Guidelines for EC 391 Research Projects
with Professor Donihue – Spring 2002

Schedule

Your grade on this project will reflect your ability to meet the following schedule. Note that the final version of your paper is due on May 13\textsuperscript{th} and that \textbf{FINAL PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DEADLINE}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline is 12 noon on the</th>
<th>What’s Due</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
<th>Date Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, February 22, 2002</td>
<td>RESEARCH PROPOSAL</td>
<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 15, 2002</td>
<td>PROGRESS REPORT</td>
<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, April 29, 2002</td>
<td>FIRST DRAFT</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 13, 2002</td>
<td>FINAL PAPER</td>
<td>55 %</td>
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Late Penalties

I do not accept late final papers. I will allow you to miss other deadlines, but not without penalty. A late research proposal or progress report will be assessed a penalty of 1 point per day late, up to a maximum of 10 points. A late first draft will be penalized at a rate of 2 points per day, up to a maximum of 25 points. Your grade will be calculated as follows: the final paper will be graded on a 100 point scale, using the weights above, and then any penalty points will be subtracted.

Research Proposal

Your research proposal should be no more than 2 pages in length and need not be in paragraph form. Outline form is acceptable. Your proposal should be free of typographical and spelling errors; formatted using a standard 12-point font with margins of at least 1 inch on all sides; have a vertical line spacing of at least 1½ lines; and be well thought out in terms of the logical flow of the proposal from start to finish.

Different people have different methods for undertaking research. As I proceed through the various stages of my research I tend to make an outline, refining it through successive iterations. One advantage to this approach is that you can divide your project into separate pieces, working on different parts of the project when the going gets tough in another area. Working on your project then becomes an iterative process of refining your outline and adding more detail. Then,
as you approach your first draft, you can concentrate on the “connective tissue” which binds together the main points and a thorough edit to ensure consistency across sections.

A suggested outline for your research proposal is provided below. You do not have to organize your project in this form to get full credit at each stage of your project. As I said, people do research differently. However, the areas outlined below for each stage of your project represent the guidelines by which I will evaluate your project in whatever form it takes.

**Suggested Outline for Your Research Proposal**

I. **Introduction**
   Present your research question and describe what you intend to do. Motivate your proposal in a way that gives me a sense for why you think that this is an interesting project.

II. **Literature Review**
   Provide a preliminary list of existing work on this topic and potential data sources.

III. **Research Methods**
   Identify the research methods you intend to use. Some examples of appropriate research methods include: econometric modeling; case study applications of economic theory; game theoretic analyses of economic behavior; mathematical modeling; or empirical analyses or economic events.

IV. **Empirical Evidence**
   If you plan to do an empirical research project, describe your data sources and identify the various types of economic information on which you plan to base your analysis. You need not have your data collected before presenting your research proposal.

V. **Conclusions**
   Describe your anticipated results.

**Linchpins & Pitfalls**
Include with your research proposal a list of potential hurdles or possible problems that you anticipate might make this project difficult to complete.
**Progress Report**

Your progress report should be no more than 5 pages in length. The standards noted above for formatting your proposal (i.e., line spacing, font size, and margins) should also be applied to your progress report. Your progress report should be divided into clearly labeled sections. At this stage your project should have a preliminary title and a summary analysis of the data you have collected.

**Suggested Outline for Your Research Proposal**

I. **Introduction**
   - Provide a more complete statement of your research project and describe why you think it is interesting and important.

II. **Literature Review**
   - Provide a preliminary bibliographic list of references relevant to your project and a brief description of those you have investigated thus far.

III. **Research Methods**
   - Provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of your project and a more complete description of your research methods.

IV. **Empirical Evidence**
   - Provide a preliminary exploratory analysis of the data you have obtained thus far. Your data set need not be complete at this stage, but if you have not yet begun to assemble your data your project is in serious trouble.

V. **Conclusions**
   - You should have some sense for where your research is going and whether or not you are on track in the context of your anticipated results. Identify possible problems that you need help on which might make this project difficult to complete and a self-assessment of your progress to date.

**First Draft**

The grade on your first draft will focus on how well you have completed the areas outlined above. If your draft is handed in on time, I will try to return it to you with my comments by the end of the week. The first draft is not optional.

Your first draft must include your abstract and a bibliography. An abstract is simply a very brief paragraph that describes your project. It should summarize the key objectives of the project, your general approach, and your results without revealing all of your interesting findings. Look at
the literature in the area of your project for examples of how to write an abstract. Work on being succinct.

The introduction in your first draft should provide a complete overview of your paper and lay out the analysis that follows it in detail. As part of the conclusions in your first draft you should have some firm results and be able to discuss some possible directions for further research.

