



Electoral incentives when the stakes are low: a case study from an economics department

Francesco De Sinopoli¹ · Giovanna Iannantuoni² · Diego Lubian¹ 

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Abstract

Since the pioneering work of Lizzeri and Persico (2001), it has been well known that, in winner-take-all systems, office-motivated politicians may favor targeted redistribution over the provision of public goods. Motivated by the possibility that similar incentives may arise even in small organizations, we examine a policy proposal to revise a journal-ranking system in a medium-sized Economics Department. At the same time, a majority of faculty members signed a petition on an unrelated issue publicly supporting the department's governance. Using individual publication records, we analyze whether the distributional consequences of the proposed reform were systematically related to such support. We find that faculty members who signed the petition were significantly more likely to benefit from the initial proposal, while this association became considerably weaker after an open departmental discussion and a subsequent revision of the proposal. The observed pattern is consistent with theories emphasizing distributive incentives and the disciplining role of transparency in collective decision-making though alternative readings of the revision cannot be excluded.

Keywords Political economy · Electoral incentives · Targeted redistribution · Transparency · Academic governance

✉ Diego Lubian
diego.lubian@univr.it
Francesco De Sinopoli
francesco.desinopoli@univr.it
Giovanna Iannantuoni
giovanna.iannantuoni@unimib.it

¹ Department of Economics, University of Verona, Verona, Italy

² Department of Economics, Management and Statistics, University of Milano–Bicocca, Milan, Italy

1 Introduction

The political process often creates incentives for decision makers to pursue policies that differ from those a benevolent planner would choose. In the classical Downsian model of electoral competition, for example, policy proposals are shaped by the need to attract electoral support rather than by welfare considerations, leading competing candidates to converge toward the preferences of the median voter. In general, different political institutions create different incentives and may therefore generate different policy outcomes. A prominent contribution in this literature is Lizzeri and Persico (2001), who show that, in winner-take-all systems, office-motivated politicians may have incentives to underprovide public goods and rely instead on targeted redistribution. Gavazza and Lizzeri (2009) emphasize the role of transparency in limiting targeted redistribution and improving policy outcomes. Together, these contributions highlight how institutional environments shape the balance between broadly shared benefits and policies targeted toward specific constituencies.

A large empirical literature has examined whether these theoretical mechanisms are reflected in actual policy outcomes. For mass electorates, empirical evidence suggests that majoritarian systems are characterized by more targeted redistribution and lower public-good provision than proportional ones (see, among others, Persson and Tabellini 1999, 2004; Milesi-Ferretti et al. 2002; Gagliarducci et al. 2011). Deacon (2009) shows that countries where political power is more concentrated provide lower levels of public goods than more democratic ones, while Gerring and Thacker (2004) find that parliamentary systems are associated with better political outcomes. Most of this evidence, however, concerns national, regional, or local governments and relies on aggregate outcomes such as public expenditure, institutional indicators, or electoral results. As a consequence, both political support and the distributional consequences of policy choices are often difficult to observe directly.

Much less is known about whether incentive structures similar to those identified in the political-economy literature emerge in small organizations, where decision makers and potential beneficiaries interact repeatedly and where support coalitions can often be observed more directly than in mass electorates. Academic departments provide an interesting environment in this respect. Sayre's well-known observation on the intensity of academic politics suggests that even decisions taken within such organizations may generate strong political incentives and conflict. In fact, although the material stakes are considerably smaller than in conventional political settings, decisions concerning the allocation of resources, evaluation criteria, and hiring guidelines may nonetheless create winners and losers. Moreover, small organizations offer a distinctive empirical advantage. Unlike in mass electorates, supporters and potential beneficiaries can often be identified with considerable precision, which makes it possible to study distributive incentives at the individual level. In addition, the academic setting allows us to explore whether patterns commonly observed in political environments also arise among non-professional decision makers.

Our study focuses on a revision of a journal-ranking system in a medium-sized Economics Department at an Italian university. The ranking was used both to allocate internal research funds and to provide guidance for hiring committees. During the revision process, a majority of faculty members signed a petition on a separate issue publicly expressing support for the department's governance. At approximately the same time, an internal committee proposed a revised journal ranking. The proposal was subsequently discussed in an open departmental meeting and substantially revised before final approval.

The coexistence of these events creates an unusual opportunity to examine whether the distributional consequences of the proposed reform were systematically related to support for the governance. Using individual publication records, we classify faculty members according to whether they would have benefited from the proposed ranking relative to an alternative benchmark proposed by an external advisory body. We then investigate whether support for the governance was associated with the probability of belonging to the group of beneficiaries.

Our results show that faculty members who signed the petition were significantly more likely to benefit from the initial proposal than non-signatories. After discussion in an open departmental meeting and a subsequent revision of the proposal, this association became substantially weaker. While alternative interpretations cannot be ruled out, the observed pattern is consistent with theories emphasizing distributive incentives and the role of transparency and public scrutiny in collective decision-making.

Table 1 summarizes the correspondence between the main elements of the Lizzeri and Persico (2001)'s framework and their counterparts in our case study. The connection between our setting and theirs is necessarily imperfect and should be understood as conceptual rather than literal. A university department is obviously not an electoral arena, and the revision of a journal-ranking system differs from the policy choices usually analyzed in political economy. Nevertheless, the underlying mechanism is similar. The central idea of Lizzeri and Persico (2001) is that decision makers whose position depends on the support of a coalition may have incentives to direct benefits toward specific groups rather than pursue outcomes valued equally by all members of the community. In our setting, support for the governance can be observed directly through a petition signed by a majority of faculty members, while the consequences of the proposed reform can be measured through changes in journal classifications.

The analogy with Gavazza and Lizzeri (2009) is more straightforward. In their model, transparency reduces the scope for targeted redistribution because the consequences of policy decisions become easier to observe. In our case, the open departmental discussion exposed the distributional effects of the proposed ranking to the entire faculty. If transparency constrains distributive incentives, one would expect the relationship between political support and expected gains to become weaker after this discussion. Our empirical results also support this prediction, showing a substantial weakening of the association between expected gains and support for the governance following the departmental discussion.

Of course, distributive incentives are not the only possible interpretation of our findings. A large literature has emphasized the importance of agenda-setting power, committee bargaining, and coalition formation in shaping policy outcomes Romer and Rosenthal 1978; Weingast et al. 1981; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Cox and McCubbins 1986; Baron and Ferejohn 1989. Departmental governance differs from the legislative settings typically examined in this literature because proposals are often approved with little or no modification, giving the proposing body substantial influence over the final outcome. Nevertheless, the journal-ranking reform was drafted by a committee and subsequently submitted to the faculty.

