# Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics Graduate Student Handbook

## Graduate Program Requirements

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Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics Graduate Student Handbook
Graduate Program Requirements

I. Introduction

A. Degrees Offered

Students who already hold a J.D. may enter the program to pursue the Ph.D. only. Students who do not hold a J.D. must earn the J.D. concurrently with the Ph.D. in Law and Economics. The Ph.D.-only program is designed to be completed in four years, and the joint-degree program is designed to be completed in six years.

The Ph.D.-only plan on page 8 of this Handbook is designed for students entering with a J.D. but without any Ph.D. coursework. The joint-degree plan on page 8 is designed for students entering without any J.D. or Ph.D. coursework. For students for whom neither plan is appropriate, such as transfer students, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and program directors must approve their academic program on an individual basis. Satisfactory progress in the program requires that students meet either the milestones listed on page 8 of this Handbook or meet the milestones approved on an individual basis by the DGS to stay on schedule.

The Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics does not offer a Master’s degree.

B. Sources of Information

The general requirements for the Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University may be found in the Graduate School Catalog under the heading Academic Regulations.

This document, the Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics Graduate Student Handbook, presents the regulations for completion of the Ph.D. in Law and Economics that are specific to this program. Students are responsible for learning the requirements set forth in the Graduate School Catalog, the requirements set forth in the Law School Student Handbook, and the requirements set forth in this program-specific Handbook.

C. The Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is the initial academic advisor for all students in the Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics. Students should meet with the DGS before registering each semester. The DGS works with students to develop individual Ph.D. academic programs and recommends courses that fit their interests and meet program requirements. Student petitions to alter program requirements must be submitted to the DGS for consideration for approval by the program directors. The DGS is fully informed about Graduate School and program regulations and works (with the assistance of the program manager) to ensure that students make timely progress through the program.
II. **Course Requirements**

A. **Credit Hours**

Students seeking the Ph.D. in Law and Economics must complete at least 72 hours of Ph.D. study. This includes a minimum of 48 hours of formal coursework, 6 hours of Ph.D. Workshop in Law and Economics, 12 hours of graduate credit granted for J.D. coursework, and up to 6 hours of research. The formal coursework requirement includes: (1) 30 hours of required core courses, (2) 12 hours of graduate field courses in two approved fields, and (3) a minimum of 6 hours in elective courses.

In year six of program study, the program manager will submit a Request for Transfer Credit form to the Graduate School so that 12 law credits will count toward the Ph.D.

Students completing both the J.D. and the Ph.D. must receive credit for the required 88 hours of law coursework. Twelve hours of J.D. credit can be granted for graduate coursework; therefore, joint-degree students must complete at least 76 hours of law coursework.

Twelve hours of J.D. credit can be granted for graduate coursework only if both degrees are conferred at the same time. If the J.D. and the Ph.D. are both earned from Vanderbilt but are conferred at different times, then only 6 hours of J.D. credit can be granted for graduate coursework.

B. **Mathematics Requirement**

All students entering the program are required to have passed at least one year of undergraduate level calculus with a grade B or higher. Extensive math preparation is necessary for success in the Ph.D. core courses. Students who enter the program but lack adequate preparation are required to make up deficiencies before starting the Ph.D. core. We provide materials and tutoring to entering students in the summer before enrollment.
C. Ph.D. Core Requirements

During the first year of Ph.D. study, students must complete eight required courses (24 hours). The five ECON courses listed below are offered annually. Three of the four LWEC courses listed below are offered annually.

**Required Core Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LWEC 8401</td>
<td>Law and Economics Theory I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWEC 8402</td>
<td>Law and Economics Theory II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWEC 8403</td>
<td>Behavioral Law and Economics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWEC 8405</td>
<td>Econometrics for Legal Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 8000</td>
<td>Mathematics for Economists</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 8100</td>
<td>Microeconomic Theory I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 8110</td>
<td>Microeconomic Theory II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 8300</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 8310</td>
<td>Econometrics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Preliminary Examination

Students must take a comprehensive preliminary examination after completing the first-year Ph.D. core. This exam will be given only once per year. If a student does not pass the preliminary examination, he or she will not be considered to be making satisfactory progress, thus affecting eligibility for funding. Students will be given a maximum of two attempts to pass the preliminary examination. The program manager administers the preliminary examination and can answer any questions regarding the exam.

