

Form E-1-A for Boston College Departments/Programs

Department/Program: Economics/Social Science Core

1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the Program expect students to have acquired from taking Social Science Core in Economics?)

(a) Students are expected to develop a basic understanding of economic theory and be able to apply this knowledge to analyze economic problems and interpret public policy alternatives across a range of issues such as poverty, international trade, the environment, and health care.

(b) Students are expected to understand analytical tools of economics including graphical analyses and simple algebra for working with economic models.

(c) Students are expected to articulate the strengths and limitations of economic models for explaining social phenomenon and making policy choices. They should appreciate how perspectives from other social science disciplines can enhance their understanding of enduring questions or complex contemporary problems.

(d) Students are expected to develop the ability to objectively interpret research findings from economic data and to integrate what they learn with the principles and values that guide their lives.

(e) Students are expected to understand the differences between positive and normative economics. In particular, they should be able to distinguish cases where efficiency and equity are compatible from those where tradeoffs are necessary.

2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the Program's learning expectations accessible to students?)

The above learning outcomes are posted on the Economics Department webpage.

Additionally, syllabi of Core courses offer a more tailored set of objectives related directly to the Social Science Core from that particular course. Students taking these courses are clearly informed of how these fits with the Social Science Core, or put differently, how this Social Science Core course helps them understand the world around them.

For example, the ECON1101 syllabi state:

As a Core course designed to fulfill a Social Science Core requirement, this course will:

1. Introduce economics as a way of thinking and approaching problems.
2. Guide students to think analytically.
3. Guide students to analyze current issues through an economic perspective.
4. Prepare students for future courses in economics.

Specifically, students will be able to:

5. Explain the fundamental concepts of economics:

scarcity, opportunity cost, equity, efficiency, positive statements, normative statements, production possibilities frontier, circular flow, economic resources/factors of production, markets, product markets, factor markets, equilibrium, surplus, shortage, elasticities, industrial organization, absolute and comparative advantage, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GDP Deflator, Consumer Price Index (CPI), inflation rates, unemployment rates, labor force participation rates, nominal versus real variables, market failures.

6. Apply economic theory in the real world.

7. Analyze the impact of fiscal and monetary policies on markets and the economy.

8. Recognize the impact of other government policies on markets and the economy.

3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the program?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

(a) Instructors teaching the economics social science Core course (ECON1101) each semester will use a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being highest) to evaluate how well the students in their classes achieved the outcomes listed above.

(b) Reports will be maintained in the Economics Department files of annual faculty meetings held to assess strengths and weaknesses of students taking the economics social science Core course (ECON1101) and whether the curriculum needs modification.

(c) In addition, the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) in Economics will form and chair a faculty committee every third year to review the curriculum of the economics social science Core course (ECON1101) and make recommendations to be discussed at the annual faculty meeting. A written report will be maintained in department files.

Note: ECON1101 will only be taught by full-time (i.e. Professors of the Practice) faculty moving forward.

4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the Program or Department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The DUS will have primary responsibility for designing and implementing modifications to the Economics Core courses. The DUS reports to and is advised by the Economics Department faculty at an annual meeting to discuss undergraduate issues, curriculum and program modifications.

5) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum? Why were they made?)

During the '19-'20 academic year, the Department replaced its two-semester sequence, Micro Economic Principles (ECON1131) and Macroeconomic Principles (ECON1132), with a four-credit, one-semester course (ECON1101, Principles of Economics). These changes were made to better respond to the large number of incoming BC students that have taken Economics/AP exams in high school (and not as a result of the evaluation data collected by the Department). Condensing the Principles course into one semester enables the majors and minors an opportunity to take more electives so they have broader and deeper education that better showcases the discipline. The electives are a mix of theoretical and applied.

6) Date of the most recent program review. (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

The last external review of the Department of Economics took place in 2012.

From May 2018 through December 2019, the DUS hosted a series of information, self-evaluation Departmental meetings devoted to undergraduate teaching goals, along with the discussion of the new Economic Principles course.

An inaugural 2-day TA/TF (Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow) Teaching Workshop for 3rd-year Ph.D. students was hosted by the DUS and a Professor of the Practice—both teach ECON1101—during the fall of 2020. Since this was the first year of the workshop, the 4th-year and beyond students were invited to participate. Four follow-up lunches were hosted throughout the academic year. TAs cover the discussion sections that accompany ECON1101, beginning in their 3rd-year as Ph.D. students.