

THE FIELD

Economists attempt to understand the economic choices of individuals, families, firms, and other institutions. For example, how do parents allocate time and other family resources, or how do firms decide what to produce and whom to hire? Economists also attempt to understand the workings of the economy as a whole. What causes inflation, unemployment, or inequality? How do regulation and deregulation of industries affect product prices and quality? How does government affect the economy overall? Why does the cost of medical care rise faster than other costs? Economists have developed a body of principles, theories, and methods that help them to think about these problems. The study of economics is the study of those theories, principles, and methods, and their application to questions and policies people really care about.

The UMass Amherst Department of Economics faculty represents an unusually wide range of specialties within economics and a range of approaches to the field. All members, which include many internationally known scholars, teach undergraduate courses and are accessible to undergraduate students, including through providing undergraduate research assistantships.

A minor in economics is available.

THE MAJOR

All economics majors take eight required courses in two basic areas of economics — microeconomics and macroeconomics — as well as statistics, mathematics, and writing. Students choose the remaining courses themselves, in accordance with their interests and career objectives. Every student takes six (or four) courses of his or her choice in economics, either courses in methods or courses in applied areas, including political economy; economic history; international, environmental and labor economics; money and banking; econometrics and game theory, for example. In addition, students may substitute a collateral field composed of a second major, minor, or five courses taken outside of economics, for two elective economics courses. Examples of such fields are history, business, and political science. Students also take three courses to satisfy the International and Intercultural Requirement (IIR).

Overall, the economics major is completed with 15 to 17 courses.

Students may declare the economics major upon entering the university, any time during their first semester, or anytime thereafter, as long as they have time to complete the major. Students declare the economics major by participating in an economics major information session, which happens throughout fall and spring semesters.

The major requirements include ECON 103: Introduction to Microeconomics (or RESECON 102: Introduction to Resource Economics); ECON 104: Introduction to Macroeconomics; and MATH 127 and Math 128: Calculus I and II for the Life and Social Sciences (or MATH 131 and 132: Calculus I and II), one statistics course (RES-ECON 212 or STATISTC 240 or STATISTC 501, STATISTC 515, PSYCH 240, OIM 240, or EDUC 240), one intermediate microeconomics course (ECON 203 or RES-ECON 202), one intermediate macroeconomics course (ECON 204), the Junior Year Writing requirement (ECON 365), the Integrative Experience (IE) requirement, four upper-level ECON courses (3-4 credits each, level 205 and above, which includes the IE course), and completion of either Option A (two additional upper-level ECON courses, 3-4 credits each, level 205 and above) or Option B (any minor or certificate program or additional major except Resource Economics; any combination of five courses in the Isenberg School of Management major departments, 3-4 credits each, 200 level and above; a group of five courses, 3-4 credits each, 300 level and above, chosen by the student and approved by the undergraduate program director). Students also complete the Departmental International and Intercultural Requirement, which is three courses in languages, International Courses, International Study Abroad, or a combination of these International and Intercultural components.

A minimum of four of the ten required ECON courses must be taken at UMass Amherst and a cumulative GPA of 2.0 must be earned in courses applied to major requirements and electives. There are slightly different requirements depending on whether a student is completing economics as a primary major, secondary major (double major), or dual degree. All students completing a secondary major or dual degree with economics must also meet with their academic advisor. One independent study or research/thesis course can count toward the upper-level economic major requirements. Internships are encouraged, although these credits do not count toward major requirements.

HONORS

Contact the departmental honors coordinator for information on how to pursue honors opportunities within the major.

STUDY ABROAD

Eight credits of UMass Amherst approved study abroad completes the IIR. For more information about UMass study abroad options, contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo).

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A substantial majority of economics majors seek employment after graduation. Placements typically include managerial, sales, and staff positions in many different sectors of the economy, including manufacturing, banking and finance, advertising, insurance, communication, wholesaling, retailing, social service, government, and nonprofit institutions. A number of graduates go on to graduate work, some immediately after graduation and some after several years of work experience. Many enter MBA programs, attend law school, or go on to graduate work in economics. A few do graduate work in other fields; these are typically students with second majors or minors in another discipline.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The social and behavioral sciences focus on behavior and organization from cultural, social, and biological perspectives, examining people as both social and individual beings. Undergraduates in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences study culture, society, and individual and social interaction processes and learn methods by which knowledge in the social and behavioral sciences is created. Students are guided by the SBS Pathways approach, integrating their academic, experiential, and professional pathways. They anchor their knowledge in at least one discipline but are encouraged to expand this knowledge through various broadening experiences inside and outside the classroom.

Office: 110 Crotty Hall
Phone: 413-545-2594
Email: advising@econs.umass.edu
Website: umass.edu/economics