



Annual Departmental Assessment Report

Department: Economics
Year: AY18-19
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Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for the Economics Major

1. Proficiency in microeconomic analysis, which applies to EC 201
2. Proficiency in macroeconomic analysis, which applies to EC 202

Section 2: Assessment Activities

Data were collected during Spring 2017. In this section, I will describe, individually for each objective, the data collected as well as the analysis of the data.

Section 2.1: Assessment of proficiency in microeconomic analysis. Professor Keaton Miller taught two sections of EC 201, Principles of microeconomics, in Spring 2017. To assess proficiency in microeconomic analysis, Professor Miller selected three central notions: opportunity cost; Pareto efficiency; and marginal thinking (a term I detest, but the concept – that agents make decisions “at the margin,” i.e. by assessment of per-unit cost and benefits – is fundamental). On his final exam, he identified, for each notion, an “easy” and a “hard” question, and then recorded the performance of students on said questions. A total of 507 students took the exams. The corresponding data are as follows:

Table 1. Micro: percent of students answering question correctly

	Opportunity Cost	Pareto Efficiency	Marginal Thinking
easy	90%	53%	80%
hard	50%	87%	61%

According to Professor Miller, the anomaly that significantly more students correctly answered the hard Pareto efficiency question reflects that a similar question was posed on a review sheet.

The results for the easy opportunity cost and marginal thinking questions are somewhat reassuring, and suggest that the majority of introductory students have a reasonably familiarity with these important concepts. The results for the corresponding hard questions are perhaps not surprising: these concepts are quite subtle and even the best students may be challenged by nuanced questions regarding them. The results for Pareto efficiency – another very important concept – are more unsettling. Students had difficulty with the easy question, and conditional on this outcome, appear to have mechanically answered the hard question.

Section 2.2: Assessment of proficiency in macroeconomic analysis. Professor Jeremy Piger and graduate employee Jean Falconer each taught a section of EC 202, Principles of macroeconomics,

in Spring 2017. To assess proficiency in macroeconomic analysis, they jointly selected three topics: monetary policy, unemployment and inflation, and each included on their respective finals the same six questions – two for each topic, one “easy” and one “hard”. A total of 588 students answered the six questions. The results are as follows:

Table 2. Macro: percent of students answering question correctly

	monetary policy	unemployment	inflation
easy	56.1%	90%	95.6%
hard	41.2%	45.6%	72.4%

Similarly to the microeconomics assessment, students performed well on the easy questions for two of the topics: unemployment and inflation. That only 56.1% correctly answered the easy monetary policy question is more disconcerting and suggests the need for spend more time on the monetary transmission mechanism – a somewhat challenging topic.

Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis

The results of the assessment will be communicated to appropriate instructional employees, with suggestions for improving outcomes.

Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience

The economics department is in the advanced stages of revising our masters degree program. The intention of the revised curriculum is to offer current University of Oregon undergraduates an efficient path to a masters degree. A side benefit of the revision is a reimagined upper-division quantitative sequence that will much better serve advanced undergraduates interested in graduate and professional schools, as well as graduate students from other disciplines, including business and public policy and management.

Section 5: Plans for Next Year

This year we expand our data collection. We will again collect data from principles courses – an effort to provide a clearer picture of current state of affairs – and we will collect data from our intermediate level theory courses in order to assess whether improvements are made within cohort and across years.