How to write an (empirical) thesis

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Kick-Off

- Expectation
- Your writing experiences
- Main difficulties
- What are your next projects?
By the end of today you should

1. Know how to plan your thesis project

2. Know where to find relevant data

3. Know how to conduct an (empirical) literature review

4. Know how to write a convincing research proposal
**Structure**

Session 1: A typical thesis timeline

Session 2: How to find a research question?

Session 3: How to find relevant data?

Session 4: How to conduct an (empirical) literature review?

Session 5: How to write a research proposal
BA vs. MA Thesis

• Different length

• Easier research strategy in BA

• Empirics more simple in BA

• Empirical analysis has be implemented thoroughly in both!
Session 1

A typical thesis timeline
Planning your work: A typical thesis timeline

a. Find your topic 2 weeks

b. Agree on research proposal with supervisor 2 weeks
   ➢ Do not register before agreement

c. Implement data analysis 2 months

d. Write-up 1.5 months

e. Revisions and layout 2 weeks
A typical thesis timeline

1. Find your topic

• Choose a research area (strategically)
  e.g. poverty, taxes, finance, ...

• Refine research questions
  e.g. What are the causes of child mortality?

• Formulate a working hypothesis
  ask one research question
A typical thesis timeline
2. Get familiar with the topic

- Read 30 journal **abstracts** from the past 5 years
  - Identify key authors in field
  - Write down key questions researched in the field (to find where your contribution might fit in)
  - Narrow down your topic

- Choose key papers of the relevant literature to read in more detail
  - ca. 10 journal papers (you can read more at a later stage)

- Short empirical literature review:
  - How have others answered my research question or similar ones?

- Use smart ideas from the existing literature for your proposal
  - Methods, identification strategies and key variables
  - Theoretical models
A typical thesis timeline

3. Find relevant data

• Check academic websites
  [more details later]

• Check journal literature on topic
  what data have been used by other researchers?

• Contact supervisor
  ask for data suggestions
A typical thesis timeline

4. Implement data analysis

• Get familiar with Stata

• Get familiar with your data (descriptive statistics)

• Implement main analysis (regressions)

• Discuss expected and unexpected results

• Adjust the “main story” of your thesis paper

• Discuss additional methods, models and robustness checks (!)
A typical thesis timeline
5. Expand literature review

You need 4 types of empirical literature:

1. Economics literature in the field (e.g. Handbook of XYZ Economics)
2. Literature on your topic from other disciplines (e.g., geography, medicine, information technology, …)
3. (Theoretical and empirical) Literature to support the (causal) argument of your hypothesis
4. Literature to help explain your (un)expected results
A typical thesis timeline
6. Finally start writing: Structure your thesis

The standard structure

1. Introduction
2. Literature review and theory (hypotheses)
3. Data (incl. descriptive analysis)
4. Methods (explain models + assumptions)
5. Results (discuss unexpected results)
6. Conclusion
A typical thesis timeline

6. Finally start writing: Plan your chapters

1. decide on structure (flow of arguments)

2. collect all relevant arguments (in bullet points)

3. find additional literature to support causal links

4. write down a first draft

5. revise text (put it aside for a day or two!)

6. ask native speakers
A typical thesis timeline

6. Finally start writing: Layout

- Compile bibliography
- Format tables and graphs
- Add appendix
- Add page numbers
- Add margins (add +1cm on the left)
- Set up table of contents, list of figures and tables, acronyms
A typical thesis timeline
6. Finally start writing: Final comments

Ask yourself:

• Is theory and literature review convincing?

• Are methods well explained?

• Are results correctly interpreted?

• Are robustness checks convincing?

➢ In case of doubt, ask your supervisor (PhD student)
A typical thesis timeline
From the very beginning: (Data) Management

- Organize a your folder (literature, notes, data)
- Organize datasets and Stata do-files on your computer
- Run daily backups (e.g. www.dropbox.com)
- Manage your literature (e.g. zotero, mendeley)
A typical thesis timeline

What to take away?

