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ACCOUNTING DOCTORAL PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the University of Georgia Accounting Doctoral Program!

Our goal is to prepare you to excel as an accounting researcher/educator. Graduates have been placed at excellent universities including Baylor, British Columbia, Connecticut (x2), Florida (x2), Illinois, Indiana, Manchester, Michigan State (x3), Mississippi, Notre Dame, Temple, Texas A&M (x2), Utah, Virginia (x2), and Wisconsin. Our expectation is that, as you near completion of the program, you will generate employment offers from comparable institutions. To meet this expectation, you must acquire the intellectual skills that are necessary to design, execute, and report “cutting-edge” research on substantive accounting issues. The primary evidence of such skill acquisition will be your dissertation project. When you enter the academic job market, decision-makers at other universities will place a significant weight on the perceived quality of your dissertation project, as reported in a working paper that you will prepare and present to the faculty here. Other evidence includes a joint research project with faculty. Beyond your skills in conducting research, you also must develop into an effective teacher. Throughout the program, our faculty will be ready to support your efforts and applaud your successes.

OVERVIEW OF ACCOUNTING RESEARCH

Accounting research may be classified on three dimensions: substantive area, method, and source discipline. The key substantive areas are managerial accounting, financial accounting, auditing, and tax. The typical research methods are mathematical modeling, archival data analysis, and experimental data analysis. The common source disciplines are economics, finance, management, and psychology. Most accounting researchers focus on issues in one substantive area (which normally coincides with their teaching specialty), employ one type of empirical or analytical method, and rely on the literature from one or more source disciplines.

Relative to undergraduate or masters’ programs, you will find that the doctoral program involves much more interaction between the student and faculty, especially in the dissertation stage. A natural outcome of such interaction is that the student’s research focus overlaps significantly with that of one or more faculty members. An advantage of such overlap is that it increases the degree of support that the faculty can provide as you develop your dissertation. Accordingly, as you plan your coursework and clarify your research focus, it is important to consider the research approaches of current faculty. However, it is not enough for students to re-trace and modestly extend the past efforts of faculty. New and experienced researchers alike are held to the high standard of doing *original* research that makes a *significant* contribution to the literature.

Table 1 provides a taxonomy of accounting research and the primary research approach of current tenure-track faculty:

TABLE 1. Taxonomy of Accounting Research.

Substantive Area	Archival Method	Experimental Method
	Economics/Finance	Economics/Psychology
Managerial Accounting	J. Campbell, N. Skinner	M. Christ
Financial Accounting	J. Campbell, T. Christensen, B. Coleman, F. Heflin, J. Gaver, N. Skinner, S. Ramalingegowda, R. Resutek, K. Valentine, B. Whipple	
Auditing	J. Campbell, F. Heflin, J. Gaver	T. Carpenter, M. Christ, J. Hammersley, J. McCallen
Tax	J. Campbell, P. Demere, J. Song, E. Towery	

Table 1 suggests the following options for your primary research approach:

- [A] financial accounting + archival method
- [B] tax + archival method
- [C] managerial accounting + archival method
- [D] managerial accounting + experimental method
- [E] auditing + archival method
- [F] auditing + experimental method

In presenting the above classification of accounting research, we do not intend to stifle “out of the box” thinking by doctoral students. On the contrary, innovation often involves an integration of previously disparate approaches. Before conducting path-breaking studies, however, new researchers should become familiar with at least one path currently in use. During your first year in the program, we encourage you to begin to develop a research focus in one substantive area (managerial accounting, financial accounting, auditing, or tax), select a minor area as a source discipline (finance or psychology), and plan to take related research methods courses (econometrics or statistics for behavioral scientists).

