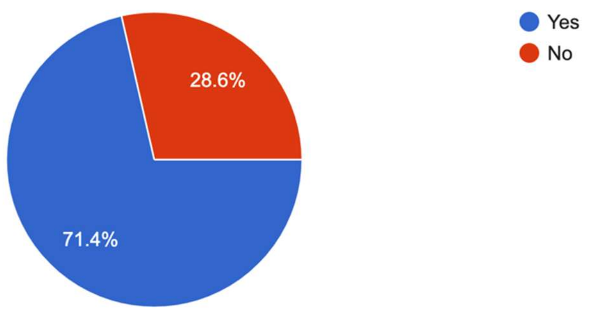
2 responses

Not in particular, but I would like to share a consideration. Personally, I believe that the entire 'Mathematical Methods for Economists' module (60 hours) would benefit from greater involvement of mathematical economists in the teaching, alongside pure mathematics professors. A mathematical economist is better positioned to highlight the direct application of mathematical concepts to economic theory and applied economics, emphasizing what matters most, streamlining what is important but serves primarily as a building block, and ultimately delivering teaching that is both economics-oriented and research-focused.

If by repetitions it is meant courses with repeated contents, then yes. Finance courses, to a good extent, every new professor (and we had 4) went over the same basic model structures before adding new content. Mathematical-related courses in the 1st semester had some small overlapping, and I believe it would be beneficial to have a single course if possible.

Did you find missing topics?

7 responses



If yes, please explain.

5 responses

Econometrics classes did not extensively (compared to panel data and Bayesian methods) cover certain topics in time series and causal inference, which could prove useful for empirical research.

Rather than missing topics, I think it would be ideal if the courses could dedicate part of the course to reading and presenting papers. Also, courses on how to code would bring a lot of added value to us.

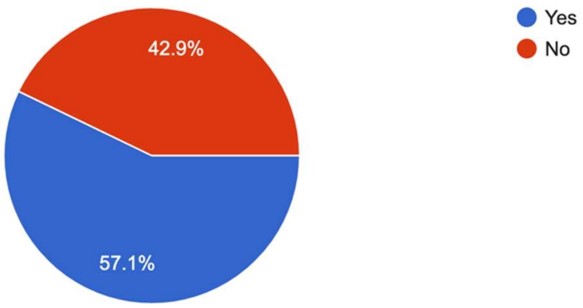
Yes, as already discussed, topics such as macro-finance, public finance, the functioning and potential fragility of financial systems, the relationship between finance and economic growth, and the link between finance and firm size. As mentioned, integrating these topics into the finance courses could improve their overall evaluation.

Macroeconometrics

In a broad perspective it is intriguing that there is not a single class related to economic history, political economy or related. In a particular perspective, the courses missed to present real life applications or connections between the theoretical content and reality.

Did you find it problematic that some courses were shared with the Master in Economics?

7 responses



If yes, please explain.

5 responses

Sharing courses with the Master's in Economics is not a problem per se, the issue lies in the way these courses are managed and assessed for PhD students. We are often required to take the exact same exams as Master's students, but without the same conditions. While Master's students can choose when to sit their exams, we have only one date, usually immediately after a very intense teaching block. Since we attend more courses and are constantly busy with assignments and theoretical lectures, it becomes nearly impossible to find adequate time to study. As a result, we often prepare for exams under a not needed pressure, focusing not on truly understanding the material, but simply trying to pass. Moreover, because exams are sometimes not clearly explained in advance, and we don't have enough time to study all the topics properly, many of us rely on "topic selection": we focus on a few parts of the syllabus and hope those will appear on the exam. This turns the exam into something close to a lottery, where the outcome depends more on guessing the right topics than on mastering the subject. This is not how PhD-level learning should work. That said, I do agree that exams are a valuable part of the learning process. They encourage rigorous study and help consolidate knowledge. However, for exams to be truly effective, the timing, workload, and clarity of expectations need to be adapted to the demands of a PhD program.

I think this is one of the main point to act on. Courses shared with the Master's students did not provide us added value, as a lot of them covered topics that we have already done in our Master's years. Also, the combination of having PhDs and Master's students created some confusion on what was the material and the take-home assignments for us and what was for the other students. At times, this became burdensome for us, as we had to sort it out ourselves and lost a lot of time because of it.