Table 1 Conceptual correspondence between the LP framework and the departmental setting

LP framework	Departmental setting
Office-motivated incumbent	Head of the Department, assisted by the Internal Committee
Support coalition	Petitioners
Targeted transfer	Journal reclassifications
Public good	Overall departmental quality and reputation

Committee bargaining may therefore have been the institutional mechanism through which distributional objectives, if present, were translated into specific journal classifications. This interpretation complements, rather than replaces, our distributive account by suggesting a plausible transmission channel through which preferential outcomes could have emerged. The central result of the paper therefore remains the documented relationship between support for the incumbent governance and the distributional consequences of the proposed reform.

The main contribution of the paper is empirical. In most political-economy applications, both support coalitions and the individual consequences of policy decisions are difficult to observe directly. Researchers usually rely on aggregate outcomes and indirect measures. In contrast, the present case allows both dimensions to be identified with unusual precision. We know which faculty members publicly supported the governance through the petition, and we can also identify which individuals stood to gain from the proposed reform. A second contribution concerns the study of small organizations. Although they differ substantially from electoral environments, they provide useful opportunities to observe support coalitions, policy proposals, and subsequent revisions in a way that is often difficult in larger political systems.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the institutional setting and the sequence of events leading to the revision of the journal-ranking system. Section 3 presents the data and discusses the empirical results. Section 4 concludes. Appendix A reports the results of the robustness checks, while Appendix B contains the relevant journal lists.

2 The institutional setting

This case study considers a medium-sized Economics Department at an Italian university. At the time of the events under analysis, the Department comprises 45 faculty members belonging to the disciplinary areas of Economics (including Econometrics), Economic History, and Statistics and Applied Mathematics.¹ Academic positions include full and associate professorships, which are permanent, alongside three categories of fixed-term or transitional positions: RTDb, a three-year tenure-track role leading to associate professorship upon positive review; RTDa, a three-year non-permanent position with possible extension; and RU, a phased-out permanent assistant-professor role.² Recruitment takes place through publicly advertised competitions governed by both national legislation and university regulation.

The institutional setting is relevant for understanding both the incentives at play and the conditions under which political support becomes observable. The Department's only deliberative body is the Department Board, which includes all faculty members (together with representatives of the administrative staff and the students) and typically meets once a month. The Board is responsible for all departmental decisions, including the allocation of resources, recruitment procedures, research policies, and internal regulations.³ The Board elects the Head of the Depart-

¹ According to Italian law, these correspond respectively to the macro-areas 13/A, 13/C, and 13/D.

² Now, the RTDa and RTDb positions have been substituted by the RTT, a 6-year tenure-track assistant-professor position.

³ If the decision to be taken concerns a particular category, the Board may meet in different compositions. For example, the hiring of a full professor is deliberated by full professors only.

ment under majority voting from among the full professors for a three-year renewable term. The position carries both administrative responsibilities and a specific remuneration. The Head is assisted by an Executive Committee whose members are elected by the faculty members.⁴ Formally, all decisions require approval by the Department Board. In practice, however, the Head determines the agenda (assisted by the Executive Committee) and formulates the proposals submitted for approval, which are very often passed without modification. As a result, the Head of the Department enjoys substantial agenda-setting power within the Department, and it is precisely the kind of institutional feature that, in the framework of Lizzeri and Persico (2001), creates incentives for targeted redistribution.

Under this institutional setting, the focus of the present case study is on a journal-ranking system adopted by the Department, the “Leading Journals List” (hereafter, the Department List), which plays an important role in internal decision making. Introduced in 2012, the List was originally used to allocate internal research funds.⁵ In 2019, its role was expanded, as it became the official guideline for the hiring committees when evaluating research output in recruitment procedures.⁶ Hence, thereafter, changes in journal classifications could affect faculty members’ access to resources and career opportunities.

In December 2019, an external Research Advisory Board (RAB) recommended a revision of the existing List.⁷ The RAB proposed extending the ranking system by introducing an additional lower tier alongside modifications of the existing two upper categories. In response, the Head of the Department proposed to constitute an Internal Committee (IC) in April 2020. The Committee initially received a narrow mandate, limited to implementing the additional lower category. Subsequently, however, its mandate was expanded to include revisions of the upper categories as well.⁸

The events relevant to the case study are summarized in Table 2. The policy proposal that constitutes the focus of our analysis is the journal ranking drafted by the Internal Committee and presented to the faculty in June 2020. After discussion in a departmental meeting, a substantial revision was requested. The revised proposal was then presented again in July 2020 and ultimately approved by a large majority of faculty members.

A second event, unrelated to the journal-ranking reform but highly relevant for our analysis, occurred during the same period. In May 2020, while the Internal Committee was preparing its proposal, a majority of faculty members signed a petition publicly supporting the incumbent departmental governance. To understand the context in which the petition emerged, it is useful to note that the Department had recently experienced an unusually contentious phase of internal governance. In April 2020, the Department Board held its first meeting via Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The new format facilitated broader participation in the discussion and a number of concerns were raised regarding proposals submitted by the governance. For the first time in recent departmental memory, the Head of the Department withdrew two items from

⁴ Throughout the paper, we use the term governance to refer to the Head of Department and the Executive Committee.

⁵ The pre-reform journals list is reported in 6.1.

⁶ In the Italian academic system, hiring committees are composed by majority of professors from outside the recruiting department itself.

⁷ The RAB is an external body that advises the Head and the Department Board on research strategies, policies, and initiatives. Composed of three external experts, it annually evaluates the Department’s research performance and provides recommendations to improve research quality and impact.

⁸ The three categories were named A++, A+, and A.

Table 2 Events timeline

December 2012	A leading-journal list is adopted to distribute internal research funds.
July 2019	The List's use is extended to serve as official guideline for hiring committees.
December 2019	The RAB's report suggests to modify the List, adding a lower tier.
April 2020	The IC is appointed to add a lower tier to the List.
May 2020	The IC is asked to modify also the upper tiers of the List.
May 2020	The petition occurs.
June 2020	The policy proposal is presented and discussed in the departmental meeting, where a revision is requested.
July 2020	The revised proposal is presented and discussed in the departmental meeting, where it is approved.

the agenda rather than bringing them to a vote. Given the typically strong agenda-setting role of the governance and the usual approval of its proposals, this episode was widely perceived as exceptional. It was in this context that, in May 2020, a petition was circulated to express support for the current governance and to request that the Executive Committee draft a set of internal policies and procedures governing the conduct of departmental meetings, in particular reducing the length of the discussions.⁹

The revision of the journal ranking therefore took place in a period characterized by an unusually active internal debate concerning departmental governance and decision-making procedures. The petition therefore represented a public expression of support for the incumbent governance at a time when the Department was discussing a potentially consequential reform.

