

**Accounting Information and Management (AIM)
PhD Program Guidelines**

August 2022

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I. Introduction

The goal of the Accounting Information and Management Department (AIM) PhD program is to train students in research methods appropriate for the study of accounting issues from both empirical/archival and analytic/theoretical perspectives in preparation for an academic career at a research-oriented institution. This cross-training in empirical and analytic research methods is an important element and strength of the AIM program.

The purpose of this document is to describe the goals, requirements, policies, and parameters of the AIM PhD program for the benefit of both faculty and students. The written representation of the requirements of the program should clarify both student and faculty understanding of the program and facilitate appropriate, informed expectations.

PhD students are subject to the requirements and regulations of the Graduate School of Northwestern University (TGS), of the Kellogg School of Management (KSM) PhD Program, and of the Accounting Information and Management Department (AIM). The student is responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with all of the applicable rules and requirements. The requirements of the Graduate School are described in The Graduate School Academic Policies & Procedures. See www.TGS.Northwestern.edu/about/policies/index.html The requirements of the Kellogg School of Management are described in the Kellogg Doctoral Program. See www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/programs/doctoralprogram/programs/programrequirements.aspx This document does not repeat all of the provisions in the other two documents but focuses on those specific to the AIM Department.

II. Residency

Students are expected to be in residence the entire duration of the PhD program in order to contribute to and gain from the intellectual life of the department, the school and the university. PhD training consists of academic and professional development and such training cannot occur while the student is not in residence and fully engaged in academic activities. Any absences from the department in excess of two weeks in any quarter (including summer) must be approved by the AIM Department Chair and the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Failure to obtain such approval may result in reduction or complete loss of the student's stipend.

Students who do not remain in residence must inform the AIM Department Chair and the AIM DGS in advance and will not receive the stipend portion of the financial aid package while out of residence. Being in residence requires that the student be on campus full time throughout the academic year, including summers, and remain actively engaged in AIM Department activities on a daily basis during each of the academic year's four quarters.

III. Coursework and Schedule

PhD students generally complete six quarters of coursework comprising 3 or 4 courses per quarter (fall, winter, spring) during their first two years in the program. All courses must be

taken for a grade (pass/no pass is not permitted) and the student must maintain a minimum 3.0 (B) average.

Enrolling in MBA courses is discouraged. Faculty members throughout Kellogg generally permit PhD students to attend (audit) MBA courses without registering. PhD students may audit such courses in the third or fourth year of their program, or as needed for developing teaching-related skills.

Required coursework in the First Year is as follows (subject to changes in scheduling):[^]

<u>Fall Quarter, First Year</u>		
Microeconomics	- ECON 410-1	Microeconomics (Price Theory)
Econometrics	- FINC 584-0	Introduction to Econometrics*
Accounting	- ACCT 540-1	Empirical Research in Accounting I**
<u>Winter Quarter, First Year</u>		
	-	
Econometrics	- ECON 480-2	Introduction to Econometrics
Accounting	- ACCT 540-2	Empirical Research in Accounting II**
Accounting	- ACCT 550-1	Research in Accounting Theory I***
<u>Spring Quarter, First Year</u>		
Microeconomics	- ECON 410-3	Microeconomics (Game Theory)
Econometrics	- ECON 480-3	Introduction to Econometrics
Accounting	- ACCT 540-3	Empirical Research in Accounting III**

[^] See Section V on “Competence in First Year Coursework”.

* ECON 480-1, also titled “Introduction to Econometrics” may be taken as a substitute ONLY if ECON 584-0 is not offered and with prior permission of the DGS.

** ACCT 540-1, ACCT 540-2 and ACCT 540-3 are readings-based courses. PhD students will take each course in both their first and second years. The course will typically alter the reading list every other year and 1st and 2nd year students should expect different course requirements and deliverables.

*** Accounting 550-1, “Research in Accounting Theory I” is taken in both the first and second years. 1st and 2nd year students should expect different course requirements and deliverables.

