

Policy Analysis Program Q&A

About Prospective Students

Q.1 What qualifications are needed to apply for the Policy Analysis Program?

A.1 Our requirements are generally the same as those of other graduate schools in Japan. That is, applicants must hold (or are scheduled to receive) a bachelor's/master's degree. No work experience is required. Further details are available from the Admission Office. We generally accept applicants who are interested in applying economic methodologies to resolving various economic and policy issues in our society.

Q.2 I have graduated from a department other than economics and thus have never been exposed to economics. Can I successfully complete the academic training offered by the program?

A.2 GRIPS offers intermediate and advanced courses in economics and mathematics for economic analysis. You may take an extra six or twelve months at the beginning of the program to take intermediate courses in preparation for the advanced courses. This preparatory education may require you to spend a little more time in courses and you may take a longer period for your graduation than the standard time period.

There are many productive economists in major universities and research institutes who do not hold an undergraduate economics degree. If you are interested in the research fields such as law and economics, civil engineering, and urban planning, then a background in fields other than economics may be beneficial.

Q.3 I am currently working for a private company/organization or a government agency. Can I apply for the program? Will there be any conflicts between my study in the Ph.D. program and such a job?

A.3 As answered in A.1, there is no problem related to your qualifications. Only your academic interest and capacity to carry out your study are of importance. However, the program requests students to engage in full-time participation while acquiring the necessary knowledge of economics.

Q.4 I've heard that the masters programs in GRIPS are mainly targeted at providing academic training to public officers who are working for government offices. Is this new Ph.D. program established for the same objective?

A.4 No, it is not. The Policy Analysis Program is a brand new Ph.D. program and we have lot of new features built into the program. We welcome new graduates out of college, which is one of the new features, as well as those who already graduated from colleges and are currently working for a company or a government office. Please also refer to A.1 and A.3 in this Q&A.

General Features of the Policy Analysis Program

Q.5 What are special features of this new program from the viewpoint of graduate school education?

A.5 This is a five-year Ph.D. course which integrates a masters program and a Ph.D. program. The first two years are devoted to course work, where students develop their research capacity mainly by taking core-courses in economics and are examined on their achievements with qualifying exams (QE). After a successful completion of the QEs, students can devote the rest of their time to preparations for their Ph.D. dissertations in the following three years.

In the second period after QE exams are completed (and in the first period upon request), students are supported by faculty members who are performing at the forefront of academic research in conferences and journals and contributing to resolving various actual policy issues. While the main focus of the program is economics, students can also interact with faculties and students in other related majors, such as political science, international relations, public administration, civil engineering and urban planning.

While the program is designed as a five-year program, students can complete their study before the end of the fifth year if they have met the qualifications to receive their Ph.D. degree. Or if one would like to change her career plan for some reason, she can receive a master's degrees and complete the program. Students can flexibly develop their capacity for careers which require or do not require a Ph.D. degree.

Q.6 What are the "core courses"? Are they different from required courses?

A.6 The core courses are all required courses in this program for receiving degrees. They are (1) basic courses covering microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics, (2) seminar courses, and (3) courses in disciplines other than economics. They are arranged so that students can develop enough capacity to carry out economic analysis of various social and policy issues for their dissertations. Depending on a student's capacity and qualifications, some courses in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics can be waived.

Q.7 What is the QE (Qualifying Exam)?

A.7 There are two types of QE's in this program. The first one is called a Basic QE, which tests a student's ability in basic courses: microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. The second is a Field QE, which evaluates a student's ability to write their dissertation. Any special subjects and dissertation topics can be studied after obtaining a good foundation in the basics. Students can take the Basic QE just after completing the basic courses and the Field QE after completing a part of the studies on their specialty. After passing both the Basic QE and the Field QE, students can start writing their dissertation and prepare themselves to defend their dissertation. When students defend their dissertation successfully, they are awarded a Ph.D. in Public Economics or a Ph.D. in Development Economics.

Q.8 Are there any research opportunities outside of lectures and individual supervision of dissertations?

A.8 Students can participate in various research workshops and conferences. These research activities provide students with opportunities to be exposed to the latest research and interact with researchers in specific fields. In addition to these activities through workshops, students can enjoy opportunities to support faculty in lectures and in research and learn about a series of academic research. This is a part of the GRIPS Assistantship Award. Refer to Sec. 6 of the Program Guide for the details.

Q.9 I heard that we could earn Ph.D. degrees in as short as three years. What is a typical process for this?

A.9 If students have a good background of economics or its related fields, they can complete basic courses and take the basic QE in the first year, followed by the field QE in the second year. Passing these QE's and having established research plans, they can devote the third year solely to writing the dissertation to complete the program with a Ph.D. degree.