The overlap between the petition and the revision of the List is noteworthy. Two of the three members of the Internal Committee were among the petition signatories, while the third member was the Deputy Head of the Department, directly appointed by the Head. In general, the majority supporting the petition, the departmental governance, and the Internal Committee were closely connected during the process leading to the proposed reform. This makes the episode particularly well suited for examining whether support for the governance was systematically associated with the distributional consequences of the proposed changes.

3 The case study

3.1 Data

Data on faculty members' publications were collected from the official online repository.¹⁰ Five members of the Executive Committee were excluded from the dataset because they were not invited to sign the petition and therefore were not part of the relevant population.

⁹ Although the petition formally called for procedures aimed at reducing the duration of departmental meetings, the practical scope for such measures was limited. Departmental meetings typically lasted about one hour and often less. The April 2020 meeting, which lasted approximately two hours, was exceptional in both duration and intensity of discussion.

¹⁰ Accessed on July 2nd, 2020.

Faculty members are classified into four categories: Unaffected, Gainers, Losers, and Undetermined. A faculty member is classified as Unaffected if the number of publications in each of the three journal categories (A++, A+, and A) remains unchanged when moving from one list to another. A faculty member is classified as a Gainer if she has at least as many publications in the A++ category, at least as many publications in the combined A++ and A+ categories, and at least as many publications overall under the new list. At least one of these quantities must increase strictly. Conversely, a faculty member is classified as a Loser if she has at most as many publications in the A++ category, at most as many publications in the combined A++ and A+ categories, and at most as many publications overall under the new list. Again, at least one of these quantities must decrease strictly. Finally, a faculty member is classified as Undetermined when the changes generated by the proposal do not allow a clear assessment of whether she is better off, worse off, or unaffected.¹¹

An example may help to clarify the classification rule. Consider a faculty member with no A++ publications under either classification, no A+ publications and two A publications under the RAB draft, and one A+ publication together with three A publications under the IC proposal. The number of A++ publications remains unchanged, while the combined number of A++ and A+ publications increases from 0 to 1. The total number of publications also increases from 2 to 4. This faculty member is therefore classified as a Gainer, since all three conditions are satisfied and at least one of them holds strictly. The example illustrates how a reclassification into higher-ranked categories can generate gains even when the number of A++ publications remains unchanged.

The policy proposal and its revision are reconstructed from the transcripts of departmental meetings.

¹² The RAB draft List serves as the benchmark throughout the analysis. We construct the Gainer/Unaffected/Loser classification separately against the original and the revised IC proposals, in both cases using the RAB draft as the reference.

3.2 Results

Table 3 reports a noticeable difference in outcomes between petition signatories and non-signatories. Among petition signatories, 54.5% are classified as Gainers under the initial proposal, whereas only 22.2% of non-signatories are. Signatories also appear somewhat less likely to fall in the Loser category. The initial proposal is thus associated with an asymmetry in expected outcomes, with those who had publicly supported the governance faring better on average than those who had not. The revised proposal shows the same directional pattern, but the gap between the two groups narrows appreciably (see Table 3).

To summarize these relationships, we report Kendall's τ_b , a standard measure of ordinal association that accounts for ties Agresti 2010. For the initial proposal, the estimated association is positive and statistically significant ($\tau_b = 0.32$, p-value = 0.041, 95% CI: [0.03, 0.59]). Given the limited sample size, the exact magnitude of the coefficient should not be overemphasized. What matters more is the direction of the relationship. For the original proposal, the estimated association is clearly positive. For the revised proposal, the coefficient remains positive ($\tau_b = 0.20$, p-value= 0.202), but the confidence interval is wide

¹¹ This could happen, for instance, if a faculty member has more publications overall but fewer publications in the higher-ranked categories. In our sample, no faculty member falls into the *Undetermined* category.

¹² A detailed comparison of the relevant lists is reported in 6.2.

Table 3 Distribution of gainers, unaffected and losers vs petitioners, full sample

	First proposal			Revised proposal		
	Petitioners		All	Petitioners		All
	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Gainers	22.2%	54.5%	40.0%	16.7%	36.4%	27.5%
Unaffected	66.7%	40.9%	52.5%	77.8%	59.1%	67.5%
Losers	11.1%	4.5%	7.5%	5.6%	4.5%	5.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Entries are column percentages, i.e., shares of each outcome within the corresponding petition group ($N = 40$; 18 non-signatories and 22 signatories)

and includes zero (95% CI: $[-0.10, 0.47]$). The sign of the relationship therefore remains unchanged, although the evidence becomes considerably weaker. These statistics should be read as measures of association rather than causal effects: the decision to sign the petition was voluntary and self-selected, and unobserved characteristics may be correlated with both petition signing and the classification outcome.

The broader contribution of the paper is therefore empirical. By providing direct evidence on support coalitions, policy proposals, and their distributional consequences, the case illustrates how small organizations can serve as useful laboratories for studying political and institutional processes that are often difficult to observe in larger political environments. Moreover, it suggests that distributive incentives may arise whenever collective decisions generate heterogeneous gains and losses across members of a community, even outside the electoral settings that have traditionally been the focus of political-economy research.

The classification rule is not particularly sensitive to borderline cases. For example, a faculty member is classified as a Loser because a single publication is reclassified from category A+ in the RAB draft to category A in the IC proposal, even if the total number of publications remains unchanged. In that case, the number of publications in categories A++ and A+ falls from 1 to 0, which is sufficient to place the individual in the Loser category. Reclassifying such cases as Unaffected would slightly reduce the number of losers, but it would not alter the overall pattern reported in Table 3. In particular, petition signatories would still be substantially more likely to be classified as Gainers.

Restricting the sample to faculty members with at least one publication in the relevant rankings makes the contrast more pronounced (Table 4), though this subsample is necessarily smaller and the resulting estimates should be read with corresponding caution. This subsample excludes faculty members whose classification is mechanically Unaffected under any proposal, since they have no publications to reclassify, and focuses on those for whom the reform carries tangible stakes. Among signatories, 80.0% are classified as Gainers under the initial proposal, against 30.8% among non-signatories. For the revised proposal the shares fall to 53.3% and 23.1%, respectively. The ordinal association for the initial proposal is somewhat larger and more precisely estimated than in the full sample ($\tau_b = 0.45$, p-value = 0.015, 95% CI: $[0.10, 0.76]$); for the revised proposal it remains positive but is again imprecisely estimated ($\tau_b = 0.27$, p-value = 0.15, 95% CI: $[-0.06, 0.61]$). The consistency between the two samples is reassuring, as it suggests that the pattern is not simply an artifact of including faculty members without research output. Although the restricted sample includes only 28 observations and should therefore be interpreted with caution, the results are supportive. Taken together, the findings from both samples point in the same direction: petition participation tracks the expected effects of the proposal.