Summer Quarter, First Year		
Accounting	- ACCT 590	Research
Deliverables	- Summer Research Paper I ^{^^}	

^{^^}See Section VI on “First Year Summer Research Paper”

Required and suggested coursework in the Second Year is as follows (subject to changes in scheduling):

Fall Quarter, Second Year		
Accounting	- ACCT 540-1	Empirical Research in Accounting I [#]
Elective ^{####}		
Elective		
Interdisciplinary Seminar	- KPHD 520-0	Workshop on Research Development ^{#@}
Winter Quarter, Second Year		
Accounting	- ACCT 540-2	Empirical Research in Accounting II ^{##}
Accounting	- ACCT 550-1	Research in Accounting Theory I ^{***}
Elective ^{####}		
Spring Quarter, Second Year		
Accounting	- ACCT 540-3	Empirical Research in Accounting III ^{**}
Elective		
Elective		
Interdisciplinary Seminar	- KPHD 520-0	Workshop on Research Development ^{#@}

[#] ACCT 540-1, “Empirical Research in Accounting I” is a readings-based course. PhD students will take this course in both their first and second years. The course will typically alter the reading list every other year and 1st and 2nd year students should expect different course requirements and deliverables.

^{##} Accounting 540-2, “Empirical Research in Accounting II” is a readings-based course. PhD students will take this course in both their first and second years. The course will typically alter the reading list every other year and 1st and 2nd year students should expect different course requirements and deliverables.

^{###} Accounting 550-1, “Research in Accounting Theory I” is taken in both the first and second years. 1st and 2nd year students should expect different course requirements and deliverables.

^{####} The course sequence FINC 486 – 1 and 2, i.e., Corporate Finance 1 and 2 in the Fall and Winter quarters respectively are strongly recommended for students seeking to pursue research in empirical Accounting. PhD students are required to seek approval of the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) if for some reason they do not wish to take these electives.

^{#@} Each KPHD 520-0 class accounts for 0.5 credits.

<u>Summer Quarter, Second Year</u>		
Accounting	- AC CT 590	Research
<i>Deliverables</i>		- Accounting Qualifying Examination ^{^^} - Summer Research Paper II ^{^^^}

^{^^}If necessary. See Section VII on “AIM Qualifying Examination”.

^{^^^}See Section VIII on “Second Year Summer Research Paper”

Required and suggested coursework in the Third Year is as follows (subject to changes in scheduling):

<u>Fall Quarter, Third Year</u>		
Elective	- Optional	
Interdisciplinary Seminar	- KPHD 520-0	Workshop on Research Development ^{#@}
<u>Winter Quarter, Third Year</u>		
Elective	- Optional	
<u>Spring Quarter, Third Year</u>		
Elective	- Optional	
Interdisciplinary Seminar	- KPHD 520-0	Workshop on Research Development ^{#@}

^{#@} Each KPHD 520-0 class accounts for 0.5 credits.

In Years 3, 4 and 5 please register for TGS 500 - Advanced Doctoral Work, as you conduct research on your dissertation and on other working papers.

Suggested electives in Second and Third Years. This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change. The specific curriculum depends on the student's background and research interests.

ACCT	550 - 2	Research in Accounting Theory II
ECON	- 411 - 1, 2, 3	Macroeconomics
ECON	- 414 - 1, 2, 3	Economics of Information
ECON	- 450 - 1, 2, 3	Industrial Organization and Prices
ECON	- 482	Applied Econometrics: Time-Series Methods
ECON	- 483	Applied Econometrics: Cross-Section Methods
FINC	- 485 - 1, 2, 3	Asset Pricing I, II, III
FINC	- 486 - 1, 2, 3	Corporate Finance I, II, III
MATH	- 314	Probability and Statistics for Econometrics
MATH	- 320	Real Analysis
MECS	- 560 - 1	Static Optimization in Economics
MECS	- 560 - 2	Dynamic Optimization in Economics
MECS	- 560 - 3	Research in Economics
MECS	- 549	Economics of Innovation
MKTG	- 552	Quantitative Marketing: Structural Modeling
STAT	- 420	Introduction to Statistical Theory and Methodology

⁺⁺Corporate Finance 1, 2 and 3 in the Fall, Winter and Spring quarters respectively are strongly recommended for students seeking to pursue research in empirical Accounting. PhD students are required to seek approval of the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) if for some reason they do not wish to take these electives.