E. Field Requirements

After year two for joint-degree students and after year one for Ph.D.-only students, students select two approved fields and begin taking the associated courses. Our current approved fields include behavioral law and economics, labor and human resources, and risk and environmental regulation. Students may petition to have other courses approved and counted toward a currently approved field.

Students must complete two fields. Field requirements include 12 hours of graduate coursework in the approved fields, with 6 hours in each field. In addition, students are expected to take 5-6 hours per field of paired courses that are not LWEC courses. These will be primarily law courses, but with approval of the DGS and the program directors, other relevant courses may be paired with the graduate field courses.

LWEC 8403: Behavioral Law and Economics I is a required core course and cannot be counted toward a field in behavioral law and economics. Students completing a field in behavioral law and economics should take an approved related graduate course in addition to LWEC 8404: Behavioral Law and Economics II.
In some circumstances, and with the consent of the law and economics faculty, students may develop a new field. Students should consider their future dissertation committee needs when choosing their fields.

F. Research Paper Requirement

All students entering without J.D. coursework are required to complete an original research paper in year three. The timing of the paper for other students will be determined by the DGS and program directors. The paper is developed within LWEC 8406: Research in Law and Economics.

There are two options for the paper. The paper may pose an original research question, including an explanation of the methods, model, and data that will be used in the investigation, or it may be a replication of an existing empirical result, containing details of the research methods and trying to account for any differences in findings. This paper is an opportunity to prepare for the dissertation research and proposal. The expectation is that this research paper will demonstrate the student’s ability to perform quality, independent research as well as to prepare, organize, and present data in a professional format. The quality of the research paper must be approved by the professor; a student will not pass the course if the quality of the research paper is unsatisfactory. Students present their papers at a faculty workshop near the end of the semester.

G. Ph.D. Workshop in Law and Economics

After year two for joint-degree students and after year one for Ph.D.-only students, students register for 6 hours (two semesters) of Ph.D. Workshop in Law and Economics. Students are required to demonstrate progress on their independent research in the workshop.

H. Electives

Students complete their required coursework by taking elective courses that have been approved for graduate credit. Electives are part of a student’s individual academic program and are subject to approval by the DGS and program directors.

I. Transfer Credit

Students who have completed graduate work in economics at other universities may request transfer credit for certain graduate courses completed elsewhere. In order for a course to qualify for transfer credit, it must meet certain conditions: (1) the course was taken at an accredited graduate school for graduate credit; (2) the student received at least a B in the course; and (3) the program directors must be satisfied that the course is of sufficient quality to count toward program requirements. Transfer hours do not count toward the student’s GPA unless they are to be considered as transferred didactic hours. Few courses are transferred as didactic hours. Credits earned for internships or research
cannot be transferred. Pass/Fail courses may not be considered for transfer credit unless there is some basis for the grade, e.g., Pass represents a B grade or better.

Transfer credit will not be considered for the following courses:

LWEC 8401: Law and Economics Theory I
LWEC 8402: Law and Economics Theory II
LWEC 8403: Behavioral Law and Economics I
LWEC 8404: Behavioral Law and Economics II
LWEC 8405: Econometrics for Legal Research

Students transferring into the program from another law school should refer to the Law School Student Handbook and should work with the Law School Academic Life Office regarding transferring J.D. credits.

III. The Dissertation

A. Dissertation Committee

At the beginning of year five for joint-degree students and year three for Ph.D.-only students, students should obtain permission from the program directors to ask a faculty member to chair their dissertation committee. Students should then obtain agreement from that faculty member to chair their dissertation committee. The committee chair must have a Ph.D. The student and committee chair work together to obtain agreement from at least three other faculty members to serve on the committee. One committee member must be program core faculty. The program’s current core faculty are: Joni Hersch, Jennifer Bennett Shinall, Paige Marta Skiba, and W. Kip Viscusi. Of the three committee members other than the chair, two must be selected from within the Law School or the Economics Department and the third must be selected from another department or school, such as Political Science or the Owen Graduate School of Management. The committee consists of not fewer than four members of the Graduate Faculty. See the Graduate School section of the Graduate School Catalog for a complete list of approved faculty.

The chair of the dissertation committee is the student’s primary research advisor. However, it is the student’s responsibility to keep all committee members informed about progress on the dissertation. Periodic reports of progress on the dissertation research to all committee members are strongly recommended.

