

FULL STATEMENT OF RULES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES OF THE ECONOMICS WAIVER EXAMS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Passing the economics or statistics waiver exam is one means whereby a student can accelerate the process of advancing through the economics component of the SAIS M.A. degree. (*micro, macro, monetary and trade are required for the M.A. degree; statistics is technically not a required course for the M.A. degree but is a common prerequisite for some SAIS programs or some courses required by other SAIS programs*). Not every student is allowed to take the waiver exam. Only students who have successfully completed a comparable course from an accredited academic institution, with a “**b-**” **grade or better**, are allowed to attempt to pass the corresponding waiver exam.

If you are qualified to take a waiver exam, you will be given **ONLY ONE** opportunity to pass it. If you pass, you will be given a denotation on transcript indicating that you have been waived of the course, but no course credit is given. For micro/macro this means you are absolved of having to take the course outright and are eligible to register for any course that requires micro/ macro as a prerequisite. For trade/monetary this means you are allowed to register for any course that requires trade/monetary as a prerequisite, but you must substitute some economics elective for either of these in order to satisfy the four upper economics course minimum requirement. For statistics this means you are allowed to register for any course for which statistics is a prerequisite. If you do not pass the waiver exam, you must complete the required economics courses in the normal way -- by taking them at SAIS at any time that they might be offered: Fall, Spring, Summer, or in Pre-Term.

Since a student can only attempt a waiver exam once, we strongly recommend that the student devote more than just a token amount of time reviewing the content of the course that they had taken previously, and also review up-to-date textbooks in the field. Students whose understanding of the course material is good and still relatively fresh may need only a couple of days or so of review prior to taking the waiver exam. On the other hand, those who have not seen the material in some time, or who were never quite comfortable with the subject matter in the first place may need several days of concentrated review.

PURPOSE OF THE WAIVER EXAMS: The International Economics Program offers students **with prior equivalent coursework** in microeconomics, macroeconomics, international trade, international monetary theory, or statistics the option to take waiver examinations in each subject in order to facilitate the attainment of the economics requirements of the M.A. Degree. Specifically:

- Successfully passing the waiver exam in micro or macro absolves the student of the need to take the micro or macro course at SAIS
- Successfully passing the waiver exam in trade or monetary allows the student to take an economics course in substitution of trade or monetary (in fulfillment of our program's requirement of a minimum of four economics courses beyond micro and macro)

In addition,

- Successfully passing the statistics waiver exam grants the student a waiver of statistics as a prerequisite course (thereby allowing the student to register for, say, econometrics, which is a next-level course above statistics).

A successful pass of a waiver exam will be denoted on transcript (though no course credit will be accrued, nor any letter grade given). Failure or a non-attempt, on the other hand, does not lead to any annotation on transcript whatsoever.

The next paragraph explains the relationship between the waiver exams and our general policy regarding the waiver of prerequisites for higher-level courses.

USING A WAIVER EXAM TO SATISFY PREREQUISITES: If the intent of the student is to obtain the right to enroll in a course for which micro/macro/trade/monetary/statistics is a prerequisite, then passing a waiver exam is generally sufficient to satisfy the prerequisite requirement. (For example, passing the trade theory waiver will allow the student to register for a next-level trade course such as Advanced Topics in Trade, or Trade Policy in Transition and Development). If a student has neither sat the prerequisite course nor has passed the waiver exam in that course, then in general the student can only be allowed to register for the next-level course if he or she obtains the special permission of the professor teaching the next-level course. (The leading exception to this is econometrics, which strictly requires that the student either have passed the SAIS statistics course or passed the stats waiver exam.) The professor teaching the next-level course must convey this permission in writing to the registrar and indicate that he or she understands the student lacks the prerequisite coursework but is being allowed to enrol in the course.

In practice, most economics professors whose courses have micro, macro, trade, monetary, or statistics as a formal prerequisite tend to disallow registration without the prerequisite in hand, and will ask that the student sit and pass the corresponding waiver exam. But there is generally much more flexibility among professors who teach higher-level courses that do not have a basic course as a prerequisite, but some other course instead (generally one for which there would be no waiver exam available). For example: Multinational Corporate Finance requires Corporate Finance as a prerequisite and there is no Corporate Finance waiver exam. Our policy for situations like this is as follows: **in cases where the next-level course has a prerequisite for which we do not offer a waiver exam, permission of the professor teaching the next-level course is sufficient.** (Therefore in the case of Multinational Corporate Finance, it is sufficient for the student with prior coursework or background in Corporate Finance to obtain the permission of the Multinational Corporate Finance professor in order to be waived of the prerequisite requirement.)