Students must obtain prior approval by the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) of each quarter's course of study before registering.

IV. Research Workshops

Throughout the student's tenure at Northwestern University, the faculty expects PhD students to attend the accounting workshops, which are generally scheduled before the quarter begins and are typically on Wednesdays. These workshops consist of outside scholars invited to present their research as well as Kellogg AIM faculty and PhD students who likewise present their research. The faculty expects all PhD students to read the research papers carefully before the workshop and encourages them to participate in the workshop by asking questions and making comments. The PhD students have the opportunity to meet as a group with each visiting speaker. The faculty expects all PhD students to attend and participate in such meetings. The faculty also encourages students to attend research workshops in other departments consistent with their interests (e.g., finance, economics).

V. Competence in First Year Coursework

At the end of year one, students are required to establish competence in Economics and Accounting Research coursework by achieving a minimum average GPA of 3.00 across the nine courses in Economics and Accounting Research in their first year. All first-year students would be required to

register for the above nine courses in this sequence for a grade and required to complete these courses during their first year. **A student who has not met the 3.00 average GPA requirement will be excluded from the program (subject to a petition for a probationary period).**

VI. First Year Summer Research Paper

After completing first-year coursework, the student spends the summer at the end of the first year completing an empirical research replication project under the supervision of a faculty member of the student's choice. The purpose of the project is to ensure that the student gains experience working with data and computing software, as well as experience with writing and presenting one's own research.

Students completing their first year in the PhD program must identify the general topic for their research paper and select a faculty advisor by July 5. Please see Exhibit A for a form to be completed and submitted to the AIM Director of Graduate Studies. The project consists of a replication of a published paper plus an extension to a different data set, perhaps more recent, with a comparison and analysis of any differences in results. The deliverable is a written research paper that is submitted to the faculty advisor and DGS, and presented in a workshop no later than September 15. Failure to meet any of the above deadlines automatically places the student on probation and the student has to request a new deadline. New deadlines require the consent of, and are at the discretion of, the DGS and faculty advisor. If the DGS and faculty advisor jointly decide that a new deadline for workshop presentation of the first-year paper will not be offered to the student, then the student will be excluded from the program.

VII. GPA Requirement and AIM Qualifying Examination

Each student must demonstrate competence by achieving a minimum mean GPA of 3.6 across the Accounting PhD courses that they take in their first two years. However, if a student's GPA falls below a mean of 3.6 in the Accounting courses the Accounting faculty will require students to demonstrate competence by taking a prelim exam. This option provides students with another means to demonstrate competence. If a student does not achieve the required mean 3.6 GPA requirement and subsequently does not pass the prelim exam in accounting, the student will be excluded from the Accounting PhD Program. An excluded student may appeal the decision directly to The Graduate School.

The AIM qualifying examination is offered during the summer following the student's second year in the program. The exam is comprehensive, covering two years of accounting PhD courses. In addition to the in-class portion of the exam, there is also a take-home portion comprising a "referee report." The student has the choice of an empirical or an analytical paper to review for the referee report. The student evaluates the paper's strengths and weaknesses, its contribution to the literature, and ways in which the research may be improved or extended. The student has three days in which to write the referee report. The grading on the exam is high pass (HP), pass (P), low pass (LP), and fail (F). Each question on the exam is graded independently by at least two faculty members.

VIII. Second Year Summer Research Paper

During the summer following the second year, and after completing the second year AIM qualifying exam, the student writes an original research paper. The purpose of the research paper is to provide the student with an early, independent experience doing original research from beginning (identifying the research question) to finish (analyzing the results). The student should begin considering potential topics for the summer paper early in the second year. The student writes the summer paper under the direction of a faculty advisor of the student's choice. The selection of the faculty advisor and of the summer paper topic must be made by July 5 prior to the start of the student's third year in the program and must be communicated to the AIM DGS by that time (see form attached as Exhibit B). The summer paper may be either analytical or empirical.

