

Department of International Economics
**FAQs on the PhD in Development
Economics**

Who can apply?

Admissions are decided on the basis of individual files. Most candidates hold a Master's degree in economics with high marks. We consider both candidates from our own MIS programme in economics, as well as candidates from outside universities with a top reputation. If you are interested in the PhD programme but do not yet hold a Master's degree, an option is to enter the Master in International Economics programme and apply for the PhD in your second year using our "fast track" option.

What does it prepare you for?

A practicing Development Economist must be, first and foremost, a very good economist, trained in the tools of the trade, from micro and macro theory, to advanced econometric techniques. But a Development Economist should be much more and should display sensitivity towards and knowledge of diverse cultural settings, know how to engage key stakeholders in developing countries (from the government to local NGOs), and be capable of getting things done in the field in conditions that are sometimes quite difficult.

Our graduates have secured positions in prominent policy institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the research departments of prominent governments. While our training is focused on policy application, many graduates have secured positions in academia.

How is the programme structured?

The programme consists of classes (in English) and the research dissertation.

- Classes cover a sequence of four courses in the first two semesters: micro- and macro-development PhD seminars, one advanced econometrics class, and a class in impact evaluation.
- Students can take a minor in another discipline (political science and anthropology/sociology of development being the most common), so as to be equipped to deal with complex issues from at least two academic standpoints.
- Students are encouraged, when appropriate, to carry out fieldwork in the context of projects supervised by faculty members in developing countries.
- While there is no requirement to take additional elective classes, you have the option to follow classes in economics or other departments of the Institute as an auditor, subject to approval of the Professor.
- The dissertation is the central element of the programme. You will choose a Professor to be your academic supervisor in the first year. You will submit and defend a dissertation proposal (the so-called "preliminary thesis statement") by the end of the third semester. That proposal describes your research plan and you will be expected to have clearly identified your research question, show a good grasp of the related literature, as well as have a clear plan for the methods and data you intend to use. The dissertation usually takes the form of three papers written under

the direction of your supervisor, each of which is suitable as an independent paper. We allow for co-authorship of chapters, but expect you to demonstrate the ability to undertake research on your own. Students usually have one chapter ready by the beginning of their fourth year, which they use as their job market paper to secure employment.

- The credit requirements are 24 credits (ECTS) from the four classes.

Can I follow classes outside the Institute?

Yes. You can take classes in other institutions as auditors, subject to approval by your supervisor.

Is financial support available?

Yes. Financial support takes the form of teaching assistantships, scholarships (both administered by the Institute) and research assistantships (usually administered by Professors using external funding). You can apply for support for your first year when applying to the Institute. Applications to obtain support for subsequent years are submitted during the spring semester for funding that will start in the next fall semester. While we cannot commit to fund all of our PhD students, the recent experience is that all of them have obtained some funding.

What is the work atmosphere like?

Each year we admit between 4 and 9 students, including those from our own MIS programme. This allows for close contact between students and faculty members. The economics section fully recognises that PhD students will soon become colleagues and we value the contribution of our students to departmental life. There is also a cooperative atmosphere among students. PhD students elect representatives who are in regular contact with the faculty and the administration.

What are the opportunities to learn about and present research?

Several. The department runs a weekly research seminar where outside speakers come to present papers. This seminar series attracts prominent researchers and gives students an exposure to current research topics in all branches of economics. The economics departments of the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne are also a short distance away and offer seminar series.

In addition to the seminar series, we also run a “Development Therapy” workshop once a semester where PhD students present work in progress. This is a very useful opportunity to learn what your fellow students are doing and receive feedback on your own research.

The department also holds a “PhD day” once a semester. Each PhD student gives a 10-minute overview of her/his current research and obtains feedback from other students and faculty members. The economics section also encourages students to present their work at economics conferences and submit it to journals, and offers a contribution towards the expenses this involves.

What do our PhDs go on to do?

The Institute is well known for preparing students to work as professional economists on development issues in international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, governments or the private sector and the academic world. The combination of advanced knowledge of up-to-date theories and methodologies and our emphasis on real-life uses of economics is highly appreciated by employers.

How to apply?

Admission is organised at the Institute level. Interested students are kindly asked to follow the General Admission Procedure to the Institute's programmes. In addition to the general admission conditions, the Economics department requires applicants to the PhD programmes to take the GRE test (school code: 2258; department code: 1901).

What else do I need to know?

- Get acquainted with two core competencies required for your PhD-experience: [Doing research](#) and [presenting your research](#).
- Check the [student toolbox](#) for further information, helpful forms and guidelines.
- If you have any additional questions about being a student in Economics at IHEID, please email studentrepphdeco@graduateinstitute.ch