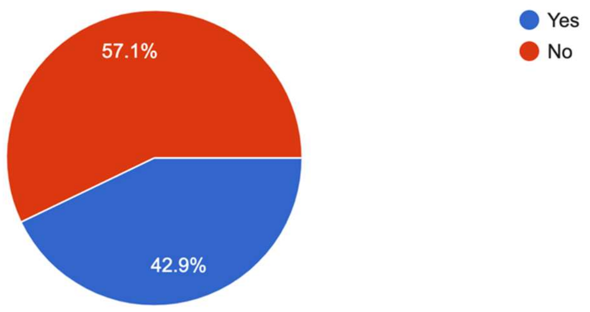
Personally no, but I know that many students have expressed this concern. If, in the future, we move to exclusively PhD-level courses - which I support - I still believe it's important to maintain some connection and shared activities between PhD and MSc students, as it benefits both the students and the programs.

Those courses are calibrated for a master student level and rarely I have seen a link with research topics. In those courses there were some elective lecture but actually they were very important for the courses.

I would say it is a minor issue if the course structure remains the same as currently. Of course classes dedicated just for PhD students can have more flexibility and more participation from us, but in general the idea is of a traditional lecture, where professor presents the course content and students take notes, so it does not influence heavly sharing the class with other people or not. On the other hand, if there is any opening to change the lectures model, this could make a big difference. For example, if dedicated classes for PhD students were a place where we debate, present papers, develop research projects, then separating us from the master is needed.

Were the assignments (homework, presentations, case studies) useful and added value to the courses?

7 responses



If no, please explain.

3 responses

I would like to elaborate on my answer. Homework, problem sets, and presentations play a crucial role in helping students fully grasp course material. However, as first-year students, we often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of assignments, especially when combined with lectures and independent study. Working under constant time pressure leads to rushed, superficial engagement, diminishing the learning value. These assignments would be far more beneficial if we had adequate time to reflect on and internalize the concepts. Additionally, some assignments lack real-world relevance, making them feel disconnected from practical economic issues and the economic-political understanding of our society. Ideally, problem sets should not only reinforce theoretical understanding but also bridge the gap between economic models and the societal phenomena they aim to explain. This would deepen our comprehension of both theory and the world around us.

Often we used the time we had for studying for solving the assignment

This is not a simple yes or no question, I answered no meaning that it was, in general, not useful, but not entirely. In most cases homeworks are lists of exercises overlaping with other courses assignements and with an almost insignificant weight in the final grade. In my perspective we would have better incentives if the assignements were more in the field of presentations, of bringing new ideas, of developing research questions, and count this as a larger share of the final grade. This way we would be practicing for what is trully expected of a PhD gradute, to do research and present it.

Please share your thoughts about the course schedule.

6 responses

Regarding the course schedule, I found some aspects problematic. For example, the PhD first exam has been an econometrics course, while the three mathematics courses (Mathematics, Differential Equations, and Mathematics for Economics) were scheduled afterwards. I understand that the econometrics professor had specific constraints. Ideally, foundational mathematics courses should precede or at least be concurrent with econometrics, to provide the necessary tools in advance. Additionally, I believe the course taught by Professor Gibilisco (Mathematics) should be mandatory for all PhD students. Many of us wanted to attend the optional parts of the course as well, but had to drop them in order to study for other courses. Perhaps some adjustments could be made to allow us to take the full exam for the mathematics course (and not just Probability), for example by reducing or eliminating parts of the curriculum in other exams. This would help ensure that students have enough time to properly strengthen and refresh their mathematical skills early in the program, which is essential for success.

Some courses where too long while some others where too short, occasionally complicating the scheduling of both lectures and exams.

I think that overall, the course schedule must be re-thinked. It is a reasonable idea to make us follow lectures on main economic topics, but this a times, this came to the expense of not having enough times, neither to follow any seminar nor to simply think clearly about our research interests. Apart from this, I also found myself many times in the position of not having sufficient times to actually pose myself questions regarding the topics we were covering. I think that a PhD student must have some time to capture the essence and pose the right (research) question regarding what he/she is studying. This however, did not happen to me and a lot of times I had to study just for the sake of passing the exam rather than enjoying them.