If the summer paper is empirical, the requirements for the paper are that the student:

- Demonstrates ability to develop an original research question
- Develops the testable hypotheses carefully
- Designs an appropriate study to test the hypotheses
- Identifies the appropriate variables for the tests and gathers the data
- Interprets the results of the tests and draws inferences appropriately
- Articulates the contribution of the paper to the literature clearly and concisely

If the summer paper is analytical, the requirements for the paper are that the student:

- Motivates the study by reference to a well-articulated accounting problem or set of related problems
- Develops a set of theorems that provides new insights into these problems
- Demonstrates the ability to prove original, and correct, theorems of interest to accounting academics

The student is required to present the summer paper to the AIM faculty in a 60-minute workshop no later than the end of the Fall quarter of their third year. The paper must demonstrate the student's ability to conduct academic research but need not be of publishable quality. In other words, the paper must be original, not just a replication of an existing study but need not necessarily pass the test of being plausibly publishable in a top tier journal. Tenured and tenure-track members of the AIM faculty attending the workshop assess the quality of the summer paper. The student's advisor and the DGS must both indicate their acceptance of the student's work on the form provided (see form attached as Exhibit C).

If the faculty determine that the summer paper is inadequate, the student is placed on probation. The student's summer paper advisor and the DGS either document the steps necessary to rectify the situation (e.g., revise the paper along specified dimensions or present the paper again by a given date) and discuss these with the student, or inform the student that s/he is being excluded from the program. If the former, the student's summer paper advisor and the DGS monitor progress consistent with the document. Failure to complete an acceptable summer research paper or successfully present the paper again by the designated date (which will be no later than end of the

Winter quarter) leads to the exclusion of the student from the program. An excluded student may appeal the decision directly to The Graduate School.

IX. Admission to Candidacy

Upon successful completion of the second-year summer research paper, the AIM tenured faculty evaluate the student for admission to candidacy. The evaluation for admission to candidacy includes the following items:

- Course selection and grades
- Quality of execution of the assigned teaching assistant and research assistantship responsibilities as reported by the appropriate faculty
- Participation in departmental activities including weekly research workshops
- Assessment of the quality of the first- and second-year summer papers

Admission to candidacy can occur only at the conclusion of a successful presentation of the second-year paper. It is dependent on the tenure-track faculty's assessment that the student is likely to succeed in completing the dissertation and in conducting additional research, and thus likely to obtain an academic position at a top research institution. Students with satisfactory evaluations are admitted to candidacy and provided feedback on the process by the AIM DGS. Students with unsatisfactory evaluations will not be admitted to candidacy and will be excluded from the AIM PhD program. Excluded students may appeal the decision to The Graduate School.

X. Year Three

Following admission to Ph.D. candidacy, students work on research toward a thesis, under the direction of one or more faculty advisors. The main goal of the third year is producing a research paper that is of publishable quality.

Students are expected to choose a dissertation chair by the end of Spring quarter of their third year and report their choice to the DGS by June 1 of their third year. This choice is not necessarily final, and students may change their dissertation supervisor later, although this is uncommon.

XI. Prospectus (Dissertation Proposal) Examination

Students must take the prospectus exam **by the end of winter quarter of their fourth year**. In preparation for this exam, the student forms a dissertation committee. The chair (or at least one co-chair if there are two co-chairs) of the dissertation committee must be an AIM faculty member. There must be a minimum of three other faculty members, with at least one other member from the AIM department and at least one member from outside the AIM department. Obtaining feedback from the committee prior to presenting the paper in a general workshop is critical to development of the research and to passing the exam. The faculty encourages students to form the dissertation committee as early as possible to benefit from the committee's feedback prior to

the prospectus exam. No more than one committee member may be absent from the prospectus exam.

The exam consists of the presentation of an original research project that the student intends to be the dissertation. The student makes this presentation in an open, formal workshop setting. At the end of the presentation, the faculty will assess if the student has passed the proposal. The outcome of the prospectus examination is communicated to the student by the dissertation committee chairman both verbally and in written form. The student's dissertation committee members and the DGS must provide their approvals via the online prospectus exam form.