B. Dissertation Proposal

The doctoral dissertation is an original, independent examination of significant problems that are of fundamental relevance to the field of law and economics.
The written dissertation proposal should include a clear statement of the questions that will be addressed in the research, motivation for the proposed research, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, outline of specific hypotheses to be tested, and the data and methods of analysis to be used.

The electronic version of the written dissertation proposal must be made available by the student to all members of the committee and the program manager at least 21 days prior to the oral qualifying examination. The program manager distributes hard copies.

C. Oral Qualifying Examination

Students must pass the oral qualifying examination in order to be admitted to candidacy.

See the Academic Regulations section of the Graduate School Catalog for a complete list of qualifying examination regulations.

D. Dissertation Guidelines

Co-authored essays cannot be included in the dissertation.

The dissertation must conform to the rules governing style and appearance prescribed by the Vanderbilt Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines. Liz Leis is the Thesis/Dissertation Format Editor for the Graduate School and must give final format approval to each dissertation before final submission of the dissertation.

Be aware that the Graduate School specifies time limitations for completing the Ph.D.

See the Academic Regulations section of the Graduate School Catalog for a complete list of dissertation regulations.

E. Final Defense

When the committee chair agrees that the student is ready to defend the dissertation, the program manager assists the student in setting the final defense date. The program manager notifies the DGS and the program directors of the final defense date and time at least 21 days prior to the final defense date. The program manager notifies the Graduate School at least 14 days prior to the final defense date.

The candidate must pass his or her dissertation defense at least fourteen days before the end of the term in which the degree is to be conferred. For example, the due date in 2017 was April 1 for May graduation.

See the Graduate School Calendar 2017/2018 section of the Graduate School Catalog for a complete list of dissertation deadlines.
An electronic version of the dissertation and the dissertation abstract must be distributed to committee members and the program manager at least 14 days prior to the defense date. The program manager distributes hard copies.

The final defense of the dissertation is an oral examination. The final defense covers the dissertation research and knowledge of the student’s substantive area of law pertinent to the dissertation. In addition to the student’s dissertation committee, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School may invite a representative of the Graduate Faculty Council to be present. The date of this examination is announced in advance, and the University community is invited to attend. Passing the final defense requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the committee.

F. Publication of the Dissertation

When the dissertation is accepted, the Graduate School requires that it be published.

Students should see the Academic Regulations section of the Graduate School Catalog for publication and indexing instructions.

IV. Financial Aid

A. Residency Requirements

Doctoral candidates must complete 72 credit hours of graduate study (including any approved hours of transfer credit). Transfer students should note that candidates must complete at least 24 semester hours in formal coursework in residence at Vanderbilt. Semester hours that are not in formal coursework include research hours and Ph.D. Workshop in Law and Economics (LWEC 8490).

Ph.D.-only students always have residency in the Graduate School. For joint-degree students, residency alternates between the Graduate School and the Law School until the student has completed five semesters of residency in the Law School. After those five semesters, students will have residency in the Graduate School for all future semesters.

Graduate School rules specify that the qualifying examination must take place within eight semesters after matriculation. These eight semesters include only semesters with residency in the Graduate School.

B. Eligibility and Progress toward Degree

All students admitted to the J.D./Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics may receive financial support for up to six years from the date of matriculation. Students admitted for the Ph.D. only may receive financial support for up to five years from the date of matriculation. The exact terms are delineated in the admissions letter sent to admitted students by the Graduate School. The financial package includes tuition for up to 72
Ph.D. credit hours and an annual stipend paid over 10 months. In addition, for students who are working on the J.D. concurrently with the Ph.D., the financial package includes tuition and stipend for completion of the J.D. Permanent incompletes and withdrawals after the full-refund course withdrawal date count against the hour limit for funding. Any leave time will also count against the limit for funding and may affect satisfactory progress deadlines, which remain in effect throughout the leave.

Beyond the first year of Ph.D. study, receipt of financial aid requires that the student make satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. Students who lose funding because they do not make adequate progress toward completion of the degree may petition the DGS to have their funding reinstated. Reinstatement must be approved by the DGS and the Program Advisory Board. If a joint-degree student decides to pursue only the law degree, he or she forfeits the continuation of any financial award that was contingent upon participation in the Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics.

Satisfactory progress is defined as:

Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in all coursework. J.D. grades and Ph.D. grades are averaged separately.