COURSEWORK

***All students must take the Department of Economics “Math for Economists” (ECON 8000). This course runs 2-3 Weeks before the fall semester begins; along with SAS Boot Camp, which will start a week prior to Math Camp.**

The following advice on coursework makes a few assumptions. First, we assume that you are familiar with the Graduate College requirements (see Graduate Catalog). For example, the Graduate College requires several semesters of full-time graduate study, with a minimum of 36 units in the major subject (i.e., accounting + research methods), a minimum of 9 units in the minor subject, and a minimum of 3 units of dissertation. Second, we assume that students have an undergraduate degree or the equivalent in accounting. Students without this background need

to take additional accounting courses. Third, we assume that students have at least one year of calculus and a good understanding of matrix algebra. Students without this background or in need of a refresher should take MATH 2250 (Calculus I), MATH 2260 (Calculus II), and ECON 8000 (3-week “boot camp” in mathematical economics), during the summer before the first year.

In the student’s first year, the PhD Coordinator (John Campbell) serves as advisor. For subsequent years, the student will arrange for another faculty member to serve as “major professor.” The PhD Coordinator and major professor are jointly responsible for approving the student’s Plan of Study (to be submitted to the Graduate College no later than the third semester). Eventually, the student will arrange for a tenured faculty member to serve as dissertation supervisor. The student and dissertation supervisor work together to form a dissertation or examining committee, which provides timely input to the student and ultimately is responsible for approving the dissertation. The dissertation committee should be formed no later than the end of the third year.

Major Subject

The Graduate Catalog distinguishes between the major and minor subjects. We use a refined distinction with three categories: major subject (accounting), minor subject, and research methods.

Besides the dissertation, the major subject consists of five courses, including ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, ACCT 9140, and two electives. ACCT 9100 surveys the literature in behavioral accounting research, and requires students to design an experimental study. ACCT 9120 and ACCT 9140 survey the literature in financial accounting research, and require students to conduct their own archival data analysis.

In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject requires two elective courses. The selection of courses depends on the student’s research focus. One option is to take additional accounting doctoral seminars. The Department’s offering of accounting doctoral seminars depends on student demand and faculty availability. In the past, the seminars have included a second course in financial accounting, managerial accounting, auditing, tax, and experimental accounting. In the past, students have also considered seminar offerings at neighboring schools (i.e., auditing seminar at Emory; analytical seminar at Emory). Another option is supervised independent study. For example, an independent study could involve a joint research project by the student and a faculty member. A third option is to take a non-accounting course which would yield a special complementary effect given the student’s research focus (e.g., a doctoral course in microeconomics, macroeconomics, game theory, public policy, or psychology). A non-accounting course that counts in the major subject cannot also count in the minor subject or as a research methods course.

The dissertation stage normally takes one to two years, after the completion of coursework. We encourage students to identify a research question for their dissertation *before* the completion of coursework. This timing allows the student to make early progress on the literature review, plan the collection and analysis of data, and so on, which can greatly accelerate the dissertation stage.

Most students enter the academic job market late in the fall semester of the fourth or fifth year. As noted earlier, an important step is the student's preparation of a working paper that reports the dissertation project. Before sending the working paper (along with a resume, letters of recommendation, etc.) to other universities, students make a formal presentation of their dissertation project in a departmental workshop here. The audience for this formal presentation includes tenure-track faculty and other doctoral students, who will provide useful and timely input. This presentation should be scheduled no later than October before the spring semester when the student plans to be on the market. This scheduling requires the careful planning and execution of earlier steps (e.g., forming a dissertation committee). In addition, the student usually presents a work-in-progress on the dissertation no later than May of the year before entering the job market. The audience for this presentation includes the dissertation committee plus other interested faculty and doctoral students. Failure to make this presentation on a timely basis strongly indicates that the student will not be ready to enter the market during the next academic year.

There are many departmental workshops during the academic year, at which faculty, students, and visitors from other universities present their work. These workshops are scheduled on Friday mornings, 10:15 to 11:45. In addition to the above seminar requirements, all students are expected to participate in these workshops. All students should read the papers in advance and prepare to ask relevant questions and provide constructive comments during the workshop. Students who actively participate in workshops accelerate their development and enhance their reputation as a scholar.

Minor Subject

The common minor subjects are finance and psychology, depending on whether the student intends to perform archival or behavioral research. Before embarking on the minor subject, students must obtain agreement from the relevant department as to the specific courses that are necessary and sufficient for completing the minor subject. Students also should find out the requirements as to any minor subject exam. Table 2 lists the courses for possible minor subjects. Because the student must obtain approval for the specific set of courses from the department that offers the minor courses, the listing of courses in Table 2 is illustrative and not definitive.