I believe the overall course schedule in the first semester to be well balanced

I think that for the math courses there is the need for more coordination and all of them should be provided at the very beginning (with no other courses). I found very useful the differential equation course.

For the program aims the schedule in terms of weekly hours is well balanced

Additional comments regarding the first semester.

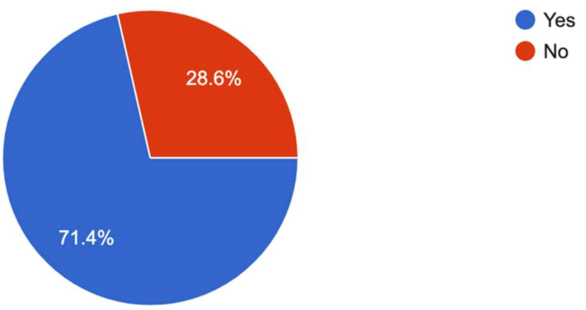
2 responses

As PhD students, it is important to give us all the necessary instruments to start our research. This includes also giving us more lectures on how to code and use softwares such as matlab, Phyton and R

I completely understand the need of ensuring a level of training in the courses we had, however I can not see the point of having a full year equal to a bachelor's or master's student without practicing nothing related to doing research. I believe the first semester could be dedicated to the very essential of the courses we had for the whole year, and in the second semester we could have the same course division, but instead of traditional lecturing, for each of the courses we would have to develop a research project. The evaluation would be based on the partial and final deliveries of the research project. First weeks to conduct a literature review in a subfield of the course discipline, then present it and receive feedbacks from the professor, following to the identification of literature gaps and ellaboration of research questions, presenting it and receiving a feedback, and lastly presenting the research project with the two previous deliveries plus a proposed methodological approach. This way we would have the basic training in one semester, and create the minimum capabilities of what is expected from a PhD in the second semester. The second year could be kept as it is, since the courses are quicker and personalized. Other than that, the research practice given by this proposed second semester could be very useful for the students to realize what is the field they match the most, and the sources read, the ideas generated could be then used for the articles to be written in the following 3 years.

Were the topics relevant for your interests?

7 responses



If no, please explain.

3 responses

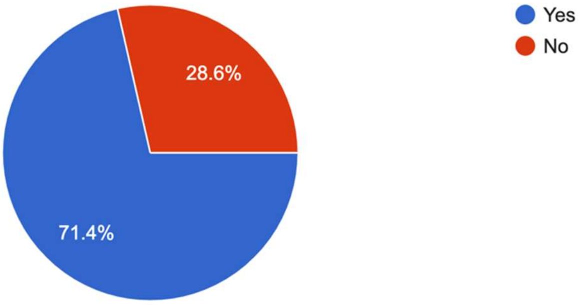
Il corso di panel data è stato molto ben fatto e interessante. Il corso di macroeconomia 1, a parte la sezione sezione di Dynamic programming, è stata una sostanziale ripetizione di un corso della magistrale. Il corso di finanza 1 è stato irrilevante. Il corso di microeconomia è stato ben fatto ma era una replica di un corso che avevo fatto in magistrale. In generale, penso sia utile in dottorato concentrarsi più sugli strumenti rispetto ai contenuti: l'ideale sarebbe un intero semestre di matematica e statistica avanzata, e un secondo semestre di econometria e altri strumenti quantitativi. Sarebbe inoltre utile proporre di replicare alcuni paper, per esercitarsi su metodologia

Yes, but same consideration as for the first semester on the the Finance courses and their potential learning value

Same answer as in the first semester

Was the number of hours devoted to each topic sufficient?

7 responses

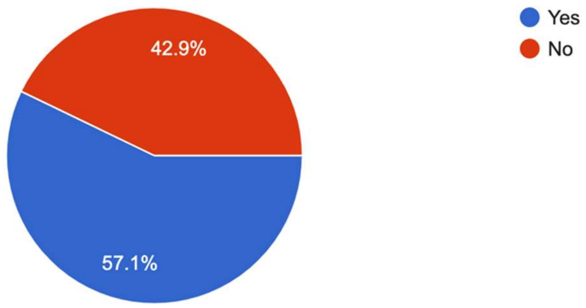


If no, please explain.

