



PhD in Applied Economics

Guidelines for the first research paper

The purpose of this document is to set guidelines and expectations with respect to the first research paper for PhD APEC students. The first comprehensive exam consists of three components: (i) written exam in microeconomic theory, (ii) research paper, and (iii) oral examination. This document focuses on the second component. The document sets minimal guidelines. Advisory committees are expected to provide additional information.

The purpose of the research paper is to demonstrate that the student can come up with a research idea independently and to execute this research idea given the limited time period. Students are expected to come up with the topic of the research paper independently but may develop it in consultation with the advisory committee. It can be based on previous courses or research undertaken by the student, but it must contain a substantial contribution relative to the previous work. Ideally, the topic should be in the student's area of dissertation so that this work can be extended into a PhD chapter.

Ideally, the paper should rely on economic theory and empirical methods students learn during the first year. The research paper can be a PhD chapter proposal. The idea of the chapter is clearly articulated. The appropriate literature is critically reviewed and the contribution of the proposed topic is explicitly emphasized. If research involves empirical analysis, the data are collected, described, and preliminary analysis is conducted.

The time limit for the submission of the research paper is set. Students do not have infinite amount of time to come with a perfect topic and excellent results. The purpose of the fixed time period is for students to demonstrate that they can potentially complete their PhD dissertation in a timely manner.

DEADLINES

Proposal submitted	June 15 of the first year
Topic approved	June 22
Final draft submitted	August 22
Oral examination	First two weeks in September

If the above dates fall on weekends, or university holidays, the first Monday after the date is the deadline. Students are encouraged to submit preliminary drafts to the



advisory committee for comments and feedback. The committee should indicate weaknesses in drafts but refrain from directly suggesting what to do to overcome them.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the advisory committee in April to discuss details and to keep track of deadlines.

PAPER PROPOSAL

Your proposal is a brief document outlining your plan of action on the proposed topic. Normally the proposal would have several components:

- The question to be addressed. Why is it an interesting question?
- The context the question is set in. What is the contribution of the proposed research to the relevant existing literature?
- Data. If your project is empirical (and most research papers would be empirical), the description and sources of the data.
- Methodology. Your plan of action. What models and techniques will be used.

The proposal does not have to be very detailed, but should contain enough information to judge the success of planned course of action. The proposal needs to be submitted to the advisory committee and be approved before students proceed with writing the paper. Approval of the topic does not guarantee a pass on comprehensive examination.

If the research paper is a PhD chapter proposal then it would be like a paper proposal but with substantial amount of detail.

APEC 990 SEMINARS

As a part of requirements for APEC 990 Seminars, PhD students are required to attend 7-8 seminars per term. Use these seminars to learn how to formulate a research question and also to learn more about front-line research in various applied economics fields.

PAPER EVALUATION

The following rubrics are used to evaluate research papers.



FIRST RESEARCH PAPER RUBRIC

Adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities

	Proficient 4	Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory 1 or 0	Points
		3	2		
Problem definition	Demonstrates the ability to construct a clear and insightful problem statement with evidence of all relevant contextual factors.	Demonstrates the ability to construct a problem statement with evidence of most relevant contextual factors, and problem statement is adequately detailed.	Begins to demonstrate the ability to construct a problem statement with evidence of most relevant contextual factors, but problem statement is superficial.	Demonstrates a limited ability in identifying a problem statement or related contextual factors.	
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.	
Evaluation of Issues	Evaluation of solutions is deep and elegant (for example, contains thorough and insightful explanation) and includes, deeply and thoroughly, all of the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is adequate (for example, contains thorough explanation) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is brief (for example, explanation lacks depth) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is superficial (for example, contains cursory, surface level explanation) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	
Literature review	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.	
Methodology	All elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are skilfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks is synthesized from economic disciplines and relevant sub-disciplines.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed, however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for.	Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused.	Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework.	
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus.	



Conclusions and related outcomes	States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings.	States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings. The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings.	States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings.	States an ambiguous, illogical, or unsupported conclusion from inquiry findings.	
Limitations and Implications	Insightfully discusses in detail relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Discusses relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents relevant and supported limitations and implications.	Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported.	
Disciplinary conventions	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to applied economics (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to applied economics, including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to applied economics for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.	
Context of and purpose for writing	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).	

Total Points: 000

Total points available - 40

- **Fail – 19 points or fewer**
- **Marginal pass – 20-29 points ORAL REQUIRED**
- **Pass – 30-40 points ORAL REQUIRED**