• Don’t panic

• Choose a topic according to your interests

• Check data availability

• Structure your work from the beginning (small steps)

• Ask your supervisor if you have doubts
Questions?
Session 2:

How to find a research question?
How to find a research question?

1. The main idea needs to be interesting to you
   - Read Economics Blogs
   - Read the journal papers suggested (in most seminars)
   - Browse abstracts in some easy-to-read journals
     - *Journal of Economic Literature*
     - *World Development*
     - *Journal of International Development*
   - Browse textbooks from class
How to find a research question?

1. Some links to get started

   • Economics Blogs
     - VOX: www.voxeu.org
       http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations
     - Greg Mankiw: http://gregmankiw.blogspot.com
     - Paul Krugman: http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com
     - Freakonomics: www.freakonomics.com/blog

   • High Quality Working Papers
     - JPAL: www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications
How to find a research question?

2. Chose a topic (strategically)
   - Speak with a PhD student who works on an interesting topic
   - Check data availability
   - Consider your future career plans
     - Private sector
     - Public sector
     - International NGOs or multilateral organization
     - PhD
How to find a research question?

3. Find your research question

- Formulate some (broad) questions you can think of
- Look for open questions and debates in the literature
- Read conclusion of papers: open research questions are often mentioned there

➤ Choose one research question
How to find a research question?

4. Formulate a working hypothesis
   - Define the aim/objective of the analysis
   - Argue for the causal direction of the effect and the sign
   - In an empirical analysis the hypothesis must be testable

5. Check with your supervisor
   - He/she can help you focus your hypothesis
   - Sometimes topics are suggested (or data sources/ data sets)
How to find a research question?
How to find a research question?

Exercise 1:

- **Area**: Development economics
- **Topic**: Development aid
- **Narrow down the topic**: Aid effectiveness
- **More specific**: Role of donors and aid recipient countries
- **Research question**: Ideas?
Exercise 1: Aid effectiveness

• More specific: Role of donors and aid recipient countries

• Research question:

  1. How do donors allocate their aid to poor countries?

    Hypothesis: Donor countries allocate their aid according to strategic economic interests (among other factors)
Exercise 1: Aid effectiveness

• **More specific:** Role of donors and aid recipient countries

• **Research Question:**
  1. How do donors allocate their aid to poor countries?
     *Hypothesis:* Donor countries allocate their aid according to strategic economic interests (among other factors)
  2. On what depends the effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa?
     *Hypothesis:* The effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa depends ceteris paribus on the prevailing political system
How to find a research question?

Exercise 1: Aid Effectiveness

• **More specific:** Role of donors and aid recipient countries

• **Research question:**

1. How do donors allocate their aid to poor countries?  
   **Hypothesis:** Donor countries allocate their aid according to strategic economic interests (among other factors).

2. On what depends the effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa?  
   **Hypothesis:** The effectiveness of foreign aid in Africa depends ceteris paribus on the prevailing political system

3. How does recipient country performance influence the effectiveness of foreign aid?  
   **Hypothesis:** Recipient country performance in fighting corruption influences the effectiveness of aid positively
How to find a research question?

Exercise 2:

• **Area:** Political economy
• **Topic:** Public finance
• **Narrow down:** Political favoritism in the allocation of subsidies
• **More specific:** Politically motivated allocation of EU-subsidies
• **Research question:**

  **Ideas?**
Exercise 2:

• **More specific:** Politically motivated allocation of EU-subsidies

• **Research question:**
  1. What are the political factors that influence the allocation of the EU subsidies for agriculture?

  **Hypothesis:** A member that holds the position of the EU commissioner for agriculture receives more agricultural subsidies ceteris paribus.
Exercise 2:

- **More specific**: Politically motivated allocation of EU-subsidies
- **Research question**:
  1. What are the political factors that influence the allocation of the EU subsidies for agriculture?  
     **Hypothesis**: A member that holds the position of the EU commissioner for agriculture receives more agricultural subsidies ceteris paribus.
  2. What factors determine the size of EU structural funds?  
     **Hypothesis**: A region receives more (less) structural funds in regional election years and if the incumbent is of the same party (opposition party) as the national government.
How to find a research question?