TABLE 2. Illustrative Minors for Accounting Students.

FINANCE MINOR (for archival students):

**FINA 9200 (Corporate Finance Theory),
FINA 9210 (Empirical Research in Investments), and
FINA 9230 (Research Topics in Finance)**

PSYCHOLOGY MINOR (for behavioral students):

**PSYC 6100(Cognitive Psychology),
PSYC 6440(Experimental Design in Psychology),
PSYC 8000(Goals and Self-Regulation)
PSYC 8210(Cognitive Theories and Models),
PSYC 8240(Judgment/Decision Making), and**

PSYC 6200(Advanced Social Psychology)

NOTE: If you minor in Psychology, you can apply two of these courses towards your major because you only need three for the minor.

When planning the minor subject, students should meet with the PhD Coordinator.

Research Methods

All students take courses in research methods. All students take ECON 8000 (Math for Economists), ECON 8010 (Microeconomic Theory), ECON 8080 (Introduction to Econometrics), and GRSC 7770 (Graduate Teaching Seminar). Students normally take ECON 8000 in the weeks leading up to the start of the first semester. In the first year, students normally take ECON 8010 and GRSC 7770 in the first semester of the first year, and ECON 8080 in the second semester.

The remaining courses in research methods depend on whether the student's approach to accounting research involves archival data analysis or experimental data analysis. As with the minor subject, the student should talk to senior accounting faculty about the appropriate set of research methods courses in light of the student's primary approach to accounting research.

For students taking the archival route, the remaining courses should emphasize econometrics, i.e., the following courses: (1) the three noted above (ECON 8000, ECON 8010, and ECON 8080), (2) ECON 8070 (Statistics for Economics), (3) ECON 8110 (Econometrics I), and (4) at least one of the following courses: (i) ECON 8120 (Econometrics II), (ii) STAT 6280 (Applied Time Series Analysis) or ECON 8130 (Time Series Analysis), and (iii) STAT 6230 (Applied Regression Analysis).

For students taking the experimental route, the remaining courses should emphasize statistics for behavioral science, i.e., the following courses: (1) the three noted above (ECON 8000, ECON 8010, and ECON 8080), and (2) at least two of the following courses: (i) ECON 8070 (Statistics for Econometrics) or STAT 6120 (Introduction to Statistics), (ii) ERSH 8310 (Statistical Methods in Education), (iii) STAT 6620 (Introduction to Statistics II) or ERSH 8320 (Applied Correlation/Regression), (iv) STAT 8200 (Experimental Design), (v) STAT 9290 (Nonparametric Statistics), (vi) MGMT 9610 (Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling) or ERSH 7750 (Structural Equation Modeling), and (vii) MARK 9650 (Applied Multivariate Analysis).

Putting It Together

To develop a program of study, the student's first decision should be one of the five options for a primary approach to accounting research, i.e., options A-E on page 2. Given this decision, the program of study should include a minor subject and a set of research methods courses that support the student's primary approach to accounting research.

Option A (financial accounting + archival method): In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more seminars or independent studies in financial accounting, tax, auditing, or economics. The minor subject should be finance and the research methods courses should emphasize econometrics.

Option B (tax + archival method): In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more seminars or independent studies in tax, financial accounting, or economics, at least one of which is an independent study in tax research. The minor subject should be finance and the research methods courses should emphasize econometrics.

Option C (managerial accounting + archival method). In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more seminars or independent studies in managerial accounting/compensation/governance, financial accounting, tax, auditing, or economics. The minor subject should be finance and the research methods courses should emphasize econometrics.

Option D (managerial accounting + experimental method). In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more seminars or independent studies in managerial accounting or psychology. The minor subject should be psychology, and the research methods courses should emphasize statistics for behavioral science.

Option E (auditing + archival method). In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more seminars or independent studies in auditing, financial accounting, or economics. The minor subject should be finance, and the research methods courses should emphasize econometrics.

