Economist Program (EP)

Overview

The International Monetary Fund's Economist Program (EP) is the IMF's flagship entry program for PhD economists.

Designed for recent PhD graduates and economists completing their doctoral studies, the EP provides an accelerated introduction to the IMF's policy, analytical, and operational work. Through structured rotational assignments and direct engagement with economic policy issues, the program serves as a foundation for a long-term career as an IMF economist.

The EP is not a trainee program. Participants join the IMF as economists and contribute from the outset to country work, research, policy development, and capacity development activities.

About the IMF

The IMF is a global institution with 191 member countries. Its mission is to promote international monetary cooperation, financial stability, sustainable economic growth, and poverty reduction.

Economists at the IMF work across a wide range of policy areas including:

- Macroeconomic surveillance
- Fiscal policy
- Monetary and exchange rate policy
- Financial sector analysis
- External sector assessment
- Debt sustainability
- Capacity development
- Policy research

Working at the IMF provides a unique opportunity to apply economic expertise in a multinational environment, engaging directly with member country authorities, central banks, ministries of finance, international institutions, and policymakers around the world.

Program Structure

The Economist Program is a three-year rotational program based at IMF Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Participants complete two departmental assignments designed to provide broad exposure to the IMF’s work and develop a strong foundation in macroeconomic policy and surveillance.

Duration: 3 years	**Structure:** Two departmental assignments	**Location:** Washington, D.C.
Eligibility: Recent PhD or within one year of completion	**Application opens:** Late September	**Start:** September of the following year
Cohort size: Approximately 20–30 per year	**Career path:** Long-term IMF economist career	**Program type:** Rotational economist entry program

What EP Economists Do

The EP offers a well-rounded experience of the IMF's work. During the program, participants rotate through two departmental assignments, joining economic teams working in regional and country-specific surveillance as well as on fiscal, monetary, balance of payments, debt, and related issues.

Country Work

EP economists support IMF surveillance and program work, including participation in country teams and analytical activities associated with Article IV consultations and IMF-supported programs. Assignments may involve evaluating economic developments, assessing risks and vulnerabilities, and contributing to policy recommendations.

Policy Analysis

Participants contribute to policy analysis on fiscal, monetary, external sector, financial, debt, and related issues, supporting IMF advice to member countries.

Research and Analytical Work

EP economists may contribute to research projects that inform IMF policy frameworks, analytical methods, and publications. Research assignments often involve applying advanced economic methods to practical policy questions.

Capacity Development and Teaching

Participants may support training, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing activities that help member countries strengthen institutions and policymaking capacity.

Candidate Profile

The Economist Program is intended for economists ready to apply doctoral research and analytical training to real-world policy challenges.

Academic Qualifications

- Recent PhD graduate or within one year of completing a PhD in economics or a related field.
- Relevant fields may include macroeconomics, monetary economics, international economics, public finance, financial economics, econometrics, and related disciplines.

Eligibility Requirements

- Applicant must be a national of one of the IMF's member countries.
- Applicant must be under age 34 when joining the Economist Program.

Core Competencies

- Strong quantitative and analytical capabilities
- Excellent research skills and policy judgment
- Ability to apply economic theory to policy problems
- Excellent written and spoken English
- Strong presentation, interpersonal, and communication skills
- Ability to explain complex economic issues clearly and logically

Recruitment Process

The Economist Program follows an annual recruitment cycle. Applications typically open in late September. Shortlisted candidates are interviewed between October and January, offers are made in early February, and the incoming class starts the following September.

Step 1: Preliminary Interview

Shortlisted candidates are invited to a 30–40 minute preliminary interview. The interview includes a high-level overview of the candidate's research paper and questions on economic topics related to the IMF's work, as well as interpersonal and communication skills.

Step 2: Supporting Materials

Following the preliminary interview, candidates may be asked to provide the most recent university transcript from their PhD program, three academic references, and a research paper of publishable standard or one or two dissertation chapters. References cannot be from current IMF staff members.

Step 3: Panel Interview and Written Assessment

Selected candidates are invited to an in-person panel interview with two or three senior IMF economists and a Human Resources officer. The interview assesses knowledge of monetary, fiscal, balance of payments, and financial sector issues, along with analytical ability, judgment, communication, interpersonal skills, and the ability to present complex issues in a structured way.

Candidates also complete a 90-minute written assessment designed to evaluate written communication skills and the ability to write under time constraints.

Step 4: Final Review

After panel interviews are completed, candidates who reached the panel stage are referred to an internal committee of senior staff for final review. The committee considers the full set of assessments, with the highest weighting given to the panel interview and research paper review.

Why Join the Economist Program?

Real Work From Day One

The EP is not a trainee program. Participants assume substantive responsibilities from the beginning of their assignments.

Broad Exposure

The rotation structure provides experience across departments, policy areas, countries, and regions.

Intellectual Rigor

EP economists work alongside experienced IMF economists on complex challenges affecting member countries and the global economy.

Long-Term Career Development

The program is designed to prepare economists for long-term careers at the IMF. Many EPs continue into economist roles after completing the program.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Economist Program a trainee program?

No. EP participants are hired as economists and take on substantive responsibilities from the beginning of their assignments.

How long is the program?

The program lasts three years and includes two departmental assignments.

When do applications open?

Applications typically open annually in late September.

What materials may be requested after the preliminary interview?

Candidates may be asked to provide a PhD transcript, three academic references, and a research paper or dissertation chapters.

What assessments are included?

The process may include a preliminary interview, research paper review, panel interview, and written assessment.

When do successful candidates start?

Offers are typically made in February, and the incoming class starts at the IMF in September.

What happens after the program?

The EP is designed as a pathway to a long-term career as an IMF economist.

Typical Career Outcomes

The program is designed to develop economists who can contribute to the IMF's policy, analytical, and operational work across a wide range of member country issues.

EP economists may pursue long-term careers across the IMF in areas such as:

- Country and regional surveillance
- Fiscal affairs
- Monetary and capital markets
- Research
- Strategy and policy development
- Capacity development and technical assistance

Learn more and view current opportunities: IMF Careers