

M.A. in Applied Economics Program

STUDENT HANDBOOK

CERGE-EI

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This handbook is subject to updates available on the Course Management System site.

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1 Study information, requirements and procedures

CERGE-EI's Master of Arts in Applied Economics (MAE) program is conducted in Prague under the absolute charter granted to CERGE-EI by the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York, U.S.A.

MAE graduates receive an internationally recognized U.S. degree conferred and authorized by the Board of Regents. MAE degrees have been nostrified in the Czech Republic by Masaryk University.

1.1 Study plan

The MAE is a one-year program (with an additional thesis option). Studying full-time, students are expected to finish the program in 12 months. The program consists of nine required core courses and seven required elective courses.

The MAE is a full-time study program. In exceptional cases, students may be allowed to study part-time, but their schedules must conform to the full-time course offerings and be arranged with the Program Director in advance.

A student must complete her/his study within 4 years (beginning on the first day of her/his first semester). The student must graduate by the end of her/his fourth year, regardless of any time spent on interruption.

1.2 Courses

The Fall Semester typically includes only core courses. The Spring and Summer Semesters include a combination of core and elective courses. Below is a typical program schedule.

	Fall	Spring	Summer
Core courses	Applied Microeconomic Analysis		Project Seminar
	Macroeconomic Policy Analysis		
	Quantitative Methods I	Quantitative Methods II	
	Communicating for Impact 1	Communicating for Impact 2	Communicating for Impact 3
Elective courses		3-4 electives (total 7-8)	3-4 electives (total 7-8)
Pass/Fail courses	Intensive Mathematics	Project Seminar preparation	
	R for Econometrics (connected to QM I)		
	Personal Professional Development	Personal Professional Development	

1.3 Enrolling in courses

Students are automatically enrolled in core courses each semester. If there is more than one section of a core course, students are placed into sections by the MAE Study and Support Office (SSO).

Students indicate their choice of elective courses for the entire program in advance. During the summer prior to the program start, the MAE SSO organizes a two-stage sign-up and enrollment procedure for students to choose electives. Typically, students choose seven electives from the offer of electives for that year.

An add/drop period in the first week of the Spring and Summer semesters is allowed for elective changes. Then the add/drop period ends and elective-course enrollments are confirmed.

Students are obliged to complete all courses in which they are enrolled and to receive grades for those courses. Once a student is enrolled in a course, the course grade will appear on the student's transcript.

Students may enroll in extra elective courses beyond the number of courses required for graduation, subject to the Program Director's approval. The decision depends on space availability and the student's academic progress, among other factors. Extra elective courses appear on the student's transcripts in the same way as any other elective course from the time of enrollment.

Students may also audit additional courses, subject to space availability and the Program Director's approval. Auditing a course means that the student participates in the course but does not receive credit or a course grade, nor will the course appear on the student's transcript. The level of participation, ranging from only attending the class meetings to completing all assignments and exams, is subject to agreement between the student and the course teacher and must be adhered to throughout the semester.

1.4 Preparatory semester

The MAE program offers an on-line Preparatory Semester. Students are not required but are strongly encouraged to participate. The Preparatory Semester is not part of the program curriculum. Its purpose is to help students refresh their skills and knowledge, to find where they might have gaps in their readiness for the MAE curriculum, and in general to prepare to start the Fall Semester more efficiently.

The Preparatory Semester runs entirely on-line for eight weeks in July and August. It is designed as a part-time, self-study plan. Students receive login information and then follow the detailed instructions and rich materials available on the Course Management System site.

1.5 Discovery week

The Discovery Week is held early in the Fall semester. Students work together to solve a business problem for a real organization with guidance from mentors. This supports student progress toward impactful careers and enables students to learn about each other. The Discovery Week is more intensive than a regular academic week. Students are not required but are strongly encouraged to attend.

1.6 Intensive mathematics week

At the start of the Fall Semester, students attend an intensive Mathematics training week. This component ends with an exam which students must pass in order to graduate. Students who do not pass the exam will be offered individual assistance to help them satisfy the requirement, and will have opportunities to re-take the exam during the academic year.

1.7 Personal professional development

During this Pass/Fail course, students explore their future career options and their personal motivations. The content is designed to be flexible to student needs and interests, so not everyone has to participate in all of the activities. Students need a certain number of points in both the Career Development Track and the Personal Development Track, which they can get by participating in specific development activities. The program works in collaboration with a professional psychologist and personal coach who helped design the course and leads many of the activities.