Exercise 3:

• **Area:** International economics
• **Topic:** International governance
• **Narrow down:** Effects of trade agreements
• **More specific:** WTO agreements, bilateral trade agreements
• **Research question:**

  Ideas?
Exercise 3: Effects of trade agreements

- More specific: WTO agreements, bilateral trade agreements
- Research question:
  1. What type of trade agreement allows large countries to negotiate their interests better?

Hypothesis: In bilateral trade agreements, large countries can negotiate their economic interests better.
Formulate a research question and a hypothesis for your own topic at hand.

Discussion
Session 3

How to find relevant data?
How to find relevant data?
Some Basics

• Micro-Data vs. Macro-Data:
  Household surveys vs. Country statistics

• Consider the **unit of analysis:**
  country, household, individual

• Time Dimension:
  • Time-series data
  • Cross-section data
  • Panel data = time-series + cross-section
How to find relevant data?

Example 1: Macro data

• Thesis: Does aid trigger trade?
• Question: Is development aid from rich countries used to increase trade with poor countries?
• Data: Aid data (30 year panel) Trade data (30 year panel)
• Unit of analysis: country per year
How to find relevant data?

Example 2: Micro data

- Thesis: Effect of Food Price Shock on Nutrition in Zambia
- Question: What do people eat if main food becomes very expensive?
- Data: Food consumption data from 2 years (pseudo panel)
  Food price data
- Unit of analysis: Household per year (though not the same household)
Macro data

Two data types

1. Aggregated data = combined information on individuals (GDP, unemployment statistics, demographics)

2. System-level data = properties of states or political systems (political indicators, institutional variables, other indices)
   - Polity IV index
   - Corruption index
Macro data sources

Overview: The MacroDataGuide

www.nsd.uib.no/macrodataguide/source.html
Macro data sources

1. **OECD Statistics**

   [http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx)

   - 300 datasets
   - Coverage: 30 member and some non-member countries (such as China, Brazil, Russia)
   - Timespan: 1960 – present, updated regularly
   - Topics:
     - Agriculture, Development, Finance, Globalization, National Accounts, Regional Statistics, among others
Macro data sources

2. World Bank, Development Indicators

http://data.worldbank.org/

- Coverage: 209 countries
- on a wide range of development issues (900 indicators)
- official sources (official register, administration)
- Timespan: 1965 – present
- Topics:
  Aid Effectiveness, Education, Financial sector, Health, Infrastructure, Poverty, among others
- Since 2010 main focus on achievements of the MDGs.
Macro data sources

3. IMF – World Economic outlook and International Financial statistics


- Coverage: 150 countries
- Time-series data
- Topics: IMF lending, exchange rates and other economic and financial indicators
- Timespan: 1980 – present (updated regularly)
Macro data sources

4. CIRI Human Rights Project
   http://ciri.binghamton.edu/
   • Database compiled under the supervision of David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards
   • Standards-based quantitative information on government respect on 13 internationally recognized Human Rights
   • Coverage: 200 countries (present and historical)
   • Timespan: 1981 – 2009 (updated annually)
   • Topics: categories covering physical integrity, freedom of speech, of press and political participation and women’s rights
   • Important: have a look at the documentation of the variables.
Macro data sources

5. **Polity Project – Polity IV**
   http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm
   - 36 indicators
   - Covering authority characteristics of states with the main index as a measure of the degree of democracy and autocracy
   - Coverage: 162 countries
   - Timespan: 1800 -2009

6. **Penn World tables**
   http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/
   - Economic time series (33 variables)
   - Based on national accounts
   - Coverage: 189 countries
   - Objective: Have a quantitative comparability between countries and across time
   - Timespan: 1950 -2009
Macro data sources

7. **Freedom House**  
[http://www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)  
- NGO offering three data sets  
- Topics: freedom in the world, freedom of the press, nations in transit  
- Coverage: 194 countries  
- Timespan: 1972 – present

8. **EuroStat**  
- Statistics for the European Union  
- Source: official registers, administrative records, national accounts and censuses of states  
- Timespan: 1900 – present (but many series just available since 1960)  
- Topics: 5000 tables and data sets organized in 9 categories (general statistics, economy and finance, population and social conditions etc.)
Micro data sources
Micro data sources

