

Research Paper Requirement for Ph.D. Students

Purpose

The research paper requirement demonstrates the student's capacity to conduct original, independent research at the Ph.D.-level. The necessary skills for this research capability will be developed during the second year of courses in the Ph.D. program. This process will also help the student develop writing and presentation skills that will be useful during the dissertation preparation, the job search, and future research.

Requirements

The paper must be 20-30 pages in length (including figures and tables), double-spaced with one inch margins all around, written in AJAE style, and be within an agricultural economics specialization area. The research must include a problem statement, a literature review, relevant theory, and analysis. The topic must be original to the student and should be motivated by relevance to decision makers or previous work in the profession. The quality and depth of the analysis should be consistent with those of an AAEA Selected Paper (see AgEcon Search for examples). The student may use whatever methodological tools are deemed appropriate.

The paper must be solely authored by the student and be based on research that is largely performed by the student. Faculty members or fellow students may assist in minor aspects of the research, but the core material should be independent work of the student. The analysis cannot be written based on work begun prior to the student's entry into the Agricultural Economics Ph.D. program. University policies for academic integrity strictly apply. The student must submit a signed statement that the research paper is their work and has not been used to fulfill another requirement at the University of Kentucky. The student may be asked to submit supplemental material to assure originality of the paper.

Timing

The research paper must be finished within one year of the student's successful completion of the Economics Ph.D theory sequence (ECO 601, 602, 701, and 702 and passage of the microeconomics and macroeconomics qualifying requirements). There is an annual cycle for submission of the research paper. Topics must be approved by the major professor and two other members of the student's advisory committee based on a proposal submitted by the student by May 15. A memorandum of transmittal from the major professor must have the signatures of the student, major professor, and two committee members stating that the topic is appropriate for the research paper. Completed papers are due September 1. Papers requiring minor revisions are resubmitted by November 1, while papers requiring major revisions are resubmitted by December 1. If any of these deadlines fall on a weekend, they move to the next business day.

Evaluation

A committee will be appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies to evaluate all research papers submitted. The review standard will be similar to the AAEA Selected Papers competition except that the comments to the student will be much more extensive. The problem must be relevant and timely, the literature review must be comprehensive, the methods must be justified and outlined, and the analysis must be rigorous. The initial evaluation will be judged as pass-with-distinction; pass; or revise and resubmit (minor or major revisions). Papers judged as revise and resubmit will be evaluated upon resubmission and awarded a pass or fail. A failing grade on the resubmission will result in the student's dismissal from the Ph.D. program.

All students passing the research paper requirement must present their paper to the department as preparation for conference participation or journal submission. The presentations will be critiqued by attendees, but the presentation will not be formally evaluated.