If the student does not pass, either the student has to do further work on the proposal before it is a viable dissertation, or the student has to find a new dissertation topic and complete substantial work on it before it is at the stage of a dissertation proposal. In either case, the student is under programmatic probation until July 31, by which time the student has to present a new dissertation proposal to faculty. If a student misses the July 31st deadline for the presentation, or if the student presents and the faculty determine that the student has not met the standard for passing the proposal, then the student will be excluded (dismissed) from the PhD program. The student can appeal this decision directly to TGS.

Students must communicate the date and time of the exam to the Graduate School and to the AIM DGS at least two weeks in advance.

XII. Dissertation Defense

With the consent of the dissertation committee, the student may schedule his or her dissertation defense in an open workshop. Notice of the date and time of the defense must be provided to the Graduate School (through Susan Jackman) and to the AIM DGS at least **two weeks in advance**. AIM requires that no more than one member of the dissertation committee may be absent from the defense. At the completion of the defense, the committee votes on whether the student has successfully defended his/her dissertation. All members of the dissertation committee must provide their approvals via the online final exam form indicating that the student has passed or not passed the dissertation defense. If a student fails the defense, the student will be excluded from the program. The students may appeal this decision directly with TGS.

XIII. Financial Aid

PhD students receiving financial aid from the Kellogg School of Management generally receive such aid for the maximum period of five years, subject to remaining in good standing with the Graduate School and to achieving satisfactory progress in the AIM Department. The financial aid package consists of tuition, health insurance, and a monthly fellowship stipend.

In the first year, the fellowship stipend requires no teaching or research assistantship activities. In years two through four, the stipend requires that the student work ten hours per week as a teaching assistant or research assistant each academic quarter including summers. Students are required to work as teaching assistants in no more than six of these quarters and work as research assistants in

the remaining quarters. There is no work requirement in the fifth year. The teaching and research assistantships are like apprenticeships, and thus important to the student's professional development. The details of the financial aid package are provided in the acceptance letter sent by Kellogg to admitted PhD students.

Students may not engage in remunerative work unless a written request for a waiver is approved by TGS. In addition, any potential employment outside of research or teaching assistantships within AIM must be approved by the DGS and the AIM Department Chair **in advance**. Accepting employment without such approval may result in the loss of part of all of the student's financial aid.

Students are expected to be in residence the entire duration of the PhD program so they can contribute to and gain from the intellectual life of the department, the school and the university. Extended absences (absences greater than two weeks) from the AIM Department must be approved in advance by the DGS and the AIM Department Chair. PhD training consists of academic and professional development and such training cannot occur unless the student is in residence and fully engaged in academic activities.

Absences of more than two weeks may result in reduction or complete loss of the student's stipend.

Students who do not remain in residence must inform the AIM Department Chair and the AIM DGS in advance and may not receive the stipend portion of the financial aid package while out of residence. Being in residence requires that the student be on campus full time throughout the academic year, including summers, and actively engaged in AIM Department activities on a daily basis during each of the academic year's four quarters.

XIV. Research Assistantship (RA)

Because the PhD program is, in part, an apprenticeship, and the student's involvement in all phases of research is a critical part of professional development, each student serves as a research assistant (RA) to members of the AIM faculty for each of the quarters in academic years 2 through 4 that the student is not a teaching assistant (TA). The research assistantships provide training and guidance in conducting research and benefit both faculty and students in accomplishing research goals. The RA work may require up to ten hours per week throughout each academic quarter that the student is not a TA.

In addition to the 10 hour per week requirement, there may be additional opportunities to work as a research assistant (RA) for additional pay. All RA arrangements must be approved in advance by the DGS or the AIM Department Chair.

XV. Teaching Assistantship (TA)

Because the PhD program is, in part, an apprenticeship the student's involvement in teaching responsibilities is a critical part of professional development. PhD students may serve as teaching assistants (TA) to members of the AIM faculty for up to six quarters total during the three academic years 2 through 4. The DGS and the AIM Department Chair assign teaching assistant responsibilities to students. The TA work may require up to approximately ten hours per week during the academic quarter.