Household survey data

1. Multi-Purpose Surveys
2. Special Purpose Surveys
3. Country Specific Surveys
4. Impact Evaluation Surveys
5. General micro data collections
Micro data sources

Starting Point: Household Survey Network
http://www.internationalsurveynetwork.org/home/?q=activities/catalog/surveys

➤ Overview of all available household surveys since 1960
Micro data sources

1. Multipurpose Surveys
   a. Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) World Bank
      Focus: Poverty, inequality and their determinants
      • LSMS Survey Finder
         http://iresearch.worldbank.org/lsms/lsmssurveyFinder.htm
      • LSMS (Pseudo) Panels
   b. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)
      http://www.dhsprogram.com/Data/
Micro data sources

1. Multipurpose Surveys (continued)

c. World Health Surveys
   http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/en/
   Focus: Health Service Delivery

d. RAND Family Life Surveys (FLS)
   http://www.rand.org/labor/FLS.html

e. National Labor Force Survey
Micro data sources

1. Multipurpose Surveys (continued)

f. Aging and Adult Health (SAGE WHO)
   http://www.who.int/healthinfo/sage/en/
   data on adult health from 8 large countries

  g. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) UNICEF
     situation of children and women
Micro data sources

1. Multipurpose Surveys (continued)

f. Aging and Adult Health (SAGE WHO)
   http://www.who.int/healthinfo/systems/sage/en/
   data on adult health from 8 large countries

g. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) UNICEF
   http://www.childinfo.org/mics4_surveys.html
   situation of children and women
Micro data sources

2. Special Purpose Surveys

a. PRIO – conflict (civil war, armed conflict, arms trade)
   https://www.prio.org/Data/

b. HICN – conflict
   http://www.hicn.org/wordpress/?page_id=92

c. COW – conflict between nations
   http://www.correlatesofwar.org/

d. Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Data
   Time and location of terrorist attacks
Micro data sources

3. Country Specific (Panel) Surveys

a. Rand (Indonesia)
   http://www.rand.org/labor/FLS.html

b. NSS (India)

c. Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (Panel)
   http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms-hse
   18 surveys, since 1991

d. Tanzania Panel: Kagera Health and Development Survey
   http://go.worldbank.org/7SVNC82EV0

And many more:
http://www.internationalsurveynetwork.org/home/?q=activities/catalog/surveys
Micro data sources

4. Impact Evaluation Surveys

• Try other outcome indicators
• Check robustness
• Heterogeneous effects (e.g. gender)

a. World Bank
   http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog

b. JPAL (Poverty Action Lab)
   http://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluations
Micro data sources

5. General micro data collections

a. UK Data Archive
   www.data-archive.ac.uk/find

b. ICPSR at Michigan University
   Social science research data
   www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/index.jsp
   Topics: political science, sociology, demography, economics, history, gerontology,
   criminal justice, public health, foreign policy, terrorism, health and medical care,
   early education, education, racial and ethnic minorities, psychology, law,
   substance abuse and mental health, and more.

c. Germany: Statistische Landesämter
   www.forschungsdatenzentrum.de
   Topics: Population, Social Affairs, Education, Health, Economics and Business,
   Taxation, Law
Macro data sources

What to take away

• Unit of analysis determines data dimension
• Several databases cover similar aspects
• Chose database according to literature
• Read the documentation of the macro variables
• Verify that index variables really cover the aspect of interest

In case of doubt: Ask your supervisor
Paper replication
Tipp: Replicate and built on published empirical work

Reason:

- Smart way to
  1. Find a topic and build on existing empirical findings
  2. Use existing data sets
  3. Get used to data issues
Paper replications

Many journals provide the data of published articles

• Idea: possibility of replication makes research results more convincing

• For students: great source of data

How to use replication data for a thesis?