The same as in the first semester

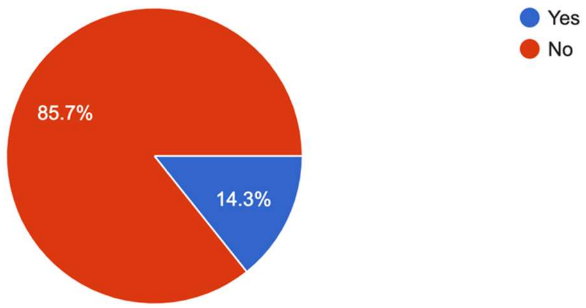
Were the courses balanced in terms of contents and duration?

7 responses



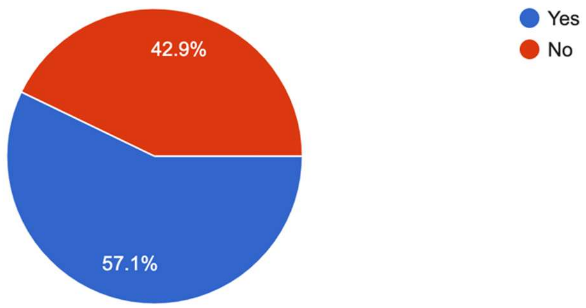
Did you find repetitions?

7 responses

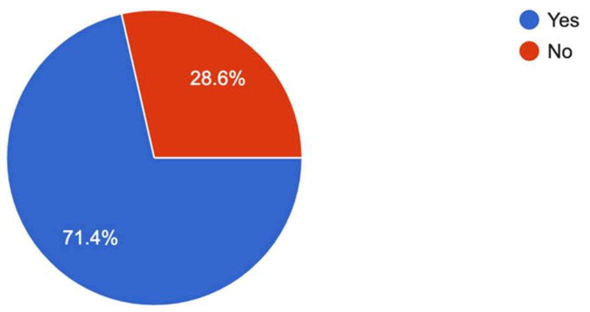


Did you find missing topics?

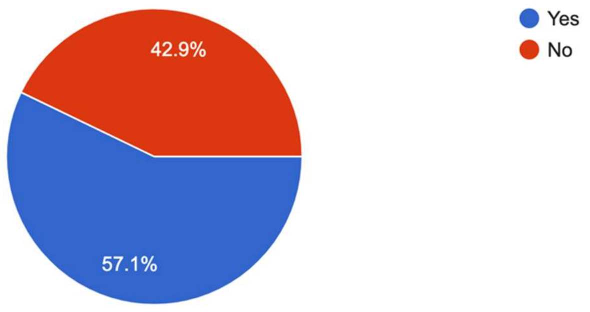
7 responses



Did you find it problematic that some courses were shared with the Master in Economics?
7 responses



Were the assignments (homework, presentations, case studies) useful and added value to the courses?
7 responses



Please share your thoughts about the course schedule.

7 responses

Regarding the course schedule, I don't have major comments on how the second semester was structured in terms of the calendar or time allocation

Maybe moving some of the second semester courses to the first semester could help with fixing a more manageable exam schedule.

Vedi sopra

What I wrote for the first semester goes also for the second one

I believe the overall course schedule in the second semester to be well balanced

I think phd students should not have shared courses with master students

Well balanced

Additional comments regarding the second semester.

1 response

Mathematics should be unified in a course at the very beginning of the year. We cannot start econometrics without finishing math.

Additional comments regarding the whole year.