(1) Ph.D.-only students:

2nd semester: complete first-year Ph.D. core, pass the preliminary examination.

4th semester: complete the Ph.D. research paper requirement in LWEC 8406.

6th semester: complete all coursework for the Ph.D., have Ph.D. committee appointed, submit dissertation proposal, pass oral qualifying examination, admission to candidacy for the Ph.D.

8th semester: pass final defense of the dissertation, submit dissertation, graduate.

(2) Joint-degree students:

2nd semester: complete first-year Ph.D. core, pass the preliminary examination.

4th semester: complete the first-year J.D. core.

6th semester: complete the Ph.D. research paper requirement in LWEC 8406.

8th semester: complete most coursework for both degrees; substantial work toward dissertation proposal.

10th semester: complete all coursework for both degrees, have Ph.D. committee appointed, submit dissertation proposal, pass oral qualifying examination, admission to candidacy for the Ph.D.
12th semester: pass final defense of the dissertation, submit dissertation, graduate.

NOTES: In some years, students may take the first-year J.D. core before the first-year Ph.D. core. Joint-degree students should aim for dissertation committee appointment and admission to candidacy in the 9th semester (Fall), and Ph.D.-only students should aim for dissertation committee appointment and admission to candidacy in the 5th semester (Fall).

C. Work Responsibilities

As part of graduate training, funded students work on research assignments. In addition to fulfilling requirements for funding, these assignments also provide valuable work experience. During the first year of Ph.D. study and the first year of J.D. study, students do not have any required research assistance responsibilities.

Students who are not in the first year of Ph.D. study and the first year of J.D. study, are required to work up to 20 hours per week as research assistants for program faculty. Any student participating in an editorial role for a law review must continue to meet the work responsibilities of the program, although a reduced load of 10 hours per week is available to students currently staffing the Vanderbilt Law Review or with senior editorial responsibilities on another Vanderbilt-sponsored law review. Students are prohibited from performing research assistance for non-program faculty for pay or for credit during the academic year. During the academic year, additional employment is strongly discouraged and is prohibited for any student working less than 20 hours a week as a research assistant.

D. Summer Work and Research

During summer breaks, students do not receive a monthly stipend and may work in outside employment, internships, or on research projects with faculty at Vanderbilt. Students are also expected to work on their own research during summer breaks.

E. $1,000 Research or Travel Funds

Students receiving financial support from the program are allocated $1,000 in research funds annually. These funds are available to enhance student research by allowing students to purchase materials or software specific to their projects or to attend a relevant academic conference or some similar approved use. Any books, software, or other materials purchased with these funds will be the property of Vanderbilt. Funds do not carry over from year to year if unspent. To utilize these funds, all purchase requests must be made through the program manager.
V. **Honor Code**

The Honor Code at Vanderbilt represents a compact of mutual trust between each student and the members of the faculty. Every student is honor bound not to present the work of another person as his/her own. Faculty members, in turn, do not question the integrity of the students. The purpose of the Graduate Honor Council is to preserve and perpetuate this feeling of mutual trust. It is therefore an organization of graduate students for their own protection. It seeks to protect the honor of all graduate students by vindicating those falsely suspected of dishonesty and penalizing those guilty of dishonest acts, according to the procedures set forth in the Honor Council Rules.

The Honor System presumes that all work submitted as part of academic requirements is the product of the student submitting it unless credit is given with proper footnoting and bibliographic reference or citation or as prescribed by the course instructor. Students are responsible for obtaining from their professors an explanation of the freedom they may exercise in collaboration with other students or in use of outside sources, including the student’s own work prepared and submitted for another course, during group study session, and in take-home examinations. Violations include the following:

(1) Falsifying or cheating on any material submitted to meet course requirements;
(2) Plagiarizing on any assigned material;
(3) Failing to report a known violation of the Code;
(4) Taking actions to deceive a member of the faculty, staff or fellow student regarding principles contained in the Honor Code;
(5) Submitting work prepared for another course without specific prior authorization of the instructors in both courses;
(6) Using text or papers prepared by commercial or noncommercial agents and submitting as own work; and
(7) Falsifying results of study and research.

Violations of the Honor Code are cause for disciplinary actions imposed by the appropriate honor council. If found guilty by an honor council, a student will no longer be eligible for funding or participation in the Ph.D. Program in Law and Economics. For further discussion of the Honor system, see the *Vanderbilt Law School Student Handbook*. 