Table 4 Distribution of gainers, unaffected and losers vs petitioners, faculty with publications only

	First proposal			Revised proposal		
	Petitioners		All	Petitioners		All
	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Gainers	30.8%	80.0%	57.1%	23.1%	53.3%	39.3%
Unaffected	53.8%	13.3%	32.1%	69.2%	40.0%	53.6%
Losers	15.4%	6.7%	10.7%	7.7%	6.7%	7.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Sample restricted to faculty members with at least one publication in the relevant journal lists ($N = 28$; 13 non-signatories and 15 signatories). Entries are column percentages

Table 5 presents the ordered Probit estimates for both the initial and the revised proposals. Results for the initial proposals are reported in columns (1)–(4), while those for the revised proposals are reported in columns (5)–(8). For the initial proposal, the coefficient on Petition is positive and statistically significant across all specifications. This indicates that faculty members who signed the petition were more likely to be associated with higher outcome categories than non-signatories. The estimated effect remains robust to the inclusion of controls for academic rank, scientific area, and gender. The result also holds in the restricted sample of faculty members with publications in journals appearing in at least one ranking list (column (4)).

Table 6 addresses a potential concern regarding the direct involvement of the Internal Committee members in drafting the proposal. Since two of the three members were directly involved in drafting the proposal, their publication records may have influenced the classification outcome, introducing a form of endogeneity in the Gainer/Loser assignment. Excluding these two faculty members leaves the results essentially unchanged. The coefficient on Petition remains positive and statistically significant for the initial proposal and becomes considerably smaller for the revised proposal, confirming that the main findings are not driven by the IC members themselves. The relationship between petition participation and the expected gains from the reform appears substantially weaker after the proposal was discussed and revised. While the available data do not allow us to isolate the causal effect of the departmental discussion itself, they clearly indicate that the revised proposal became less closely associated with the coalition supporting the incumbent governance.

Figure 1 reports average marginal effects on the probability of each outcome category. For the initial proposal, petition participation is associated with a higher estimated probability of being a Gainer and a lower estimated probability of being a Loser, in both the full sample and the publications-only subsample. The estimated effects are not negligible in magnitude, though the confidence intervals remain fairly wide given the limited number of observations. For the revised proposal the estimated differences are smaller and no longer statistically distinguishable from zero. The figure is broadly consistent with the pattern already visible in the tables, with the association appearing stronger for the initial proposal than for the revision.

An alternative explanation is that petition signatories simply had stronger publication records and therefore happened to benefit more from any reasonable revision of the journal rankings. Table 7 provides little support for this interpretation. The reported average marginal effects come from Probit models in which the dependent variable equals one if a faculty member signed the petition. Columns (1)–(4) use indicators for having at least one publication in journals included in the Tilburg rankings, the Department List, or the RAB

Table 5 Ordered probit model for gainers, unaffected and losers

	First proposal				Revised proposal			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Petition	1.190*** (0.4222)	0.8187** (0.3903)	1.317*** (0.4302)	2.419*** (0.5434)	0.7787* (0.4311)	0.4305 (0.4144)	0.7264* (0.4397)	0.8891* (0.4896)
Full Professor	1.474** (0.6642)		1.363** (0.6108)	1.364** (0.6179)	0.8170 (0.5320)		0.6773 (0.5246)	0.5763 (0.6826)
Associate Professor	0.8828* (0.5266)		0.8406* (0.4674)	0.4463 (0.5620)	1.356*** (0.3877)		1.290*** (0.3736)	1.381*** (0.4959)
RTDb	-0.7117 (0.7314)		-0.9215 (0.6659)	-1.769*** (0.6637)	0.06016 (0.6810)		-0.07182 (0.6977)	-0.1443 (0.5669)
RTDa	0.03379 (0.5200)		-0.1144 (0.4276)		0.3196 (0.3119)		0.1757 (0.3209)	
Economics		0.4412 (0.4728)	0.5938 (0.4824)			-0.04463 (0.4604)	0.009072 (0.4653)	
Economic History		-0.2503 (0.4961)	-0.2278 (0.4082)			-0.5076 (0.4582)	-0.6372 (0.4323)	
Female	0.1831 (0.4421)	-0.09491 (0.3524)	0.1524 (0.4281)	0.6461 (0.5308)	0.1485 (0.4042)	-0.02904 (0.3853)	0.1177 (0.4072)	0.03671 (0.5625)
μ_1	-0.5732 (0.5147)	-0.9369* (0.5467)	-0.3379 (0.5222)	-0.3491 (0.5796)	-0.6255 (0.5014)	-1.529** (0.6521)	-0.8108 (0.6057)	-0.5719 (0.8203)
μ_2	1.683*** (0.5916)	0.9203* (0.5195)	1.983*** (0.6195)	1.380** (0.6551)	1.984*** (0.5288)	0.7818 (0.5166)	1.817*** (0.5705)	1.534** (0.7798)
<i>n</i>	40	40	40	28	40	40	40	28

The excluded categories are the RU position and the Statistics and Applied Mathematics area. Columns (4) and (8) include only faculty members with publications. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively

draft List, whereas columns (5)–(8) replace these indicators with publication counts. Unlike the Department List and the RAB draft, which are both part of the reform episode under analysis, the Tilburg ranking reflects no input from the faculty members and should therefore be less susceptible to any endogenous influence that may have shaped the other two lists.¹³ Across all eight specifications, the publication variables are small in magnitude and not statistically significant, regardless of which list is used or whether indicators or counts are employed. This offers no indication that faculty with stronger records in these rankings were more likely to sign the petition. Overall, observable differences in publication activity do not appear to explain the link between petition signing and the reform's distributional consequences, with the usual caveat about sample size.

To assess the robustness of our findings, we consider both alternative model specifications and the sensitivity of the results to the classification of the outcome variable. We first collapse the two lower outcome categories (*Unaffected* and *Losers*) into a single category. To account for small-sample bias and potential separation, we estimate binary Firth penalized logit models Firth 1993; Heinze and Schemper 2002, in which the dependent variable equals one for *Gainers* and zero otherwise (Table 8). The results are broadly consistent with

¹³ The 2020 Tilburg ranking includes both a broad version (79 journals) and a narrow version (35 journals); both are used to check whether the results depend on the breadth of coverage. The full list of journals is reported in 6.3.

