

## GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS IN ECONOMETRICS

This document contains a set of guidelines that all students entering their third year of the PhD program with an interest in doing research in econometrics should read and be aware of. We divide the guidelines into three sections: (a) Expected Timing of Events, (b) Successful Strategies for a Prospectus, and (c) Final Recommendations.

### Expected Timing of Events

1. Students are expected to frequently talk to at least one of the faculty from the econometrics group during the **Fall quarter** of their third year.
2. Students should provide a **draft** of their 501 paper to any faculty invited to attend the 501 talk, at least a week before the presentation.
3. Students are expected to frequently talk to at least one of the faculty from the econometrics group during the **Winter quarter** of their third year.
4. By the first week of the **Spring quarter** in their third year, students should decide, or at least have a clear sense, of who the chair of their committee will be.
5. Students are expected to form a **thesis committee** of at least three members by the middle of the Spring quarter of their third year.
6. Once a committee is decided, students are expected to keep **all members** of their committee updated with the research progress (and setbacks).
7. Students are expected to provide a research proposal, in writing, to all members of their committee, **14 days before the prospectus date**.

**Main Takeaway:** start forming relationships with your committee members as early as possible and make sure to keep all members up to date.

### Successful Strategies for a Prospectus

Successful prospectuses may take different forms and shapes, so there are no strict rules as to what a successful prospectus may look like. However, there are certain guidelines that should provide a good idea.

1. A standard successful proposal typically contains three projects:
  - a. **Project 1:** well advanced, with clear results, and with high likelihood of becoming a paper soon. Typically there is at least a rough draft for this paper.
  - b. **Project 2:** a well-defined statement of a problem with some outline of the steps required to complete it. This may still require substantial work to take it to completion but the what/why/how are clear.
  - c. **Project 3:** an idea, hopefully ambitious and broad, that has high upside despite potentially being high risk.
2. In many successful prospectuses, the first project is a finished paper that is well written and that could be submitted for publication to a journal. Often, the paper is the end result of one of the 501 papers.

3. In some successful prospectuses none of the projects are at an advanced stage, but the research proposal includes written description of the project(s) with a clear statement of the necessary steps that must be carried out to bring at least one of the projects to completion. Such proposals have some evidence that the student is able to solve the stated problem(s).
4. In many cases, having at least one project with an empirical application is desirable and recommended. However, there are exceptions to this recommendation, depending on the topic of the prospectus. This should be discussed with the committee.
5. Students are expected to articulate in a **written document**, to be shared with the members of the committee, the content of their prospectus at least **14 days** before the date of their oral evaluation.
6. At the oral evaluation, students are expected to prepare a 45 min long presentation (supported with slides) that summarizes the projects in their prospectus.
7. The slides that are used during the oral evaluation should **NOT** be viewed as a substitute of the written document described in point 5 above.

**Main Takeaway:** the main ingredient of a successful prospectus is a **well written** research proposal and that usually includes three projects.

### Final Recommendations

1. After the prospectus is passed, students are required to regularly update **all members** of their committee. This includes updates on progress they are making in their research and changes in direction where one project is abandoned to move to a different research agenda. Students should inform committee members of setbacks that, instead of moving research forward, pushes the project a couple of steps backwards. It is important for dissertation writers to understand that changes in direction and setbacks are common aspects of the research process. We urge students to discuss them transparently with committee members.
2. Frequent communication with all members of the committee is encouraged, as opposed to a model where students mostly talk to the chair in their committee.
3. During the year that students are expecting to go on the market, they should talk to their chair about the timeline required for a successful market. Key deadlines include when to provide a draft of the job market paper to all the letter writers, when to give a practice talk, and when to provide a final draft of the job market paper.