1. Rerun the same analysis and add your own ideas
   • Give the paper a different spin (add variable)
   • Add more robustness checks

2. Rerun analysis for a different country or setting
Paper replications

Possible examples:

1. Study looks at impact on child mortality in **Uganda**

   **Idea:** Try to find the impact factors on child mortality in **Kenya**
Paper replications

Possible examples:

1. Study looks at impact on child mortality in Uganda
   
   **Idea:** Try to find the impact factors on child mortality in Kenya

2. Analysis of aid effects on trade in developing countries
   
   **Idea:** Look at aid effects on trade in emerging economies.

Or:

- Add some variables; change context/setting; change method
Paper replications
Journals providing datasets:

- American Economic Review
- Econometrica
- Journal of Political Economy
- Review of Economic Studies
- International Economic Review
- Journal of Labor Economics
- Journal of the European Economic Association
- Review of Economics and Statistics
- Journal of Environmental Economics and Management
- Journal of Human Resources
- Journal of Law, Economics and Organization
- Journal of Economic Perspectives
- American Journal of Agricultural Economics
- Industrial and Labor Relations Review
- Journal of Applied Econometrics
- Canadian Journal of Economics
- Macroeconomic Dynamics
- Southern Economic Journal
- American Political Science Review
- Journal of the American Statistical Association
- Journal of Conflict Resolution
Paper replications

Example:


• Download data
• Open dataset
Questions?
Session 4

How to conduct an empirical literature review?
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

• **Books vs. Papers**

  In short: don’t read books

  Except:
  
  • Econometrics books (Wooldridge; Angrist & Pischke)
  • Text books (Krugman, Obstfeld, Ray and Basu, ect.)
  • Handbook of Development Economics

• **Journal Papers vs. Working Papers**

  In short: avoid working papers (only very recent period)
  avoid papers from before the 1990s
  mainly use literature from 2010 onwards
  do not read non-English journals
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

How to search?

1. Identify leading authors in your field
   • Compare bibliographies of several articles
   • Use google scholar
2. Narrow down your topic
3. Find main arguments and counter-arguments
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

Intended result of literature review:

- Present the key approaches in your field (3-5 approaches)
- Summarize 6-12 articles (only main points)
- Where does your research question fit in?
- What is your main “shoulder” to lean on?
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

You need 4 types of empirical literature:

1. Economics literature in the field (e.g. Handbook of XYZ Economics)
2. Literature on your topic from other disciplines (e.g., geography, medicine, information technology, ...)
3. (Theoretical and empirical) Literature to support the (causal) argument of your hypothesis
4. Literature to help explain your (un)expected results
Questions?
How to conduct an empirical literature review?
Getting Started: only recent articles, find PDF versions

How to use Google Scholar
How to conduct an empirical literature review?
Getting Started: only recent articles, find PDF versions
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

Getting Started: only recent articles, find PDF versions
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

For few restricted journals and very recent article use working paper versions:

• Links to find them
  http://econpapers.repec.org/
  http://ideas.repec.org/i/p.html

• World Bank working papers
• IMF working paper series
• NBER working paper series
How to conduct an empirical literature review?
Example: Journal of Economic Literature

Content:

• Literature review and essays on specialized topics in economics
• Book reviews

How to get there:

1. SUB Homepage
   [www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de](http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de)
2. E-Journals
3. Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek Heidelberg
4. Suchkriterien: Journal of Economic Literature
5. Choose: via JSTORE
6. Zu den Volltexten

➢ This applies for all journals you want to find
Empirical literature review:
Journal of Economic Literature
Example 1: Development aid

9,458 Search Results

(Development Aid) AND jid:(j100685 OR j100219)

Search within results

All Results  Journals  Books  Pamphlets

All Content  Content I can access

Relevance  Newest  Oldest

10  25  50  100

Citation Tools  Save  Email  Export  Track

Select/Unselect All

O: Economic Development, Technological Change, and Growth
Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 50, No. 2 (JUNE 2012), pp. 598-605

Instruments, Randomization, and Learning about Development
Angus Deaton
Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 48, No. 2 (JUNE 2010), pp. 424-455

Economic History; Economic Development; National Economies
Example 2: Economic crisis

World Economic Crisis Once Again
Andre Gunder Frank
Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 27, No. 9 (Feb. 29, 1992), pp. 457-458

...World Economic Crisis Once Again Andre Gunder Frank The world economic crisis has pushed the weakest parts of the world economy (all quite independently of their supposedly different economic 'systems' and political ideologies) into a depression which is already deeper...