Table 6 Ordered probit model for gainers, unaffected and losers, no IC members

	First proposal				Revised proposal			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Petition	1.127*** (0.426)	0.752* (0.401)	1.247*** (0.429)	2.388*** (0.571)	0.728* (0.412)	0.373 (0.421)	0.641 (0.415)	0.859* (0.468)
Full Professor	1.305* (0.707)		1.176* (0.656)	1.331** (0.648)	0.689 (0.611)		0.553 (0.603)	0.534 (0.739)
Associate Professor	0.857 (0.527)		0.810* (0.466)	0.443 (0.572)	1.343*** (0.394)		1.276*** (0.389)	1.371*** (0.499)
RTDb	-0.716 (0.737)		-0.930 (0.669)	-1.759*** (0.677)	0.055 (0.691)		-0.067 (0.735)	-0.138 (0.565)
RTDa	0.002 (0.513)		-0.154 (0.423)		0.290 (0.298)		0.147 (0.329)	
Economics		0.467 (0.495)	0.608 (0.501)			-0.190 (0.486)	-0.144 (0.493)	
Economic History		-0.187 (0.497)	-0.231 (0.413)			-0.585 (0.479)	-0.749 (0.456)	
Female	0.205 (0.433)	-0.022 (0.361)	0.173 (0.419)	0.634 (0.536)	0.172 (0.419)	0.004 (0.398)	0.143 (0.423)	0.038 (0.571)
μ_1	-0.605 (0.506)	-0.887 (0.558)	-0.370 (0.517)	-0.365 (0.588)	-0.661 (0.479)	-1.618** (0.686)	-0.959 (0.601)	-0.577 (0.817)
μ_2	1.637*** (0.582)	1.002* (0.543)	1.936*** (0.614)	1.361** (0.665)	1.957*** (0.531)	0.700 (0.530)	1.681*** (0.568)	1.512* (0.781)
n	38	38	38	26	38	38	38	26

The excluded categories are the RU position and the Statistics and Applied Mathematics area. Columns (4) and (8) include only faculty members with publications. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively

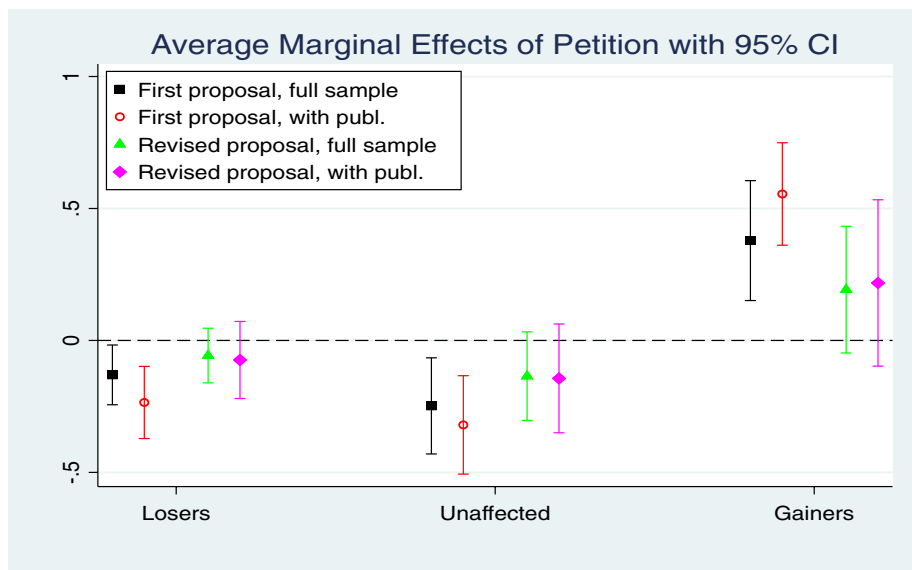
**Fig. 1** Average marginal effects of petition

Table 7 Marginal effects - probit model for petition participation

	Dummy for publication				Number of publications			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Tilburg (broad)	-0.016 (0.18)				0.033 (0.039)			
Tilburg (narrow)		0.045 (0.18)				0.015 (0.063)		
Department List			0.054 (0.18)				-0.063 (0.061)	
RAB List				-0.102 (0.19)				-0.013 (0.028)
Full Professor	-0.230 (0.30)	-0.274 (0.28)	-0.272 (0.26)	-0.161 (0.33)	-0.366 (0.235)	-0.284 (0.293)	-0.104 (0.333)	-0.162 (0.324)
Associate Professor	-0.293 (0.25)	-0.316 (0.23)	-0.314 (0.22)	-0.243 (0.28)	-0.341 (0.217)	-0.309 (0.229)	-0.260 (0.245)	-0.276 (0.246)
RTDb	-0.063 (0.33)	-0.114 (0.32)	-0.110 (0.29)	0.022 (0.36)	-0.122 (0.287)	-0.092 (0.295)	-0.008 (0.300)	-0.049 (0.301)
RTDa	-0.347 (0.26)	-0.360 (0.25)	-0.340 (0.26)	-0.328 (0.26)	-0.351 (0.247)	-0.353 (0.248)	-0.344 (0.248)	-0.347 (0.251)
Female	-0.338** (0.15)	-0.343** (0.15)	-0.351** (0.15)	-0.327** (0.15)	-0.353*** (0.146)	-0.338*** (0.146)	-0.332*** (0.144)	-0.331*** (0.146)

The binary dependent variable equals 1 if a faculty member signed the petition. Columns (1)–(4): Tilburg (broad), Tilburg (narrow), Department List, and RAB List are dummy variables indicating whether the faculty member has at least one publication in the corresponding list. Columns (5)–(8): the same variables measure the number of publications. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively. Sample size: $n = 40$

those from the ordered probit analysis. Signing the petition is associated with a significantly higher probability of being a Gainer under the initial proposal, whereas the estimated effect is smaller and no longer statistically significant under the revised proposal. We also check whether the main finding depends on borderline classification decisions. Reassigning any single Gainer or Loser to Unaffected does not eliminate significance at the 5% level in column (1) of Table 5. A sequential worst-case procedure that, at each step, applies the most damaging reassignment shows that significance marginally falls below the 5% level only when the two most influential petitioner-Gainers are reclassified simultaneously ($z = 1.950$); any other pair of reassignments leaves the result significant. Significance at the 10% level requires moving the four most influential petitioner-Gainers at once, corresponding to one third of that group. Full results are reported in Appendix A.2.

5.3 provides additional descriptive evidence based on changes in outcome classification. Only six faculty members changed outcome category. Among these, four of the six downward transitions involved petition signatories, whereas neither of the two upward transitions did. Given the limited number of observed changes, these figures should be interpreted as descriptive evidence only. They nonetheless indicate that the revision disproportionately reduced the advantages associated with the initial proposal among petition signatories, a pattern consistent with the attenuation of the association documented above.

Overall, the evidence points in the same direction. Faculty members who signed the petition were more likely to benefit from the initial version of the ranking reform. After the proposal was discussed and revised, this relationship became much weaker. This pattern

emerges consistently from the descriptive evidence, the regression results, and the robustness checks.