Your first draft should be free of typographical and spelling errors. The formatting standards noted above for your proposal apply for your first draft as well. It should have a title page, a separate page for your abstract, and a bibliographic list of references at the end. While it will be important to include them in the draft, final formatting and placement of equations, footnotes, charts and/or tables describing your data, and bibliographical references can wait for the final paper.

Final Paper

Due at noon on Monday, May 13, 2002

Your final grade will depend on how well you have addressed my comments on your draft and the format of your final paper. I don’t like to put an absolute length on research papers. I’ve seen excellent 10 page, 3 credit papers. I’ve also seen lousy 50 page, 1 credit efforts. Ten pages per credit seems to be a conventional norm here at Colby. All final papers should be in a format consistent with published economic journal articles. Here are some guidelines:

- Include an abstract and separate title page and any acknowledgments of financial or mentor support.
- Your paper must be printed using a font no smaller than 12 points, with at least 1 inch margins on each side of the page (excluding headers and footers), and at least 1½ lines of spacing between lines of text.
- Every page (except for the title page) must be numbered.
- A table of contents is highly recommended since is usually facilitates a more tightly organized paper.
- You may use either footnotes or endnotes.
- Your bibliography must be in a format consistent with that found in a profession economic journal.
- You may not send your paper to me via electronic mail unless you make special arrangements with me before hand.
- Note that I do not accept late papers.

Notes on Grading

To receive an A, your paper must pose an interesting question and address it in a creative and innovative fashion. Several economic concepts should be carefully integrated throughout your
analysis and links should be made to current research in the area. An A paper will be very well written and reflect a great deal of thought and rigor.

A B paper poses a rather straight-forward question and addresses it in a logical fashion. Economic concepts and relevant research are applied accurately, and are integrated into the analysis in a logical fashion. A B paper will be well written and reflect a significant amount of effort. Novel approaches to the problem are not necessarily taken, an early deadline may have been missed, but overall the paper satisfactorily addresses the question in a thoughtful and careful manner.

A C paper poses a rather obvious question and answers it in a straight forward manner with little or no creativity. A paper that makes errors in applying standard economic concepts or fails to apply them in a logical manner is likely to receive a C grade. Such papers are typically not well thought out, do not reflect much effort, are not well written, and are noticeably careless in content and style.

**How do I find a topic for my 391?**

Think about what led you to major in Economics in the first place and which topics in your classes you have found most interesting. Look for economic content in important current events. Once you have identified a few general areas, explore the literature in detail. Look at some of the research papers you were assigned in class and explore their bibliographic references for more depth on a particular topic. Look for authors’ suggestions for further research in an area. Use the reference librarians and the available information technology tools to search the economics literature. Explore the extensive collection of journals in Colby’s library. Think about how you might apply a particular method of analysis to an area it hasn’t often been used before. Then take your ideas to a member of the department and discuss it with him or her to help you focus your research question and define your topic.

**When do I use footnotes?**

The general rules I apply for using footnotes in my own work are for the following cases:

- Direct quotes in your text.
- Sources for data or facts cited in you text.
- Representative example of ideas in the text or other works on a subject described in your text.
- Any time a page number is required to appropriately cite a source.

**How do I avoid plagiarism?**

There are resources on the department web page that help here. Be aware that just because you cite a source does not absolve you from charges of plagiarism.
ACADEMIC HONESTY

Colby's guidelines for academic honesty can be found in the student handbook. Any paper which is found to have plagiarized material from other sources will receive a failing grade. In cases of flagrant dishonesty in any form I will recommend to the college that you be expelled.

USEFUL SOURCES

• The staff in the Colby Writers’ Center can be very helpful in preparing your written results. Give them a copy of this document and work with them to improve your writing abilities.

• Colby’s Economics Department Internet home page has many links to potential data sources on its Resources page. General guidelines for EC 391 projects and notes on how to write economic research papers can also be found on the Department’s home page. I strongly recommend that you read these guidelines. The URL for these guidelines is:
  http://www.colby.edu/economics/ec391.htm

• The Colby Library home page also maintains links to a wide variety of useful data sources. The URL for these resources is:
  http://www.colby.edu/library/research/guides/economics.shtml

• The Colby Library also has information on how to cite sources, including electronic sources, at the reference desk and on-line on their home page. The URL for this information is:
  http://www.colby.edu/library/research/web_reference/links.shtml#style

FINAL NOTE

I do not accept electronic versions of your proposal, progress report, draft, or final paper, unless you have obtained my permission in advance. Take the time to proofread whatever you hand in to me. If you aren’t willing to make sure that your own research is written in complete sentences and free from typographical errors then don’t bother to ask me to read it.