



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

Doctoral Programme @ FBE KU Leuven

Marleen Willekens

Program Director PhD in Applied Economics





Two PhD Programs at FBE

- Two distinct PhD tracks at Faculty of Business and Economics
 - PhD in Economics
 - PhD in Applied Economics
- Major difference qua format is the required load of course work in year 1!



Research Master Programs and PhD Programs at FBE



- To start a PhD in Economics:
 - The student follows MASE (Master of Advanced Studies in Economics) with distinction – the student gets an official Master degree (K.U.Leuven diploma). With this degree the student is admitted to the PhD program in economics
 - The student starts with the PhD program, and follows the MASE program as a Doctum Colloquium. The student does not get an official MASE degree at K.U.Leuven, he/she gets a certificate from the Faculty. The student should have distinction in the Doctum Colloquium to continue the PhD program



Research Master Programs and PhD Programs at FBE

- To start a PhD in Applied Economics:
 - The student follows MABS (Master of Advanced Business Studies) with distinction – the student gets an official Master degree (K.U.Leuven diploma). With this degree the student is admitted without further conditions to the PhD program.
 - The student starts with the PhD program, and follows a Doctum Colloquium, consisting of a number of courses from the MABS program. The student does not get an official MABS degree at K.U.Leuven, he/she gets a certificate from the Faculty. The student should have distinction in the Doctum Colloquium to continue the PhD program.
 - The student follows Commercial Engineering (Handelsingenieur), major Business Research, with distinction: the student can start the PhD program without following MABS or a Doctum Colloquium.



PhD program in Applied Economics

Duration: 4 years

1st and 2nd year:

- ✓ Doctum Colloquium = course work in 1st year
- ✓ Comprehensive exam
- ✓ Participation in seminars of the research group
- ✓ Research proposal (commission)
- ✓ First research report



Doctum Colloquium / Course work

- Choose courses amounting to min. 21 ECTS
- Distinction required
- Some exemptions possible



Master of Advanced Business Studies Courses

- Combinatorial optimization and local search techniques
- Advanced econometrics
- Multivariate Statistics
- Applied Game Theory
- Economics of Information
- Advanced time series analysis 6 pt.39,0 h. coordination
- Optimization: special topics
- Statistical modelling
- Advanced Regression Modelling



Master of Advanced Business Studies Courses

- Asset Prices: Basic Models and Tests
- Simulation theory and applications
- The Empirics of Financial Markets
- Economics and strategy of innovation
- Bibliometrics as a research field
- Advanced applied econometrics
- Survey Methodology
- Experimental Design
- Multi-Agent Systems



Courses from other Faculties/Universities ?

Can be chosen if:

- Research orientation
- At post initial master / Phd level

Exemptions ?

- Possible but we are quite strict
- PHD course that are very similar
- Pre-requirement: at least distinction 14/20



Comprehensive exam

- In the research area the student does his/her research
- Various formats; research groups are free to design this
 - From standard reading list for all students in a group
 - To reading lists tailored to the research interests of the student



PhD program in Applied Economics

3rd and 4th year:

- ✓ Two doctoral seminars: progress of the research
- ✓ International publication and conference participation
- ✓ Preliminary defense
- ✓ Public defense



Did we always have this format?

- No
- In 1990's Course work = MBA courses
- Course component has changed very often; different PhD coordinators had different views
- Only since mid/late 90's: research methodology oriented courses for phd audience
 - Staff capacity constraint
- Different faculty members have different visions; some still think courses are not useful for all students



Is course work useful?

- For most sub-disciplines it is very useful
- Less econ oriented disciplines complain though
- On average the introduction of research methodology courses has levered publication output by PhD students
- Debate about exam resit chance for PhD students at FBE



Should more or less courses be followed?

- Econ vs. Applied Econ approach?
- Econ had on average a higher publication output and delivers more PhD graduates



Is comprehensive exam useful?

- Very
- Link with writing the research proposal



Workshop Seminar participation

- Mandatory for PhD students
- Introduced as requirement in late 90's-early 2000's
- Positive effect on interaction and group dynamics
- In some groups students write referee report for the presenter based on their discussion in a prep meeting



Two doctoral seminars

- Student presents his/her progress
- Dissertation very often structured around a three essay format, but this is no requirement
- Feedback from PhD committee and other colleagues at various points in time is very good for the student



Doctoral committee

- At least 5 members in the committee
- Supervisor/promotor from FBE
- At least 2 other internal members
- At least one external member, but mostly 2



International publication and Conference participation

- Mandatory international publication is not perceived as either feasible nor a good strategy for certain research domains, but still is a requirement
- International conference participation: generally supported



Conclusion

- Programme evolved over last 15 years from ad hoc programme with MBA courses to well structured programme.
- Currently course work is linked to our research master programmes
- Number of PhD students has increased dramatically over the past 15 years. About 120 PhD students currently.