4 Conclusion

The paper examines the revision of a journal-ranking system in a medium-sized Economics Department and investigates whether the distributional consequences of the proposed reform were systematically related to support for the incumbent governance, as revealed by a petition signed by a majority of faculty members. The setting is unusual but informative. Unlike most empirical studies in political economy, it allows us to observe directly, at the individual level, support for the governance, the expected beneficiaries of a reform, and the subsequent revision of that reform.

We find that faculty members who signed the petition were significantly more likely to benefit from the initial proposal than non-signatories. Following discussion in a departmental meeting and a subsequent revision of the proposal, this association became substantially weaker. These findings are consistent with the broader idea that distributive considerations may influence collective decision making even in relatively small organizations. Academic settings differ substantially from conventional political systems, yet they also generate support coalitions, distributional conflicts, and institutional processes through which policy proposals are formulated, discussed, and revised.

The evidence should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The case study does not allow us to identify the precise mechanism through which the observed relationship emerged. While the findings are consistent with distributive incentives of the type emphasized by Lizzeri and Persico (2001), committee bargaining, agenda-setting power, and coalition formation may have constituted the institutional channels through which such incentives were translated into the final journal classification. At the same time, alternative explanations, including shared research interests or other features of the departmental environment, cannot be ruled out.

Appendix A. Robustness checks

Appendix A.1. Robustness to alternative model specifications

Table 8 reports binary response models in which *Gainers* are coded as one and all other faculty members (*Unaffected* and *Losers*) as zero. By collapsing the two lower outcome categories, this specification focuses directly on the probability of being a Gainer and is less sensitive to borderline reclassifications between Loser and Unaffected. Given the relatively small sample size and the potential for separation in binary response models, all specifications are estimated using Firth's penalized logistic regression Firth 1993; Heinze and Schemper 2002. Following the discussion in Pühr et al. (2017), we report average marginal effects to facilitate interpretation. The results are similar to those obtained from the ordered probit analysis. For the initial proposal, the marginal effect of *Petition* remains positive and statistically significant at the 5% level (or better) across all specifications. By contrast, for

Table 8 Robustness check: Average marginal effects from Firth penalized logit models

	Initial proposal				Revised proposal			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Petition	0.353*** (0.124)	0.278** (0.141)	0.318** (0.136)	0.507*** (0.133)	0.205 (0.140)	0.116 (0.154)	0.160 (0.150)	0.238 (0.170)
PO	0.468** (0.227)		0.371 (0.244)	0.321 (0.355)	0.370 (0.307)		0.313 (0.305)	0.154 (0.434)
PA	0.329 (0.212)		0.273 (0.221)	0.197 (0.316)	0.443 (0.287)		0.401 (0.279)	0.343 (0.397)
RTDB	0.009 (0.274)		-0.068 (0.282)	-0.298 (0.329)	0.217 (0.341)		0.172 (0.336)	-0.048 (0.445)
RTDA	-0.021 (0.394)		-0.084 (0.391)		0.152 (0.444)		0.076 (0.442)	
Female	0.096 (0.151)	0.001 (0.160)	0.070 (0.151)	0.099 (0.178)	-0.059 (0.149)	-0.123 (0.151)	-0.063 (0.150)	-0.129 (0.192)
A		0.070 (0.158)	0.063 (0.150)			-0.043 (0.149)	-0.055 (0.146)	
C		-0.289 (0.403)	-0.166 (0.340)			-0.249 (0.362)	-0.206 (0.346)	
Observations	40	40	40	28	40	40	40	28

Entries are average marginal effects; delta-method standard errors are reported in parentheses. The dependent variable equals one for *Gainers* and zero for *Unaffected* and *Losers*. All specifications are estimated using Firth's penalized logistic regression. Columns (1)–(4) refer to the initial proposal, whereas columns (5)–(8) refer to the revised proposal. The four specifications correspond to those reported in the main ordered probit analysis. Statistical significance: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

the revised proposal, the estimated marginal effect is consistently positive but never statistically significant.

Appendix A.2. Robustness to outcome classification

We check whether the main finding depends on borderline classification decisions through two complementary exercises.

Leave-one-out We re-estimate column (1) of Table 5 after reassigning each non-Unaffected faculty member—Gainers and Losers—individually to Unaffected, one observation at a time, for a total of 19 reclassifications (16 Gainers and 3 Losers). Table 9 reports the resulting coefficients and z -statistics. The z -statistic on Petition remains above 1.96 in all 19 cases, with a minimum of $z = 2.38$. No single reclassification eliminates statistical significance at the 5% level.

Sequential worst-case algorithm We ask how many simultaneous reclassifications are needed to eliminate the result, focusing on petitioner-Gainers since reassigning them to Unaffected is the scenario most damaging to our finding. To avoid dependence on the arbitrary ordering of observations, we adopt a sequential worst-case algorithm: at each step we identify the petitioner-Gainer whose individual reassignment produces the largest reduction in the z -statistic of column (1), flip that observation, and repeat. This traces the true worst-case path for our result, in the sense that no other sequence of reclassifications of the same length produces a lower z -statistic. Table 10 reports the resulting sequence.

Table 9 Leave-one-out sensitivity: Petition coefficient after individual reclassification of each gainer or loser as unaffected

	ID	Reclassification	Coeff	z-stat
	Baseline	-	1.190	2.784**
	<i>Panel A: Gainers reclassified as Unaffected</i>			
	F02	Gainer → Unaffected	1.295	3.099**
	F06	Gainer → Unaffected	1.413	3.405**
	F07	Gainer → Unaffected	1.055	2.680**
	F08	Gainer → Unaffected	1.055	2.680**
	F09	Gainer → Unaffected	1.321	2.964**
	F13	Gainer → Unaffected	1.072	2.563**
	F16	Gainer → Unaffected	0.966	2.375**
	F18	Gainer → Unaffected	1.055	2.680**
	F20	Gainer → Unaffected	1.072	2.563**
	F24	Gainer → Unaffected	1.072	2.563**
	F27	Gainer → Unaffected	1.103	2.610**
	F31	Gainer → Unaffected	1.072	2.563**
	F34	Gainer → Unaffected	1.242	2.670**
	F35	Gainer → Unaffected	0.947	2.375**
	F37	Gainer → Unaffected	1.321	2.964**
	F38	Gainer → Unaffected	1.072	2.563**
	<i>Panel B: Losers reclassified as Unaffected</i>			
	F05	Loser → Unaffected	1.343	2.934**
	F11	Loser → Unaffected	1.065	2.548**
	F30	Loser → Unaffected	1.238	2.572**

Faculty IDs (F01-F40) are generated by a random permutation of the sample to preserve anonymity. Replication code is available from the authors upon request. Each row reports the ordered probit coefficient on Petition and its z-statistic after reassigning the indicated observation from its original category (Gainer or Loser) to Unaffected. Column (1) includes controls for academic rank and gender. Robust standard errors throughout. No single reclassification produces a non-significant coefficient. * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$

Significance at the 5% level is first lost only when the two most influential petitioner-Gainers are simultaneously reassigned ($z = 1.95$, marginally below the 1.96 threshold); any other pair of reclassifications leaves the coefficient significant. Significance at the 10% level is lost only when the four most influential petitioner-Gainers are simultaneously reassigned, corresponding to one third of that group.