XVI. Annual Progress Reports

During the summer following each academic year, the DGS meets with each PhD student to assess the student's progress toward completion of the program's academic requirements and goals. After each meeting, the DGS prepares a summary report to be discussed by the Department Chair, the AIM tenured faculty, and faculty for whom the student has worked as an RA and TA. The DGS communicates the department's assessment in writing to the student no later than **September 15**. An annual evaluation of each student's progress is required by and forwarded to The Graduate School. Students are assessed as:

- making satisfactory progress
- not making satisfactory progress with the specification of a remediation plan
- not making satisfactory progress and excluded from the program

Additional assessments of the student's progress toward completion of the PhD are made after the student takes the qualifying exam and after the student completes the prospectus exam as described above.

The Graduate School requires that a student must maintain a 3.00 GPA and have no more than three incompletes to stay in good academic standing. If the student is placed on probation, the student and the DGS develop a plan, with specific action steps and specific completion dates, for the student to return to good standing. This plan is put in writing and monitored by the DGS.

XVII. Master of Science (MS) Degree in Accounting

Students who complete two years of coursework, obtain a minimum average GPA of 3.0 across all Accounting PhD courses, and are in good standing with the Graduate School are eligible for a master's degree (MS) in accounting upon petition to the AIM department, regardless of whether they continue in the program. The petition takes the form of a formal letter addressed to the AIM Department Chair and to the DGS. At the time of grading the preliminary examination, the faculty will assess whether a student who fails the exam demonstrates sufficient knowledge on the exam to be eligible for the master's degree.

XVIII. Key Dates and Milestones

For the sake of the following Tables, Academic Years run from Sep 01 to Aug 31.

	Academic Year	Deadline Date
First Year Paper Topic + Advisor Selection	Year 1	Jul 01 (submit form to DGS)
First Year Paper (write, distribute and present)	Year 2	Sep 15
Second Year Paper Topic + Advisor Selection	Year 2	Jul 05 (submit form to DGS)
Second Year Paper (write, distribute and present)	Year 3	End of Fall Quarter
Admission to Candidacy	Year 3	Soon after 2 nd year paper
Dissertation Proposal	Year 4	End of Winter Quarter
Dissertation Defense	Year 5	Year 5 or Year 6

Exhibit A
Kellogg School of Management
Northwestern University
Accounting Information & Management

PhD Program – First Year Summer Research Paper Advisor and Title

Please complete and submit this form to the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) no later than July 5 of the summer following your first year in the program.

Date: _____

Student name: _____

Faculty advisor for summer paper: _____

Brief description of proposed research paper (may be subject to change):

Exhibit B
Kellogg School of Management
Northwestern University
Accounting Information & Management

PhD Program – Second Year Summer Research Paper Advisor and Title

Please complete and submit this form to the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) no later than July 5 of the summer following your first year in the program.

Date: _____

Student name: _____

Faculty advisor for summer paper: _____

Brief description of proposed research paper (may be subject to change):

Exhibit C

**Kellogg School of Management
Northwestern University
Accounting Information & Management**

PhD Program – Second Year Summer Research Paper Completion

Please complete and submit this form to the Director Graduate Studies no later than end of Winter of your third year in the program.

Date: _____

Student name: _____

Faculty advisor for summer paper: _____

Title of summer paper: _____

Date summer paper presented: _____

By signing below, I signify that the above-named student has fulfilled the requirements for the successful completion and presentation of the summer research paper.

Faculty Advisor: _____

Director of Graduate Studies: _____

Exhibit D

Kellogg School of Management

Northwestern University

Accounting Information & Management

PhD Program – Prospectus Examination Committee

Please complete and submit this form to the AIM Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) no later than February 1 of your fourth year in the PhD program. The prospectus examination committee must consist of at least four faculty members of which the chair and at least one other member must be AIM faculty. There must be one member from outside the AIM department.

Date: _____

Student name: _____

Prospectus Examination Committee:

Chairman: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Anticipated (approximate) date for prospectus examination (must be prior to End of Winter Quarter of the student's fourth year in the program:
