

COURSE AND THESIS REQUIREMENTS

Duration of the Ph.D. program

The Ph.D. in Economics of the Universities of Milan and Pavia is a three-year program. Scholarships are granted for the same period. During the three-year program, students have to fulfill course requirements and write a research thesis. The Ph.D. degree is jointly awarded by the University of Milan and the University of Pavia after the thesis has been publicly defended and judged as an original contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the relevant field of study.¹

Attendance

Students have to personally attend Ph.D. courses and participate to other activities of the program. They must carry out their research at the University of Milan or at the University of Pavia except when they do research in a foreign institution or participate to Conferences, Workshops or other activities authorized by the Ph.D. Director. In practice, authorizations should be asked in advance for any period of leave exceeding one week. Being a Ph.D. student is a full time job. In particular, students cannot be enrolled in other Ph.D., Master or Bachelor programs and cannot carry out working activities except if explicitly authorized by the “Collegio dei docenti”; i.e. by the Ph.D. Faculty. Authorized activities include tutoring of master and bachelor students, lectures, seminars and review sessions for a maximum yearly amount of 40 hours.²

A student who fails to comply with the above rules can be suspended by the “Collegio dei docenti” (the Ph.D. Faculty) from the Ph.D. program and consequently lose the scholarship.

Thesis Requirements

The thesis generally consists of a brief introduction and two chapters. Essays on different topics within the same field are acceptable. The two chapters must provide original contributions to the advancement of knowledge, i.e. new theoretical and/or empirical results in the chosen research field. The thesis chapters should be in the form of original (full length) research papers publishable on international scientific journals with peer review. At least one of the two chapters should be single-authored by the Ph.D. candidate. The thesis must be written in English and have an abstract in Italian.

The thesis is presented to the “Collegio dei docenti” (the Ph.D. Faculty) before the end of the final year of the Ph.D. program.³ Then, the “Collegio dei docenti” submits the thesis to two external referees who must provide a formal written assessment of the thesis. The referees may ask for a revision that must be completed by the Ph.D. candidate within 6 months before the thesis can be formally defended.⁴ After 6 months the thesis is in any case admitted to the final public defense.

¹ In case of maternity leave or serious illness students have to interrupt their studies (with a deferral of the scholarship). Studies can also be suspended upon students' request and subject to approval by the “Collegio dei docenti” for serious personal or family problems.

² This limit is removed after the third year.

³ Students must also submit a short written report (two pages) of their research activity and results.

⁴ The referees provide a new assessment of the revised version of the thesis.

The thesis has to be publicly defended in front of a Thesis Committee of three members (one of whom must be a full professor) selected by the “Collegio dei docenti”. At least two members of the Committee cannot be affiliated with the Universities of Milan and Pavia and cannot be members of the “Collegio dei docenti”.

First year Requirements

During the first year, students must attend courses in Mathematics, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, and Econometrics. Three or four courses (modules of about 20 hours) are usually offered in each area for a minimum of nine to a maximum of twelve courses. Students are expected to prepare a research project for the thesis, and present it at the end of the first year of the Ph.D. program. To this end students are encouraged to identify, with the help of the Ph.D. Director, a tutor/advisor with whom to discuss their research project.

The research project should identify one or more issues to be addressed, and be motivated by a short survey of the literature; the project proposal should include a statement of research objectives, and a research strategy.

The presentation is public and takes place at the end of the first year of the Ph.D. program (i.e. on September 2018) in front of the Ph.D. Faculty and fellow Ph.D. students.

At the end of the first year students have to submit a short written report (two pages) of their research activity and results. The first-year report should include a summary of the research project, and indicate the participation to seminars, workshops and conferences, and any publications.

Admission to the second year

In order to be admitted to the second year, students have to pass all first-year courses by obtaining a pass grade in the first exam or in the retake.⁵ Exams can be retaken only once. Students who are not admitted to the second year have to leave the Ph.D. program. In exceptional circumstances, the “Collegio dei docenti” can admit students to the second year if they have not failed more than two courses, showed a fairly good overall performance, and presented a satisfactory research project.

The research project must be approved by the “Collegio dei docenti”. If the “Collegio” finds the research project unfeasible or unsatisfactory, it may ask for extensions and/or modifications, and possibly for a new presentation in which revisions are discussed in front of a Committee appointed by the Ph.D. Director.

Second year Requirements

During the second year, students must attend field courses in specific research topics to be decided each year by the “Collegio dei docenti”, if possible considering the research interests of the students. Upon approval by the Ph.D. Director, a course from another Ph.D. program can be substituted for one of these field courses. Field courses are usually given in the first term (September-December) of the second year of the Ph.D. program.

During the second year, students have to write an original research paper for the first chapter of the thesis under the supervision of a thesis advisor previously identified among the members of the “Collegio”. The paper can be in the form of a preliminary draft but should clearly state the research objectives, include a literature review, and provide original results. The paper is presented at the end of the second year in front of the Ph.D. Faculty and fellow Ph.D. students.

At the end of the second year students have to submit a short written report (two pages) of their research activity and results. The second-year report should include a summary of the research paper, and indicate the participation to seminars, workshops and conferences, and any publications.

⁵ Each course is a module of about 20 hours of lectures.

Admission to the third year

To be admitted to the third year, students have to pass all second-year courses⁶ and write an original research paper that has the potential to satisfy the requirements of a thesis chapter.

Exams of second-year courses may take the form of a written exam or a presentation or a short essay, possibly to be evaluated with a pass/fail decision. Exams can be retaken only once. Students who do not pass one or more courses have to leave the Ph.D. program.

The research paper has to be approved by the “Collegio dei docenti” for the student to be admitted to the third year. If the paper does not provide original results or cannot be expected to meet the requirements for a thesis chapter, then it is not approved by the “Collegio dei docenti” and the student has to leave the Ph.D. program.

Third year requirements

During the third year, students have to complete their Ph.D. thesis under the supervision of the thesis advisor. The thesis is presented at the end of the third year in front of the Ph.D. Faculty and fellow Ph.D. students. The presentation focuses on the results obtained during the third year, usually, presented in the second chapter of the thesis. The thesis should fulfill the requirements indicated above.

At the end of the third year students have to submit a written final report on their research activity and results during the three-year period of the Ph.D. program. The final report should include a summary of the thesis, and indicate any publications.

Interdisciplinary courses

To enrich their cultural backgrounds on topics not strictly related to economics, Italian law requires that Ph.D. students attend interdisciplinary courses, such as Data Analysis, Research Methods, Computer Programming, Research Ethics, Communication, etc.

Period Abroad

Students are encouraged (but not obliged) to do research in a foreign Institution; a university, a research institute or an international organization. The period spent abroad usually follows second-year courses and cannot exceed 12 months. The student’s request to do research abroad must be endorsed by the thesis advisor and be approved by the “Collegio dei docenti”. The request has to include a letter by a researcher in the hosting institution willing to supervise the student abroad. The request is evaluated by the “Collegio dei docenti” taking into consideration the coherence of the student’s research project with the expertise of the external researcher and the fields of specialization of the foreign Institution. The student may be asked to interrupt the study abroad and return to Milan if the “Collegio dei docenti” so decides based upon the reports provided by the external and internal advisors.

⁶ If a second-year course is replaced with the course of another Ph.D. program, students must pass this latter course.