Table 10 Sequential worst-case cumulative reclassification: Petition coefficient after sequentially reassigning petitioner-gainers to unaffected

Flips	Cumulative set	Coeff	z-stat
0	—	1.190	2.78**
1	{F16}	0.966	2.38**
2	{F16, F35}	0.745	1.95*
3	{F16, F35, F20}	0.636	1.70*
4	{F16, F35, F20, F24}	0.533	1.44

Faculty IDs (F01-F40) are generated by a random permutation of the sample to preserve anonymity. Replication code is available from the authors upon request. At each step the sequential worst-case algorithm selects the petitioner-Gainer whose individual reassignment to Unaffected produces the largest reduction in the z-statistic of column (1), given the observations already flipped. This traces the worst-case path for the baseline result: no other sequence of reclassifications of the same length produces a lower z-statistic. There are 12 petitioner-Gainers in total. Significance first falls below the 5% level only at the 2nd flip ($z = 1.950$, marginally below the 1.96 threshold); any other pair of reclassifications would leave the coefficient significant at the 5% level. Significance at the 10% level is lost at the 4th flip, corresponding to one third of that group. Column (1) includes controls for academic rank and gender. Robust standard errors throughout. * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$

Table 11 Changes in faculty outcome classification

Transition	Petition signed		Total
	No	Yes	
Moved down	2	4	6
Unchanged	14	18	32
Moved up	2	0	2
Total	18	22	40

A faculty member is classified as *Moved down* if the outcome category (Gainer, Unaffected, Loser) is lower under the revised proposal than under the initial proposal, and as *Moved up* if it is higher

Appendix A.3. Changes in faculty outcome classification

Table 11 reports how faculty members' outcome classifications changed between the initial proposal and the revised proposal. This table complements the comparison of the three journal rankings reported in Appendix B.2 by focusing on the distributional consequences of the revision for individual faculty members.

Only six faculty members changed outcome classification between the initial and the revised proposals. Four of the six downward transitions involved petition signatories, whereas neither of the two upward transitions did. Given the limited number of observed changes, these figures should be interpreted as descriptive evidence only. They suggest that the revision disproportionately reduced the advantages associated with the initial proposal among petition signatories, a pattern consistent with the attenuation of the association documented in the main analysis.

Appendix B Journal classifications

Appendix B.1. Pre-reform departmental journal ranking

The table below presents the journal classification adopted by the Department prior to the reform.

Journal	DSE class
American Economic Review	A++
Annals of Mathematics	A++
Annals of Probability	A++
Annals of Statistics	A++
Biometrika	A++
Econometrica	A++
Journal of Finance	A++
Journal of Political Economy	A++
Journal of the American Statistical Association	A++
Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series B	A++
Quarterly Journal of Economics	A++
Review of Economic Studies	A++
SIAM Review	A++
Nature	A++
PNAS	A++

Journal	DSE class
Science	A++
American Economic Journal: Applied Economics	A+
American Economic Journal: Economic Policy	A+
American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics	A+
American Economic Journal: Microeconomics	A+
American Statistician	A+
Annals of Applied Probability	A+
Biometrics	A+
Economic Journal	A+
European Economic Review	A+
Explorations in Economic History	A+
Games and Economic Behavior	A+
International Economic Review	A+
Journal of Development Economics	A+
Journal of Econometrics	A+
Journal of Economic History	A+
Journal of Economic Literature	A+
Journal of Economic Perspectives	A+
Journal of Economic Theory	A+
Journal of Financial Economics	A+
Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis	A+
Journal of International Economics	A+
Journal of Labor Economics	A+
Journal of Multivariate Analysis	A+
Journal of Monetary Economics	A+
Journal of Public Economics	A+
Journal of the European Economic Association	A+
Management Science	A+
Mathematical Finance	A+
Journal	DSE class
Mathematical Programming	A+
Mathematics of Operations Research	A+
Operations Research	A+
Probability Theory and Related Fields	A+
Quantitative Economics	A+
RAND Journal of Economics	A+
Review of Economics and Statistics	A+
Review of Financial Studies	A+
SIAM Journal on Optimization	A+
SIAM Journal on Control and Optimization	A+
Statistical Science	A+
Theoretical Economics	A+

Appendix B.2. RAB, IC initial, and IC revised proposals

The table below compares the journal classifications contained in the three main rankings used in the analysis: the draft proposed by the RAB, the initial proposal prepared by the IC,

and the revised proposal subsequently approved by the Department. For each journal, the assigned tier (A++, A+, or A) is reported under the corresponding list. A dash indicates that a journal does not appear in the corresponding ranking. The comparison includes all journals appearing in at least one of the three rankings.

Journal	RAB	IC initial proposal	IC revised proposal
AEA Papers and Proceedings	–	A	–
American Economic Journal: Applied Economics	A+	A+	A+
American Economic Journal: Economic Policy	A+	A+	A+
American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics	A+	A+	A+
American Economic Journal: Microeconomics	A+	A+	A+
American Economic Review	A++	A++	A++
American Journal of Agricultural Economics	A	A	A
American Statistician	A+	A	A
Annals of Applied Probability	A+	A+	A+
Annals of Applied Statistics	–	A	A
Annals of Mathematics	A++	A++	A++
Annals of Probability	A++	A++	A++
Annals of Statistics	A++	A++	A++
Bernoulli	–	A	A
Biometrics	A+	A+	A+
Biometrika	A+	A+	A+
Brookings Papers on Economic Activity	–	A	–
Business History	–	A	A
Clometrica	–	A	A
Ecological Economics	A	A	A
Econometric Theory	–	A	A
Econometrica	A++	A++	A++
Econometrics Journal	A	A	A
Economic History Review	A	A	A
Economic Inquiry	A	A	A
Economic Journal	A+	A+	A+
Economic Policy	A	A	A
Economic Theory	A	A	A
Economica	A	A	A
Energy Economics	–	A	A
Environmental and Resource Economics	A	A	A
European Economic Review	A	A	A
European Journal of Political Economy	–	A	–
European Review of Economic History	–	A	A
Experimental Economics	A	A	A
Explorations in Economic History	A	A	A
Finance and Stochastics	–	A	A
Games and Economic Behavior	A	A+	A+
International Economic Review	A+	A+	A+
International Journal of Industrial Organization	A	A	A
Journal of Applied Econometrics	A	A	A
Journal of Banking and Finance	–	A	A
Journal of Business and Economic Statistics	A	A+	A+

