

PhD Students Preparation and Presentation Workshop, Autumn term 2013

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The goal of this course is to teach 2nd year PhD students the basic skills required for conducting top-level research in Economics, writing a PhD thesis, communicating PhD research to others, and interacting with the academic community. We also give an introduction to some of the basic tasks, responsibilities and duties of being an academic. Finally, the course is intended to support students in the first stages of their written PhD work, which leads to the second year forum, by providing structured advice and discussion, and by stimulating discussion among students about their work. A particular focus will be on how to present and communicate work to others, either in written form, or in presentations and seminars.

Prerequisites:

1. **Workshop 1:** Read the material below and summarise what you believe are the key messages, contrast the views different economists/academics have on research, how to develop it, and how to communicate it to others. The first course will be devoted to this topic. We will ask some of you, picked at random, to present their understanding of these issues in front of the class, and to explain where you agree, and where you disagree with the various views in these papers.

You may want to structure your summary along the following lines: i) How do you think, and based on that material, you can develop a good research idea. Relate that to your own thoughts about what you would want to develop during your PhD studies. ii) How to structure and write a paper, iii) How to make other people read your work and comment on it, iv) How to interact with other junior and senior researchers.

Write down what you think are the best advises you obtained from these papers. Explain where you agree, and where you disagree. Point out where there is disagreement between the different authors.

Readings:

- Richard Hamming, “You and Your Research”
<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~robins/YouAndYourResearch.pdf>
- Dan Hamermesh’s website:
<http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Hamermesh/AdviceforEconomists.htm>
- Dan Hamermesh , A Young Economist's Guide to Professional Etiquette (*Journ. Econ Persps.*, Winter 1992)
- ---, Professional Etiquette for the Mature Economist, AER papers and proceedings, May 1993, 34-38

- Hal Varian: “What I’ve learned about Writing Economics”,
<http://www.ischool.berkeley.edu/~hal/Papers/writing-economics.html>
 - Hal Varian: “How to Build an Economic Model in your Spare Time”,
<http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/~hal/Papers/how.pdf>
 - Matthew Jackson, “Notes on presenting a paper”,
<http://www.stanford.edu/~jacksonm/present.pdf>
2. **Workshop 2:** Formulate on 3-5 pages the key ideas that you want to develop in your second year paper.
Suggested structure: Carefully point out
- i) Motivation: Why you think what you want to do is interesting. Motivate it, and put it in a wider context. What is the key question that you wish to answer? For instance, if you wish to investigate the effect of giving birth to a boy vs a girl on father’s behaviour (such as labor supply, criminal activity etc.) explain why we should care, and why this may be an interesting question to investigate.
 - ii) Contribution: point out precisely the contribution of your research idea to knowledge. Why may what you intend to do be a relevant addition to our understanding of a particular area in economics, and to which public or policy debate does it speak.
 - iii) Existing Literature: Point out precisely to which literature your work relates: what is the state of this literature, where are avenues and challenges for further research, and where do you contribute over and above what exists already, i.e. goes beyond what people have done so far.
 - iv) Implementation: how do you wish to implement your research ideas? Do you need a formal model? On what existing work do you want to draw? Is your work empirical? What data do you intend to use? What methods will you need for that? Etc.
 - v) Feasibility: Is what you intend to do feasible? Is the data available? Are you able to develop the theory on the level required? Can you answer the question you started off with, and in which way? If you do empirical work: Can you answer the question you ask in causal way?
 - vi) Final check: Having gone through ii) – v), do you still think you can answer the question you started off with? Is this still a valuable contribution, going over and above what we already know, and will others find this contribution exciting and interesting?
- One aim of this exercise is to make you think in a structured way about your research ideas, and to critically assess them before you have spent several years of your time on it. Try to convince the course instructors and your fellow students that what you are doing is in fact important, relevant, and worthwhile spending several years of your life on.
3. **Workshop 3:** Attend *two* of the following seminars:
- a. Micro seminar, Axel Ockenfels October 22
 - b. Macro seminar, Alan Sutherland, October 25
 - c. Macro seminar, Valerie Ramey, October 18.
- Write an evaluation of these two seminars, 2 pages for *each* seminar. Each assessment should start with a brief overview of what the particular paper

presented is about. It should then assess content, presentation style, whether the contribution is innovative, whether the presenter succeeded in explaining the paper to a wider audience, possible language problems, choice and readability of slides, ppt presentation etc, as applicable, whether speaker induced interest in her/his work, and suggestions for improvements. Focus on the presentation style as much as on the content. We will not ask you much about the content, but about the presentation style. Point out strengths and weaknesses in the speaker's presentation.

4. **Workshops 4 & 5**, you are asked to prepare a 20mn presentation of your work (summer paper). We will ask (randomly) 5-8 of you to present your work in front of the class. You should aim for a maximum of 8- 10 slides. The key point is not to impress us with your technical skills, but to present your project to a non-specialised audience, and to convince that audience that what you are doing is interesting and exciting, and worthwhile listening to. Refer to WS2 for how to structure that presentation.

Workshop 1:

- Introduction: What is this course about?
- Brief description of everybody's PhD topic.
- What does it mean to be an Economist? Professional Etiquette.
- Discussion of the material on "how to do research".
- Plagiarism and its consequences.

Workshop 2:

- How to present your work
- Writing and Presenting work in English
- How to structure a research paper and a PhD thesis
- Discussion of previous Workshop's assignment. You will present these ideas to your fellow students in a *five-minute* format.

Workshop 3:

- Seminars: Platforms for academic exchange.
- How to learn from others: Seminar attendance and critical evaluation of seminars (style, content, etc).
- What can you learn from the presentation you have seen the previous week for your own work? How should a good presentation look like?

Workshop 4 & 5:

- Seminar presentations: 4 presenters drawn at random.
- Discussion and assessment of the quality of other people's presentation.