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THE BLACK ECONOMIC CRISIS
The Black Scholar, Vol. 5, No. 5, BLACK ECONOMICS (II) (February 1974)

...THE THE BLACK BLACK ECONOMIC ECONOMIC CRISIS CRISIS THE THE BLACK BLACK ECONOMIC ECONOMIC CRISIS CRISIS It has become a cliche today to say that the United States is caught in a major economic crisis. Whether one refers to growing unemployment, monetary instability, prices spiraling...

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Best journals in economics

- American Economic Review
- Journal of Economic Literature (JEL)
- Quarterly Journal of Economics
- Econometrica
- Review of Economics and Statistics
- Review of Economic Studies
Thematic journals

• Development Economics
  Journal of Development Economics
• Economic Policy
  American Economic Journal: Economic Policy
  Journal of Institutional Economics
• International Economics
  Journal of International Economics
• Public Economics
  Journal of Public Economics
• Finance
  Financial Economics Journal
• Conflict
  Journal of Conflict Resolution
Find literature
Offers of Heidelberg University

Die wichtigsten Sucheinstiege

HEIDI
Katalog für die Bibliotheken der Universität und
Universitätsbibliographie (HeiBIB)

E-Journals
94,500 Fachzeitschriften im Volltext

Datenbanken
3,120 Datenbanken (Bibliographien, Volltexte, Lexika,
Wörterbücher ...)

HeiDOK
Der Heidelberger Dokumentenserver: Elektronisches
Publizieren im Open Access

HeiJOURNALS
Publikation wissenschaftlicher Zeitschriften

HeiICON
Die Heidelberger Bild- und Multimediadatenbank: Bildmaterial für
Forschung und Lehre

Heidelberger historische Bestände – digital
Bibliotheca Palatina, Klosterbibliothek Lorsch, Weischer Gast, Schrifttum
zur Stadt und Universität Heidelberg, zur Kunstgeschichte, Archäologie,
Ägyptologie und Südasien ...

Heidelberger Fachinformationsdienste
arthistoricum.net (Kunst), Propylaeum (Alterswissenschaften), Savifa
(Südasien)
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

Literature Management

Collect, organize, cite, and share your literature

- Zotero: [www.zotero.org](http://www.zotero.org)
  - Automatic Bibliograph
  - Freeware
  - Nice online support

- Mendeley: [www.mendeley.com](http://www.mendeley.com)
  - Freeware
  - Youtube support

  - Deutschsprachig
  - Lizenz über Uni

- EndNote: [http://www ub uni heidelberg de/helios/fachinfo/www/schulung/endnote/start-endnote.html](http://www ub uni heidelberg de/helios/fachinfo/www/schulung/endnote/start-endnote.html)
  - Englischsprachig
  - Lizenz über Uni
How to conduct an empirical literature review?

Literature management: save PDFs with bibliographic names
Session 4: What to take away

• Structure your literature search

• Goal: summary of key approaches in your field

• How: use specialized journals

• Never forget high ranked journals:
  not mentioning these articles shows lack of rigor

• Do not use working papers!
  only exception: very recent literature 2014-2015
Coffee
Session 5

How to write a convincing research proposal?
Focus

• Aim and addressee
• Suggested structure
• Examples
Who reads a research proposal?