Journal	RAB	IC initial proposal	IC revised proposal
Journal of Comparative Economics	A	A	A
Journal of Development Economics	A	A+	A+
Journal of Econometrics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization	A	A	A
Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control	A	–	A
Journal of Economic Geography	A	A	A
Journal of Economic Growth	A	A	A
Journal of Economic History	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Economic Literature	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Economic Perspectives	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Economic Theory	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Environmental Econ. and Management	A	A+	A
Journal of Finance	A++	A++	A++
Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Financial Econometrics	–	A	A
Journal of Financial Economics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Health Economics	A	A+	A
Journal of Human Resources	A	A	A
Journal of Industrial Economics	A	A	A
Journal of International Economics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Labor Economics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Law, Economics and Organization	A	A	A
Journal of Mathematical Economics	A	A	A
Journal of Monetary Economics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Money, Credit and Banking	A	A	A
Journal of Multivariate Analysis	A	–	A
Journal of Political Economy	A++	A++	A++
Journal of Population Economics	A	A	A
Journal of Public Economics	A+	A+	A+
Journal of Risk and Uncertainty	A	A	A
Journal of the American Statistical Association	A+	A++	A++
Journal of the European Economic Association	A+	A+	A+
Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series B	A++	A++	A++
Journal of Urban Economics	–	A	A
Labour Economics	A	A	A
Management Science	A+	A+	A+
Mathematical Finance	A	A+	A+
Mathematical Programming	A+	A	A+
Mathematics of Operations Research	A	A	A
Nature	A++	A++	A++
Nature Communications	A+	–	–
Nature Human Behaviour	A+	–	–
Operations Research	A++	A++	A++
Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics	A	A	A
Oxford Economic Papers	A	–	A
Journal	RAB	IC initial proposal	IC revised proposal
PNAS	A+	A+	A+
Probability Theory and Related Fields	A+	A+	A+

Journal	RAB	IC initial proposal	IC revised proposal
Quantitative Economics	A+	A+	A+
Quarterly Journal of Economics	A++	A++	A++
RAND Journal of Economics	A+	A+	A+
Review of Economic Dynamics	A	A	A
Review of Economic Studies	A++	A++	A++
Review of Economics and Statistics	A+	A+	A+
Review of Finance	–	A	A
Review of Financial Studies	A+	A+	A+
Scandinavian Journal of Economics	A	A	A
Science	A++	A++	A++
Scientific Reports	A+	–	–
SIAM Journal of Financial Mathematics	–	A	A
SIAM Journal on Control and Optimization	A	A	A
SIAM Journal on Optimization	A	A	A
SIAM Review	A++	A+	A++
Social Choice and Welfare	A	A	A
Statistical Science	A+	A+	A+
Stochastic Processes and Their Applications	–	A	A
Theoretical Economics	A+	A+	A+
World Development	A	A	A

Appendix B.3. Tilburg University economics ranking coverage (2020)

The table below reports the journals included in the 2020 Tilburg journal lists.

Tilburg broad	Tilburg narrow
AEJ – Applied Economics	
AEJ – Economic Policy	
AEJ – Macroeconomics	
AEJ – Microeconomics	
Advances in Applied Probability	
American Economic Review	✓
Annals of Probability	
Annals of Statistics	
Bernoulli	
Brookings Papers on Economic Activity	✓
Econometric Theory	
Econometrica	✓
Econometrics Journal	
Economic Inquiry	
Economic Journal	✓
Economic Policy	
Economic Theory	
Economica	
Economics Letters	✓
European Economic Review	✓
Experimental Economics	
Explorations in Economic History	

Tilburg broad	Tilburg narrow
Games and Economic Behavior	✓
International Economic Review	✓
International Journal of Industrial Organization	
Journal of Applied Econometrics	✓
Journal of Banking and Finance	
Journal of Business and Economic Statistics	✓
Journal of Comparative Economics	
Journal of Development Economics	✓
Journal of Econometrics	✓
Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization	✓
Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control	✓
Tilburg broad	Tilburg narrow
Journal of Economic Growth	✓
Journal of Economic History	
Journal of Economic Literature	✓
Journal of Economic Perspectives	✓
Journal of Economic Theory	✓
Journal of Environmental Economics and Management	
Journal of Finance	
Journal of Financial Economics	✓
Journal of Financial Intermediation	
Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis	
Journal of Health Economics	✓
Journal of Human Resources	✓
Journal of Industrial Economics	
Journal of International Economics	✓
Journal of Labor Economics	✓
Journal of Law and Economics	
Journal of Law, Economics and Organization	
Journal of Mathematical Economics	
Journal of Monetary Economics	✓
Journal of Money, Credit and Banking	✓
Journal of Political Economy	✓
Journal of Public Economics	✓
Journal of Risk and Uncertainty	
Journal of Urban Economics	✓
Journal of the American Statistical Association	
Journal of the European Economic Association	✓
Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A – Statistics in Society	
Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series B – Statistical Methodology	
Land Economics	
Management Science	
Nature	
Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics	
Oxford Economic Papers – New Series	
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences	
Public Choice	

Tilburg broad	Tilburg narrow
Quarterly Journal of Economics	✓
RAND Journal of Economics	✓
Review of Economic Dynamics	✓
Review of Economic Studies	✓
Review of Economics and Statistics	✓
Review of Financial Studies	
Scandinavian Journal of Economics	
Science	
Stochastic Processes and their Applications	
World Bank Economic Review	✓
World Development	

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Author contributions Francesco De Sinopoli and Diego Lubian conceived the study, assembled and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Giovanna Iannantuoni contributed to the interpretation of the institutional setting and the discussion of the empirical results, and participated in the revision of the manuscript. She did not have access to the individual-level data, which contain information on identifiable department members.

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Data availability The individual-level data refer to identifiable members of a small population and therefore cannot be shared. Replication code is available upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest Francesco De Sinopoli and Diego Lubian are members of the department analyzed in this study and are classified, respectively, as a Gainer and as Unaffected under both proposals. Giovanna Iannantuoni is not a member of the department and had no involvement in the events analyzed. No other conflict of interest are declared.

Ethical approval This observational study uses existing publication records and existing departmental records. No new data were generated or collected from participants, and ethics approval was not required under the institutional regulations in force at the time the research was conducted. All individual-level information is reported only in anonymized form.

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