1.8 Attendance policy

With the exception of illness or other extenuating circumstances, students are expected to attend all meetings of classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance is necessary to successfully complete the program. Classroom sessions typically do not simply repeat material in textbooks or other readings. On exams, students are responsible for both material presented in lectures and material from reading assignments and homework assignments. Teachers set their own specific requirements regarding attendance in the particular courses, and these are the primary attendance rules that students must follow.

If a student must miss a class meeting, an exam, or an assignment deadline for health or other unavoidable and serious reasons, this is the procedure the student should follow:

- Absences should be reported to the SSO and to the student's teachers whenever a class, an exam, or an assignment deadline is missed.
- Students should contact the SSO and teachers as soon as possible by email.
- Students are responsible for asking teachers what they have missed and how to make up missed work.

Whether or not an absence is excused will be judged by the teacher and the Program Director if necessary, including consideration of any provided official documentation.

1.9 Interruption of studies

MAE program study may be interrupted before the beginning of any semester if approved by the Program Director. Valid reasons for taking an interruption are usually unexpected and extraordinary personal situations that prevent the student from pursuing the study program as originally intended. For practical reasons, interruption is advisable for one calendar year, after which the student resumes study in the same semester prior to which s/he interrupted.

During an interruption, the individual does not have student status and hence has no right to dormitories, visa, or any other student privileges.

While on interruption, the student should stay in close contact with the Program Director and the SSO so that the student's return to studies will go smoothly.

1.10 Grading

The method of evaluating student performance is determined by each course teacher, and is a priori approved by the Program Director in terms of meeting the evaluation standards of The University of the State of New York. The evaluation criteria must be made explicit to students by the teacher at the beginning of the course. The grading scale used in all courses and examinations at CERGE-EI is based on the U.S. standard. The following are levels of attainment and quality points associated with each grade:

A+	4.00
A	4.00
A-	3.75
B+	3.25
B	3.00
B-	2.75
C+	2.25
C	2.00
C-	1.75
D+	1.25
D	1.00
F	0.00
I	Incomplete

All grades except for Fail (F) and Incomplete (I) indicate that the student has passed the course; hence a D (1.00 points) is the lowest passing grade. If a student fails a course, s/he receives an F and no credit for the course. Students must pass all core and elective courses in which they enrolled in order to graduate.

A course teacher may assign a student a temporary grade of Incomplete, indicating that the student has not completed all required coursework. When an Incomplete is assigned, the student must agree with the course teacher on a reasonable date by which to complete the coursework, but no later than six months after the date of the final course exam. Completion and submission of required coursework is the responsibility of the student. If a student fails to complete the course requirements during the period allowed, the grade of Incomplete is automatically replaced by a Fail.

The Grade Point Average (GPA) is the average of all grades in all courses the student has taken to that time. The GPA only includes grades for core and elective courses.

Evaluating all assignments, exams, and other work during the semester is the responsibility of the course teacher, including grading the final exam. After the final exam, the course teacher determines an overall grade for each student, evaluating the student's performance in the course as a whole.

Teachers may communicate overall course grades to students, but they are not required to do so. Within two weeks of the end of the semester's final exam week, course teachers submit grades for all students to the MAE SSO. The SSO then sends an official grade report for all courses to each student, usually in the form of an electronic transcript, and teachers receive the student course evaluation results from the SSO.

Once the teacher has submitted the grades for a course, the grades cannot be changed by the teacher without prior approval of the Program Director and the Deputy Director for Graduate Studies. Students may appeal their grades.

1.11 Graduation requirements

To graduate, a student must:

- pass all of the core courses,
- pass at least seven elective courses,
- pass all Pass/Fail courses,
- achieve an overall GPA equal to or higher than 1.75.

If a student fails a *core* course, s/he must re-take the same course to satisfy graduation requirements. A core course may be re-taken in the following academic year or, if possible and at the discretion of the Program Director, in an individualized study plan with a second-try teacher. It is possible to agree with the second-try teacher to modify the course requirements such as attendance and homework assignments. The second-try teacher and the Program Director decide if the work done by the student merits a passing grade and what passing grade is earned.

