Fields in Economics

If you have made it to this website and have clicked to this page, you almost certainly have a reasonably good idea of what economics is. But even many undergraduate Economics majors do not have a grasp of the enormous range of the discipline.

One way to define economics is by its approach. While not quite comprehensive, the definition that *Economics is the application of techniques of constrained optimization and statistical analysis to social problems* captures the essence of the discipline’s approach.

It does not, however, come close to presenting the great diversity of questions that are addressed. Economists examine topics ranging from forecasting exchange rates or stock prices, to determining the ideal location for a company to locate, to designing efficient social policies, to assessing alternative strategies for malaria control or cancer research spending.

The description below of the fields comprising the discipline of economics is brief and therefore incomplete. Its purpose is to give you an idea of what can be studied, the sorts of questions you might address - and, hence, the sort of research you might undertake.

Economic Field Descriptions

The following closely (but imperfectly) follows the *Journal of Economic Literature* classification that is standard within the profession.

**A0 Principles of Economics:** This is an introductory field dealing with the issues surrounding monetary and fiscal policy, including unemployment, inflation, and economic growth. “Principles of Economics” oftentimes aims to help a student adopt an economic way of approaching problems.

**A1 General Economics:** This field is a broad survey of economic issues from both micro and macro thought.

**B0 Institutional Economics:** This field analyzes the interplay between institutions and the economy. Issues include property, government enterprise, and contract rules.

**C0 Applied Econometrics:** This field introduces students to statistically based analysis of economic problems. In this field, students will oftentimes do independent, econometric analysis in addition to studying work done by other researchers.
**C0 Mathematical & Quantitative Methods:** This field uses fairly advanced quantitative tools to prepare students for the mathematical rigors of further studies in economics or related fields. The field focuses primarily on advanced calculus, linear algebra, and differential equations.

**C0 Mathematical Economics & Econometrics:** This field studies the quantitative tools/methods economists use to develop economic theories.

**C1 Econometric & Statistical Methods / Econometrics:** This field introduces students to statistically based analysis of economic problems. It provides a thorough presentation of economic theory and the statistical methods economists use.

**C5: Econometric Modeling:** This field studies the use and implementation of econometric models.

**C6 Mathematical Methods & Programming:** This field combines the mathematical methods used in economics with the programming techniques needed to implement economic models.

**C7 Game Theory & Bargaining Theory:** This field introduces the basic concepts of both game theory and bargaining theory.

**C9 Experimental Economics:** This field teaches students the tools and methods used in conducting economic experiments. Students learn the latest techniques in constructing models and analyzing data.

**D0 Applied Microeconomics:** This field introduces intermediate microeconomic concepts and applies them to the behavior of consumers and producers in the marketplace. Asymmetric information and imperfect rationality are oftentimes among the topics discussed.

**D0 Microeconomic Theory:** This field introduces the concepts of microeconomic theory, including consumer and demand theory, production and cost theory, and allocation of resources.

**D4 Market Structure & Pricing:** This field studies the problems surrounding market structure and pricing. Issues include perfect competition and monopoly/oligopoly power.

**D6 Welfare Economics:** This field applies economic theories to the study of welfare, including cost-benefit analysis, Pareto optimality, and public choice analysis.

**D8 Information & Uncertainty:** This field studies the economic issues relating to information and uncertainty in the marketplace.
E0 Macroeconomic Theory: This field introduces the concepts of macroeconomic theory, including fiscal and monetary policy, the business cycle, unemployment, and inflation.

F0/F1 International Economics: This field covers the issues relating to international economics, including trade and finance, foreign exchange, and free and controlled international trade.

F2/F3 International Business/Finance: This field studies the interplay between international businesses. Issues include exchange rates, strong vs. weak currency, and European unification.

G0 Finance: This field introduces the concepts of finance theory, including time value of money, capital budgeting, dividend policy, risk and return, capital structures, and efficient markets.

G2 Financial Institutions and Services: This field deals with financial structures and services, including banking services, securities markets, futures markets, investment advisory services, and insurance services.

G3 Corporate Finance: This field studies the issues surrounding corporate finance, including shareholder rights, financial markets, cash flows, dividend policy, and mergers.

H0 Public Economics/Finance: This field explores the proper role of government in the marketplace, including issues surrounding taxation, government expenditures, and economic growth.

H7 Local/State Public Finance: This field explores the proper role of government in the marketplace on the state and local level, including issues surrounding taxation, government expenditures, and economic growth.

I1 Health Economics: This field applies economic concepts to the study of the healthcare industry. Issues include health plan design, healthcare systems and institutions, and supply/demand of medical services.

I2 Education: This field studies the ways in which economic concepts can be applied to the study of education. Issues include vouchers, inequity, and the impact of policies on student development/improvement.

J0 Labor & Demographic Economics: This field studies the economics of labor, including the supply and demand of labor, decisions of workers/employers, and labor market problems (i.e. unemployment and unions).
**J1 Family Economics:** This field applies economic theory to the behavior of families. Issues include work/life time allocation, income inequity, capital accumulation, family forms, and population growth.

**K0 Law & Economics:** This field applies economic theories to the study of law, particularly the ways in which economic incentives have been created by laws.

**L0/L5 Industrial Organization/Regulation:** This field studies the behavior of firms within a variety of market organizations. Issues include government regulation mergers, economies of scale, pricing, and production.

**L9 Industry Studies:** This field focuses on the economic issues surrounding a particular industry (i.e. transportation or utilities).

**M0 Business Administration:** This field covers a variety of topics related to administering a business, including accounting, finance, marketing, business organization, and business ethics.

**M1 Managerial/Entrepreneurship Economics:** This field studies the use of economic principles to provide business solutions. Issues include entrepreneurship, demand analysis, forecasting, and capital management.

**N0 Economic History:** This field covers the history of economic thought and the economists who have influenced/progressed the field of study.

**O1 Development Economics:** This field studies the economic theories and problems related to the economic development of developing countries. Issues include trade, agriculture, population, and economic aid.

**O5 African/Asian/Country Development Issues:** This field uses development economics to study the issues particular to African, Asian, or any other country’s development.

**P0 Economic Systems / Transition Economics:** This field studies a variety of economic systems, particularly their transition from one system to another (i.e. socialist system to market economy).

**P5 Comparative Economic Systems:** This field analyzes/comparisons the differences in national economies, considering structural differences and the advantages/disadvantages they have generated.

**Q0 Environmental Economics:** This field uses economic tools to study a variety of environmental and natural resource problems, particularly focusing on the tradeoff between economic development and environmental preservation.
**Q1 Agricultural Economics:** This field studies the economics of the agriculture industry, government policies/subsidies and trade policies.

**Q3 Mineral Economics:** This field studies the economics of the mineral industry, including conservation, government policies, and trade policies.

**Q4 Energy Economics:** This field studies the role of energy in the economy. Issues include the supply and demand of energy, economic growth, environmental conservation, and alternative energy sources.

**R0 Urban, Rural, & Regional Economics:** This field uses economic tools to study the problems cities, rural areas, and regions face in the current environment. Issues include, growth/decline, population, poverty, transportation, and rents.

**Z0 International & Comparative Political Economy and Public Policy:** This field studies, from a variety of perspectives, the history of the political economy and public policy and oftentimes looks to the future, forecasting the direction of the international political economy.