Q.10 I heard that the standard program period is 5 years. What is the maximum length that I could stay at GRIPS?

A.10 Our school rule states that the maximum length at GRIPS is 10 years.

Q.11 What types of scholarships are available?

A.11 International (non-Japanese) students may apply for scholarships from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. All students also have the option to apply for a GRIPS Assistantship. See Section 6 of the Program Guide for the details. Japanese students can apply for scholarships from the Japan Student Service Organization.

Q.12 What are possible jobs after graduating from this program?

A.12 Possibilities include becoming researchers and professors of economics and its related fields, employees of worldwide government agencies, or economists and consultants in public and private research institutes. If you are already working for a company or an organization, the material of this program will improve your professional skills and help to upgrade your career.

Q.13 I attended a masters program in economics at another university. I acquired some credits and passed the QE for some classes. Can you count my credits and QE from other universities as part of the requirements at GRIPS?

A.13 We check and judge this issue on a case-by-case basis. The method of application will be guided when you enter GRIPS.

Q.14 My major was not economics, but I took some courses in economics. Do I have to learn economics from the beginning at GRIPS?

A.14 Students who understand economics well are possibly exempted from studying some courses.

Q.15 I am in a masters (or Ph.D.) program of economics at another university. Can you include my credits from other universities as part of the requirements at GRIPS ?

A.15 In principle, we check and judge this issue on a case-by-case basis. Students who understand economics well are possibly exempted from studying all or some core courses.

Q.16 What degree can I get?

A.16 The final degree is a Ph.D. in Public Economics or a Ph.D. in Development Economics. When you satisfy the requirements for a masters degree, you can obtain an MA in Public Economics or an MA in Development Economics before getting a Ph.D.

Q.17 What is an integrated masters and Ph.D. program? Is it impossible to get a masters degree?

A.17 Typical graduate schools in Japan have a 2-year masters program and an additional 3-year doctors program. We integrated them into a 5-year Ph.D. program and offer a consistent educational program. Of course, you can get a masters degree before obtaining the Ph.D. when you have satisfied the requirements for a master's degree.

Q.18 I am not good at English. Can I obtain a Ph.D. by only taking courses in Japanese?

A.18 No, you can not. The main courses are taught in English and you have to write your dissertation in English.

Q.19 Can I choose to enter in either April or October?

A.19 At present, it is April for Japanese students and October for foreign students. We are examining whether the entrance period for Japanese students can be changed to October in the future.

Q.20 I am contemplating doing some field work during the program. Can I have time for it?

A.20 In principle, the core courses are taught in spring and fall terms. You can do some field work or off-campus research in other terms or after you finish your course requirements.

Q.21 What is the difference between the major of "Public Economics" and that of "Development Economics"? Can students take courses for the major they do not belong to?

A.21 The major is chosen after you pass the basic QE. Irrespective of your major, you can take courses for both of the majors.

Q.22 Is changing from the Policy Analysis Program to other programs in GRIPS allowed?

A.22 No. Since the criterion for passing the entrance examination and the core courses are different among programs, a change of programs is not allowed. The change of major is allowed within the Policy Analysis Program.

Q.23 Are the courses from disciplines other than economics counted as credits?

A.23. Yes. They are counted as credits, and at least two non-economics courses are needed to fulfill the requirements of core courses.

Q.24 Is it necessary to take courses in disciplines other than economics?

A.24 Yes. Because in the core courses we set a 4 credits (2 courses) requirement for disciplines other than Economics, you should take at least 2 courses in other fields.

About Entrance Examination

Q.25 Can I consult professors before the entrance examination?

A.25 GRIPS does not introduce you to professors, but you can contact them on your own.

Q.26 What are the subjects of the entrance examination?

A.26 As denoted in the list of application form, the entrance examination consists of two stages of selection. The first stage is selection based on documentations specified in the application form and the second is by interview. If your mother tongue is not English, you should take the examination of TOEFL before the application to prove your English proficiency. English is a must because all classes are offered in English.

Q.27 Do you provide a different entrance examination for applicants with work experience?

A.27 No. All the applicants will face the same entrance examination.

Q.28 How do you arrange the entrance examination for international students?

A.28 Because international students enter GRIPS in October and Japanese students enter in April, the dates of the application deadlines and the entrance examination are different for the Japanese and international students. The subjects of the entrance examination are the same, undergraduate/graduate academic records, TOEFL, and interview.

Q.29 My mother tongue is English. Are the necessary application forms different from those of other ordinary applicants?

A.29 Since you need not take the examination of TOEFL, the score of TOEFL is not necessary in the application. Please ask the Admissions Office for further details.

Q.30 Where is the entrance examination held?

A.30 The applicants in Japan are interviewed at GRIPS at Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo. As for those living abroad, we plan to interview in several countries.