If a student fails an *elective* course, s/he can replace that grade with a passing grade in another elective course for the purposes of graduation, or re-take the same course. Students may re-take or replace a failed elective course grade in the same or the following academic year, depending on availability. When a student takes a different course to replace the failed course for the purposes of graduation, the student is expected to fully adhere to all course requirements as must other students.

The re-take option also applies to a student who passes all courses but whose GPA is too low to graduate. The student can re-take whatever course or courses necessary as many times as needed to obtain the required performance to graduate from the program, within the four years allowed. The re-take regulations described above apply.

If a student re-takes the same course, the second grade replaces the first grade, whether it is higher or lower. If a student re-takes a different (elective) course, both grades appear on the transcript, but the failed course is ignored for the purposes of meeting graduation requirements.

If a student fails a *pass/fail* course, he or she can agree on a strategy to pass the course within the same or the following academic year with the Program Director.

Once the student satisfies the requirements for the Master of Arts in Applied Economics degree, the Director of CERGE-EI forwards a recommendation to award the degree to the Board of Trustees of CERGE-EI, which approves the awarding of the Master of Arts in Applied Economics degree under CERGE-EI's absolute charter.

1.12 MA thesis option

The thesis option is separate from the MAE program. The student must satisfy the program graduation requirements before starting substantial work on the thesis. Usually the thesis takes six months to complete.

Students must submit a proposal for the thesis by a date announced by the Program Director, typically during the Summer Semester. The proposal should include:

- Thesis title
- One-page proposal/description
- Name of supervisor who tentatively agrees to supervise the thesis, typically a member of CERGE-EI permanent faculty or visiting senior faculty
- Planned time line for completion.

In late August of the graduation year, the student must provide binding confirmation that s/he will write the thesis.

The thesis proposal is in turn subject to approval by the supervisor and the Program Director. Significant changes to the direction of the proposed thesis during the writing process are possible only with the approval of the supervisor and the Program Director. Students receive close attention from their supervisor, the Program Director and other MAE faculty and staff during the process of writing the thesis.

The written thesis must be submitted by the deadline agreed upon with the supervisor and the Program Director. Within six weeks after submission, an oral defense is scheduled. A Thesis Defense Committee including the supervisor and two CERGE-EI permanent faculty evaluate the written thesis and the in-person defense to pass the thesis.

2 Academic standards and code of academic integrity

2.1 Code of academic integrity

CERGE-EI is an academic community whose fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Essential to the success of this mission is a commitment to the principles of academic integrity. Every member of the CERGE-EI community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at all times. Students, as members of the community, are also responsible for adhering to the spirit and principles of the Code of Academic Integrity.

Activities that have the effect or intent of interfering with education, the pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of student performance are prohibited. Faculty members in particular need to be active in monitoring violations of academic integrity in the classroom. Examples of such activities include but are not limited to:

- **Cheating:** using or attempting to use unauthorized assistance, material, or study aids in examinations or other academic work. Example: bringing unauthorized materials into a quiz or exam, altering a graded exam and resubmitting it for a better grade, etc.
- **Facilitating academic dishonesty:** knowingly helping or attempting to help another violate any provision of the Code. Example: working together on a take-home exam that was meant for individual completion, etc. Giving unauthorized assistance on exams is considered as serious an offense as receiving assistance. In most examination situations, the exam proctor shall ask students to write an academic pledge inside their examination booklets and sign their name below. A student caught cheating receives a failing grade on the work in question and receives a Bad Conduct Standing. If the student violates the principles of academic honesty a second time, the case is referred to the Program Director for action. The usual outcome in such situations is expulsion from the program.
- **Plagiarism:** using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment. Example: copying another person's paper, article, or computer work and submitting it as one's own work; lifting someone else's ideas without attribution; failing to use quotation marks where appropriate, providing incorrect or insufficient citations and referencing in any work, etc.
- **Fabrication:** submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise. Example: making up data for an experiment; falsification of data; citing nonexistent articles; contriving sources, etc.
- **Multiple submission:** submitting, without prior permission, any work of one's own previously submitted to another teacher or work submitted by another student to another teacher to fulfill academic requirements.
- **Misrepresentation of academic records:** misrepresenting, tampering with, or attempting to tamper with any portion of a student's transcript or academic record, either before or after coming to CERGE-EI. Example: forging a change of grade slip; tampering with computer records; falsifying academic information on one's resume, etc.
- **Unfair advantage:** attempting to gain unauthorized advantage over fellow students in an academic exercise. Example: gaining or providing unauthorized access to examination materials, obstructing or interfering with another student's efforts in an academic exercise, lying about the need for an extension for an exam or paper, continuing to write after allotted time has expired during an exam, destruction or withholding of library materials in an effort to deny others access to those materials, etc.