- Master / PhD supervisor
- Research fund: application for funding/ for field work
Suggested Structure

1. Introduction + background (1 paragraph)
2. Literature review (1/2 page)
3. Setting (1 paragraph)
4. Data description (1 paragraph)
5. Estimation strategy (1/2 page)
6. Shortcomings and challenges (1/2 page)
7. References
Suggested structure

1. Introduction + background (1 paragraph)
   - Like the introduction of the paper (but shorter)
   - Describe the motivation, background of your idea
   - Catch the readers interest
   - State the hypothesis of your work
Suggested structure

2. Literature review (1/2 page)
   
   • Name the two or three main studies/papers attending your topic
   
   • Support your hypothesis or clearly show what is missing that you are going to cover
   
   • If any, address the theoretical background
Suggested structure

3. Setting (1 paragraph)

Ask yourself:

• What countries do you look at?
• Why exactly these countries, this region?
• Why is your research relevant in this setting?
Suggested structure

Setting examples:

1. What type of trade agreement allows large countries to negotiate their interests better?

*Focus lies on ASEAN region*

**Setting:** The focus of the study lies on a regional trade agreement in Asia, namely ASEAN for several reasons: first, the countries are different in size (economically and geographically). Second, South-East Asia is increasingly important in international trade. Third, the region acts with one voice in the WTO. Finally, data is available for a large period of time to analyze the development over time.
Suggested structure

Setting examples:

2. Is official development assistance from the G7 countries effective in promoting growth in recipient countries?

*Focus G7 countries*

**Setting:** G7 countries are the major donors providing up to 80 percent of the global aid budget. All have the same goal of enhancing economic development on recipient countries. Maybe other studies have only focused on USA, Japan and Germany so the G7 study would broaden the perspective (among other reasons).
4. Data description (1 paragraph)

Answer the following questions:

- What data do you use: micro/ macro data?
- What database/survey/sources?
- What timeframe is covered by data?
- What is the unit of analysis?
- Why did you decide to do so?
Data issues:

➢ Use existing data (faster, cheaper, easier)
➢ Start looking early (in case you have to order)
➢ Example for Data Description:


5. Analytical strategy

5.1 Theoretical paper

Explain the theories you base your analysis on

- Why are these theories useful for answering your RQ?
- How are they related?
- Be specific about what is relevant to your RQ.
- Use economic arguments!
- What is the contribution of your work?
5. Analytical strategy (1/2 page)

5.1 Estimation strategy

1. **Describe** identification strategy
   - Specify causal channels (reverse causality)
   - Make theoretical prediction (expected direction of impact)

2. **Specify** Econometric Model
   - What strategy will be used? What does it do?
   - Show the model and refer to standard econometric literature (Wooldrige, etc.)
   - Describe outcome (subscript matters):

\[ Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \gamma_t + \beta T_i P_t + \sum_j \theta_j X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \]
5. Analytical strategy (1/2 page)
5.1 Estimation strategy (cont.)

3. Explain the method
   • Key assumptions and challenges (Discussion)
   • Weaknesses/Limitations of the approach
   ➢ Shortcomings and challenges arise most of the time out of the empirical strategy
     o data availability
     o shortcomings of the strategy itself
     o ...

Suggested structure
To remember

➢ Choice of models is a function of the outcome variable

➢ Check:
   • What is the scale of my outcome variable?
   • Is the variable ordered?

➢ Examples
   • Continuous: OLS
   • Dummy: Probit/Logit model
   • Categorical, ordered: Ordered Logit model
   • Categorical, unordered: Multinomial Logit model
What to take away:

• Don’t expect at a seminar paper/ master thesis proposal to match exactly this structure from the beginning
• Write your ideas down
• Try to match it to the suggested structure (more or less)
• Get feedback from your supervisor
• Modify the proposal
• It helps to structure your thesis from the beginning
Read the exemplar proposal

• Imagine it is a proposal of your colleague
• Provide feedback
  • Be constructive: positive and critical aspects.
  • What questions are still open?
  • Compare both proposals.
Preparation for second day of seminar
Prepare for the second day of the seminar:

1. Write your own proposal (1-2 pages)
   - Use the tips and tricks provided here
   - Remember we don’t expect it to be perfect
   - We offer feedback

2. Present it in class (4 slides incl. title slide)

3. Read examples of seminar papers:
   - Identify strengths and shortcomings
   - Assign grade
Your own proposals

• Your research idea must not be original – any idea will work
• Try to make a structure of your thoughts and ideas
• Do not get lost in the details

➢ Send us a copy until

Sunday May 10, 2015 at 7 pm: 1-2 pages
Day 1

The end