Option F (auditing + experimental method). In addition to ACCT 9100, ACCT 9120, and ACCT 9140, the major subject normally would include two more courses in psychology. The minor subject should be psychology, and the research methods courses should emphasize statistics for behavioral science.

Examples of Coursework

For archival students:

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer
Before Year 1			SAS Bootcamp ECON 8000, Math for Economists
Year 1	ACCT 9210, Capital Markets Research I ECON 8010, Microeconomics I ECON 8070, Statistics for Econometrics FINA 9200, Corporate Finance Theory	ECON 8080, Introduction to Econometrics ACCT 9100, Behavioral Accounting Research FINA seminar (towards minor) STAT 6230, Applied Regression Analysis GRSC 7770, Graduate Teaching Seminar	ACCT 9000, Directed Study - Independent research with a faculty member
Year 2	ACCT 9240, Capital Markets Research II ECON 8110, Econometrics I FINA seminar (towards minor)	STAT 6280, Applied Time Series Analysis ACCT 9000, Directed Study - If tax, directed readings in tax - If audit, directed readings in audit - If financial, independent research with a faculty member or directed readings in an area of your choice	Written Comprehensive Examination
After Year 2	ACCT 9300 Doctoral Dissertation	ACCT 9300 Doctoral Dissertation	

For behavioral students:

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer
Before Year 1			SAS Bootcamp ECON 8000, Math for Economists
Year 1	ACCT 9210, Capital Markets Research I ECON 8010, Microeconomics I ECON 8070, Statistics for Econometrics ERSH 8310, Applied ANOVA	ACCT 9100, Behavioral Accounting Research ECON 8080, Introduction to Econometrics MARK 9650, Multivariate Statistics PSYC 6200, Advanced Social Psychology GRSC 7770, Graduate Teaching Seminar	ACCT 9000, Directed Study - Independent research with a faculty member
Year 2	ACCT 9240, Capital Markets Research II MGMT 9610, Structural Equation Modeling MARK 9450, Marketing Management PSYC 6100, Cognitive Psychology	ACCT 9000, Directed Study BUS 713B, Advanced Topics in Accounting Research II (Emory) STAT 8200, Experimental Designs PSYC 8000, Goals and Self-Regulation	Written Comprehensive Examination
After Year 2	ACCT 9300 Doctoral Dissertation	ACCT 9300 Doctoral Dissertation	

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

In June of the second year, students take a written comprehensive exam that covers the content of all accounting courses taken (i.e., those in the major field). The PhD Coordinator selects faculty (normally those who teach these courses) to write and grade this exam. There are three possible outcomes: (1) pass and continue in the program, (2) fail and leave the program, or (3) fail with permission to re-take. In the latter case, the student must re-take the exam by the end of the following academic year.

After successfully passing the written comprehensive exam, students must take an oral examination that is conducted before a committee of up to five faculty members appointed upon the recommendation of the major and minor departments (and usually consists of the dissertation committee). This oral examination generally occurs during the third year of the program.

FINAL ORAL DEFENSE EXAMINATION

After writing the dissertation, the student must take a Final Oral Defense Examination that focuses on the dissertation. The examining committee must be composed of at least three faculty members in the major area, and usually consists of the student's dissertation committee. This typically occurs as a workshop in the spring of the year prior to the candidate going on the market.

FORMS FOR GRADUATE COLLEGE / MILESTONES

- Middle of 2nd year: Set up an Advisory Committee (i.e., select your chair and at least two other committee members), fill out "Preliminary Program of Study" form for Grad College
- Summer after 2nd year: fill out "Final Program of Study" form for Grad College, take written comprehensive exams
- End of 3rd year: take oral comprehensive exam (which is really just a proposal of your dissertation), fill out "Application for Admission to Candidacy" form for Grad College
- End of 4th year: present a draft of dissertation (at least front end) to the faculty (but this requires no form)
- Beginning of 5th year: present job market workshop to the faculty (but this requires no form)
- End of 5th year (after job market): have your dissertation defense, fill out "Dissertation and Final Examination Approval" form for Grad College, file dissertation with the Grad College, and graduate.