Note: The granting by an individual professor of permission to attend a course without prerequisites (i.e., a "waiver of prerequisites") does not imply that the student has in any way successfully completed the prerequisite course, nor does it imply the student has satisfied any degree requirement associated with the prerequisite course. It merely implies that that particular professor has allowed the student to register for that particular course without satisfaction of its formal prerequisites.

ELIGIBILITY FOR A WAIVER EXAM: To qualify to take the International Economics Program on-line waiver exams, **candidates must show that they have already successfully completed (i.e. a grade of "B-" or better) the same course at an accredited academic institution.** For microeconomic and macroeconomic theory, the corresponding equivalent course is **micro or macro at the INTERMEDIATE level**, which is one level beyond that of the "principles" level. The waiver exam for trade requires that the student has already successfully completed an international trade or international economics course. The waiver exam for monetary requires that the student has already successfully completed a course in international monetary theory or open economy macroeconomics or international finance. The statistics waiver exam requires that the student has already successfully completed a course in basic statistics or probability theory. If no course with these titles appear, we will either deny eligibility outright, or (more typically) request that you provide us with a more detailed course syllabus and possibly other information that establishes equivalency with the course for which you seek a waiver. Should these extra items still be insufficient to clearly establish prior equivalent coursework, eligibility to take the waiver exam will be denied.

- **TIME LIMIT RULE ON WHEN ONE CAN ATTEMPT A WAIVER EXAM:** **MICRO, MACRO, TRADE & MONETARY MUST BE TAKEN NO LATER THAN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF RESIDENCY AT SAIS.** This rule is in place to ensure that students who are unable to pass a core economics waiver exam will still be able to complete the economics requirements of the M.A. degree in time to graduate on schedule. Students attempting the statistics waiver may attempt the waiver any time

during their residency in the M.A. program. M.I.P.P., Ph.D., and special arrangement students are not restricted in terms of when they may attempt specific waiver exams, but are strongly encouraged to take these exams early in their residency since micro, macro, trade, monetary, and statistics are prerequisite courses to many upper level economics electives.

OTHER VERY IMPORTANT PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE WAIVER EXAMS PROPER:

- Each waiver exam may be taken **ONLY ONCE** so it is imperative to properly prepare for them, as no student gets a second chance to pass any given subject. **Absolutely no retake of a given waiver exam is allowed.**
- Exams are given at various points or "cycles" during the academic year and, unless otherwise specified, are administered on-line, over the internet. **The full schedule of waiver exam cycles for each campus are set one year in advance, and appear below at the bottom of this webpage. Students can take the waiver exams on these fixed schedules at no cost.**
- **WAIVER EXAMS ARE NOT GIVEN ON DEMAND, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOW ABLE TO SUPPORT A LIMITED NUMBER OF OUT-OF-SCHEDULE WAIVER REQUESTS. These out-of-schedule waiver exams are subject to staff availability and to a nontrivial out-of-schedule exam fee.** So if a student misses the exam cycle for whatever reason, or is physically unable to attend a proctored on-campus waiver exam, an out-of-schedule waiver exam may be possible as long as staff is available and the student pays the out-of-schedule waiver fee. If not, then the student must wait for the next available exam cycle to take the exam. Please see the section "Taking A Waiver Exam Out Of Schedule" at the bottom of this page for specific rules.
- All waiver exams are in on-line format and can be taken during any two-hour period within the open examination window (typically three days in length) using any computer with internet access and Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher. **Please see the bottom of this page for the schedule of each waiver exam cycle.**
- Again, a passing performance on a waiver exam implies that the student need not sit the waived course. But there is no course credit that accrues therefrom, so the student remains subject to our program's minimum requirement of four economics courses beyond micro and macro, and the broader school-wide requirement of a minimum of sixteen SAIS courses taken for credit. Therefore again please note importantly that **passing the trade or monetary waiver exams will eventually require substitution with a higher economics elective** in order to fulfill the requirements for the SAIS M.A.
- As the exams are already open-book, open-notes, and multiple-choice in format, we do not issue any sample exams or practice questions.