Core Course: 
Global Integration and the New Trade Agenda

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(Notation: The World Bank Institute was formerly called the Economic Development Institute (EDI), as reflected in some text)

The Macroeconomic Policy and Management Division of EDI (EDIMP) conducted a course on *Global Integration and the New Trade Agenda* from June 29 to July 10, 1998 in Washington, D.C. The course provided an overview of the costs and benefits of alternative institutional mechanisms to foster international cooperation between nations in the areas of trade and investment. Starting with a review of existing and recent developments in economic theory relating to multilateral and professional integration arrangements, the course explored in some depth the possible economic implications of alternative forms of international cooperation on a number of new policy choices that are of increasing importance in terms of globalization of the world economy. Some of the issues explored were cooperation in setting investment incentives and competition policies, agreements on trade in services and factor movement, choices between minimum standards and mutual recognition versus harmonization of regulatory regimes, and best practices in the area of clearance, valuation, and facilitation. This was a pilot course and planners encouraged participants to provide feedback that could be used to improve future offerings. There were 44 course participants from 21 countries. Twenty-nine (65.9%) were from the public sector, 5 (11.4%) were from the private sector, 7 (15.9%) were trainees from Columbia University and 3 (6.8%) were World Bank staff. Eight (18.2%) participants were women.

The course was evaluated by the EDI Evaluation Unit (EDIES) using an end-of-course questionnaire. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1=minimum to 5=maximum. Of the 44 participants, 30 (68.2%) responded to the questionnaire. Respondents consisted of 23 individuals from public and private sector positions, 5 trainees from Columbia University, and 2 World Bank employees. The questionnaire contained 2 parts. The first part asked respondents about the relevance and usefulness of the course. The second part asked about self assessed gain in knowledge after the course compared to the level of knowledge before attending the course. Additionally, written comments/suggestions were solicited from participants in evaluating this course. The main findings are presented below.

- Overall, responses to course performance were positive. The course was highly relevant to the participants' needs, as evidenced by a high mean score of 4.10 on this issue. Over 83% of respondents scored in the 4-5 range for this question.

- Trainers communicated their message well, as seen by the 66.7% of respondents who rated this question in the 4-5 range. The mean score for this item was 4.10 out of 5.0.

- Training materials were considered appropriate by respondents. Over 70% (73.3%) of participants expressed strong positive opinions about the usefulness of these materials. This is reflected in the mean score of 4.03 for this item.
Results show one area that requires attention. This was on how to maintain a high level of interest throughout the course. A relatively lower mean score was obtained on this item (mean score of 3.03). Course designers should reconsider their strategy in this area for future courses. There is also a need to steer discussions so as to make them more constructive (mean score 3.33) by treating various issues in depth (mean score 3.23). Scores on these two items were also in the lower range of overall scores.

Comparison of ratings from the pre/post self assessment questions show that participants’ level of knowledge improved significantly after attending the course. Mean scores on the pre-course self assessment ranged from 2.03-3.43 which improved to 3.38-3.93. The pragmatic approach of the course is evident from the maximum gains in the participants’ knowledge about practical tools for trade policy analysis. Mean score for this category improved by 66.1%. Other areas showing significant increases were government procurement (43.2% increase in mean score) and trade in services (42.7% increase in mean score).

It seems most of the participants had a fairly good understanding of issues such as links between trade and growth (high pre-course self assessment mean score of 3.43) and the rationale for international agreements (pre-course self assessment mean score of 3.21) upon entering the course. Thus, percentage changes in level of knowledge about these issues was not as great. Course designers may want to put less emphasis on these issues and, instead, emphasize other areas of participants’ knowledge, such as product standards and intellectual properties, with lower pre-course self assessment mean scores of 2.86 and 2.73 respectively.

Open ended questions also provided valuable information for the evaluation. Three respondents stated that participants should be more homogeneous as a group with similar educational / professional backgrounds. Other useful suggestions involved inviting experts from W.T.O., U.N.C.T.A.D., I.T.C., and W.C.O., and placing greater emphasis on practical tools.

There were some limitations to this evaluation. First, the information obtained from pre/post course self assessment should be interpreted with caution. It reflects the degree to which participants believed they understood the topics, but does not measure how much they actually learned. Second, more detailed information on participants’ level of work experience, such as the specific number of years in the particular field and their educational background, would help to assess better the relevancy of the course for different categories of participants, especially when participants are not homogeneous.