Dissertation Proposal Guidelines and Forms
Economics Ph.D. Program – University of Virginia
March, 2019

Writing and Preparing for your Proposal

Proposals are limited to 15 pages, double-spaced, in 12 point font, with 1” margins. This limit includes appendices and tables, but not figures and references. Insert tables into the text and put figures at the end, after the references. Express yourself concisely, a skill that will help in your career, as conferences, journals, and grants all impose page and word limits for submissions. A template for the title page of your proposal appears at the end of this document (page 4).

A satisfactory proposal should:

1. Discuss related literature, provide a complete bibliography and indicate the importance of your research in this context.

2. Explain why your own work is interesting and worthwhile.

3. Indicate what issues and problems you will investigate and what specific theoretical or econometric techniques you will use, and (for empirical dissertations) provide a careful description of the data sources.

4. For research based on a theoretical model, completely describe the model, or a useful special case of the model, so that the reader does not have to consult the literature in order to evaluate the proposed research.

5. Provide an outline (in paragraph form) of various parts of the thesis, indicating clearly what is finished, what is in progress, and what remains to be done.

Be prepared to make a 20-minute oral presentation of your proposal and then answer questions. The ability to make an effective oral presentation is an important skill, and since many conference presentations are limited to 20 minutes, working within this framework provides valuable practice. When colleagues at other universities call us to ask about the teaching and research of our students on the job market, our response will be heavily influenced by the presentations that we have observed during the proposal and workshops.

Preparing for the Oral Presentation

1. Attend the proposals of others and think about how their presentation and responses to questions could be improved.
2. Take drafts to your faculty advisors and ask them to point out the rough spots that are likely to generate questions and objections.

3. Find an empty classroom and practice your presentation while speaking out loud; otherwise, you will almost surely underestimate the time it will take to say what you intend to say. If possible, do a final trial run in front of another student.

**Scheduling your Proposal**

Dissertation proposals will be conducted only in the fall and spring semesters while classes are in session (i.e., not during final exams or breaks). *Students proposing during the spring semester must do so during the ERC (Economic Research Colloquium)*; the DGS may give permission for an alternative date only under pressing circumstances; the alternative date should fall on a Friday. At latest, you must schedule your proposal by April 15th in your third year. To schedule your proposal:

- Check the Economics Department Calendar online to see which dates are available and confer with the Department Coordinator to confirm the dates you are considering are definitely available.
- Consult your faculty advisors to determine a mutually convenient date and time.
- Confirm all dates with the DGS.
- To reserve room 120, complete the Single/Multi-Day Room Reservation form (go to http://economics.virginia.edu/department-resources, under Faculty>Quicklinks>Reservation Forms) and submit the form to the Department Coordinator.
- Have the advisors sign the Proposal Permission Form (page 3) and submit it to the Graduate Program Coordinator. Your proposal must be approved by at least two Economics faculty members, and you must have a third reader (ECON faculty and approved by the DGS). If you are unable to find a third reader two months before your proposal is due, please contact the DGS for assistance.

Check with your advisors/readers to see when they will need your proposal. They generally ask to see the proposal at least one week before they are expected to sign off (i.e., two weeks before the proposal date).

Complete the following Permission to Sign Up for a Dissertation Proposal Date form and submit it only after your proposal has been scheduled, approved by the DGS, and the day and time have been confirmed with your advisors.
Permission to Sign Up for a Dissertation Proposal Date
Economics Ph.D. Program – University of Virginia

______________________________ (student’s name) has decided upon an acceptable research topic to pursue in his/her dissertation. As his/her provisional dissertation committee, we have reached an agreement with this student on a research plan that, if followed, should result in an acceptable dissertation proposal (15-page limit) by the agreed upon date.

Therefore, this student is approved to schedule a dissertation proposal presentation during the ERC or on alternative date (with prior approval of the DGS):

___________________*, _________________, at ____________ am / pm, in ____________.
(day of week) (day/month/year) (time) (room)

1. Name of Thesis Advisor (print)______________________________

Signature_____________________________________

2. Name of Thesis Advisor (print) ______________________________

Signature_____________________________________

2. Name of Third Reader (print)______________________________
   (Signature not required)

Proposal Title:

________________________________________________________

*Students proposing during the spring semester must do so during the ERC (Economic Research Colloquium); the DGS may give permission for an alternative date only under pressing circumstances; the alternative date should fall on a Friday. Dissertation proposals must take place during the regular semester (not during final exams or breaks). To allow a broad range of faculty and students to attend, please avoid conflicts with workshops or typical class times. Proposals usually take place at 11:30 am on Fridays; consult with the DGS if your dissertation advisors prefer a different time.
Abstract. An abstract of up to 150 words should appear here.

Name of Reader 1 ____________________________
Name of Reader 2 ____________________________
Name of Reader 3 ____________________________