7 responses

Let me begin by saying that I feel fortunate to be part of this PhD program, and I am grateful for the opportunity to deepen my knowledge and grow as a researcher. All the comments I share here are motivated by a genuine desire to improve the program, both for myself and, especially, for future students. I care deeply about the quality of this experience, and I believe that with a few adjustments, the program could become even stronger. Some of the challenges we encountered this year should not be repeated, and I hope these reflections can contribute to constructive changes. One of the most recurring problems was the very little time for proper study and deep understanding. Many of us ended up studying just to survive the exams, rather than to master the material. Even though exams are important and useful for learning, the current structure pushes students to prioritize short-term performance over long-term comprehension. Another consequence is that we finish the first year with little clarity on what kind of research we would like to pursue. With so much focus on preparing for exams, there is hardly any room left to explore different topics, read beyond lecture slides, or develop genuine curiosity. If the first year is meant to help us identify our research interests, then the current structure might not be serving that purpose well. Moreover, the program tends to place a strong emphasis on theoretical knowledge, while offering little training in practical skills, especially programming. Given the increasing importance of data analysis and coding in both academic and non-academic research, a more robust and formal course in programming would be a valuable addition and better prepare students for their future work. In this regard, one fundamental question arises: what kind of students is this program designed for? Should first year PhD students already be experts in economic theory, or should they be given time to learn, follow courses seriously, and discover their research interests along the way? If the former is true, then perhaps admission criteria should reflect that. But if the latter is the goal, as I believe it should be, then the program should allow more space for reflection, genuine learning, and personal academic growth. Another aspect worth reconsidering is the timing of grade communication. It would be extremely helpful if students could receive their exam results as soon as they are corrected by the professors, rather than having to wait until the end of the exam session. This would allow us to promptly discuss our performance with the instructors, understand where we went wrong, and work on closing the gaps. In some cases, these conversations might also open up the possibility of agreeing on a way to address the shortcomings, either immediately or over the following months , by allowing students to demonstrate that they have overcome their weaknesses without necessarily waiting for a formal retake in September. Waiting until the session is over often means postponing this learning process or facing a resit without the benefit of timely feedback and support. Finally, I would like to suggest considering alternative modes of assessment for some exams. While theoretical, knowledge-based exams are appropriate for certain subjects (and should remain so), others could benefit from assignments that encourage deeper engagement. For example, students could be asked to read and analyze academic papers, reflect on the material, and present their insights. This would foster critical thinking and allow for constructive feedback from peers and professors. Such a mix of assessment types would help balance rigorous testing with opportunities for meaningful learning and research exploration, and would also help avoid the feeling that the program is simply an extension of a Master's degree, rather than a true beginning of an academic and professional journey. I hope that by sharing my honest experience, I can contribute to building an even better environment for future cohorts , one where students are challenged, yes, but also supported in a way that allows them to truly learn, grow, and find their path not only as researchers.

The material covered throughout the first year is definitely beneficial for the first-year PhD students (maybe except for Finance, which does not appear to be within the interests of the majority of the current first-year cohort), however continuation, both date-wise and material-wise is occasionally absent. Furthermore, evaluation based on assignments and presentations might be of more benefit to the PhD students than regular exams, given the necessity of developing skills such as team work, searching for appropriate resources and presenting with an academic manner.

Vedi sopra

What I wrote for the first semester goes also for the second one

I agree with the program's structure: a foundational first year of core courses, a second year focused on specialization through optional courses and early research (including teaching assistantships), and full research immersion - with a period abroad - from the third year onward.

I think we had too many courses. I think we should have a math session at the very beginning of the year. It is wrong start the year with econometrics without finishing mathematics

Same comment as previously: I completely understand the need of ensuring a level of training in the courses we had, however I can not see the point of having a full year equal to a bachelor's or master's student without practicing nothing related to doing research. I believe the first semester could be dedicated to the very essential of the courses we had for the whole year, and in the second semester we could have the same course division, but instead of traditional lecturing, for each of the courses we would have to develop a research project. The evaluation would be based on the partial and final deliveries of the research project. First weeks to conduct a literature review in a subfield of the course discipline, then present it and receive feedbacks from the professor, following to the identification of literature gaps and ellaboration of research questions, presenting it and receiving a feedback, and lastly presenting the research project with the two previous deliveries plus a proposed methodological approach. This way we would have the basic training in one semester, and create the minimum capabilities of what is expected from a PhD in the second semester. The second year could be kept as it is, since the courses are quicker and personalized and we will be already conducing our researches in parallel. Other than that, the research practice given by this proposed second semester could be very useful for the students to realize what is the field they match the most, and the sources read, the ideas generated could be then used for the articles to be written in the following 3 years.