Teachers set up requirements for exams and out-of-class projects to prevent cheating and plagiarism that every student must follow, even if the student has no intention of cheating. For example, teachers may ask students not to have any extra materials at their desks during exams, including mobile phones, and students must comply. Students should expect such measures and should expect the penalty for cheating to be failure.

If a student is unsure whether her/his action(s) may constitute a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, then it is that individual's responsibility to consult with faculty members and the Program Director to clarify any ambiguities.

Violations of the Code of Academic Integrity are usually considered on a case-by-case basis by the Program Director and the Deputy Director for Graduate Studies. Typically, if a violation happens in relation to course work, the course teacher is also involved in the case, and the punishment may involve assignment of a lower grade or failure on the assignment or for the course. For example, plagiarism on a course writing assignment is usually punished on the first violation with failure of the assignment or the course, and on the second violation by referral to the Program Director for Bad Conduct Standing or expulsion. The teacher who gave a failing grade due to a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity should inform the student, the Program Director and the SSO of the violation. The student may not retake a course for a grade in which s/he received a failing grade due to a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity; the student may only audit the course. For violations outside of a course, cases are dealt with directly by the Program Director and the Deputy Director for Graduate Studies, and referral for Bad Conduct Standing or expulsion is possible on a first violation.

CERGE-EI's special character is reflected in the diversity of the CERGE-EI community. Men and women of different races, religions, nationalities, and backgrounds are integral to achieving CERGE-EI's ultimate purpose: improvement of the human condition through the pursuit of learning. Diversity is prized at CERGE-EI because it helps to create an educational environment that best prepares students to contribute to an increasingly diverse and connected world. CERGE-EI therefore continuously seeks talented faculty, students, and staff who will contribute to the CERGE-EI community, which is diverse in race, ethnic background, interests, and perspectives.

The institution does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or ethnic origin, age or disability in the administration of its educational policies, programs, or activities, admissions policies and procedures, scholarship and loan programs, employment, or recreational or other administered programs.

As a community of scholars, CERGE-EI affirms, supports and cherishes the concepts of freedom of thought, inquiry, speech, and lawful assembly. The freedom to experiment, to present and examine alternative data and theories; the freedom to hear, express, and debate various views; and the freedom to voice criticism of existing practices and values are fundamental rights that are upheld and practiced at CERGE-EI.

2.2 Bad conduct standing

Unless punished by immediate expulsion, a student can be given a Bad Conduct Standing (BCS) for violations of academic standards such as cheating or plagiarism, or violations of community standards such as not following dormitory regulations. The Program Director and Deputy Director for Graduate Studies consider BCS cases and make a decision whether to impose BCS, and if so to what degree. A second infraction of the same type is grounds for expulsion from the program, regardless of the degree of BCS received.

2.3 Expulsion

A student may be expelled for grave violation of academic or community standards, especially if it is a repeated offense. In addition, a student may be expelled if, without a serious documented reason, s/he does not fulfill her/his study plan and other obligations to a significant extent. Violating institutional policies or procedural requirements set by the Director of CERGE-EI may also lead to expulsion. The Director of CERGE-EI authorizes such action upon the recommendation of the Program Director and Deputy Director for Graduate Studies. When appropriate, students will be given a warning and have an opportunity to remedy the deficiency before expulsion for non-fulfillment of obligations.

2.4 Student appeals

Students have the right to appeal any academic or procedural decision and any academic evaluation, including grades. To appeal, the student should write a memorandum that fully explains the situation and provides any supporting documentation needed. The appeal should clearly state what change the student desires. The student may discuss the appeal in advance with the Program Director, the teacher or administrator involved. The written appeal should be submitted to the Program Director.

The Program Director relays all appeals to the Deputy Director for Graduate Studies. The Deputy Director may request further information from the student or others involved. The Program Director then takes the Deputy Director's recommendation to the Director of CERGE-EI, and together they make a final decision on the matter. Students may not further appeal the final decision.