

# Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa

*April 2014*

## **GUIDELINES FOR M.A. MAJOR PAPER**

The M.A. program in Economics at the University of Ottawa has the following requirements:

Six (6) one-semester courses (including Micro IV, Macro IV, and Econometrics I), and a major paper.

Major papers are regulated directly by the Economics Department. The following guidelines are aimed at all students writing a major paper in economics at the University of Ottawa.

### **WHAT IS AN M.A. MAJOR PAPER?**

Two types of major papers are acceptable:

- A major paper consisting of an empirical investigation (Type A);
- A major paper consisting of a critical assessment of a theoretical or public policy issue (Type B);

An acceptable (Type A) empirical paper could replicate a previously published study using new data. Alternatively, a student may use a variant of a methodology used in a previously published study, and perform a comparative analysis of the results. A review of the relevant literature and/or a more detailed critical analysis of a known empirical approach should constitute the first part of a Type A major paper.

A Type B major paper may be devoted to a critical assessment of a theoretical or policy issue. This type of major paper cannot be limited to a summary of readings (i.e., a major paper consisting only of a review of the literature is not acceptable). There must be some original contribution, for example a minor extension of an existing theoretical framework, or some original policy analysis. A review of the relevant literature will typically constitute the first part of a Type B major paper.

A paper previously submitted as a requirement for a graduate course may be used to jump-start the preparation of the major paper. The major paper requirement can provide a good opportunity to improve and substantively extend work already started.

Original research undertaken while employed at a job outside the University may also be used for a major paper provided that: 1) the topic includes a fair amount of economic analysis (a simple description of facts or policies will not in general be accepted); 2) the student is the sole author of the paper; and 3) the employer accepts that the work be used as an M.A. major paper (in particular, the information contained in the paper must not be confidential).

## **PROCEDURES**

Normally, at the beginning of the second semester of study in the M.A. program, a topic and supervisor are chosen. The student must fill out a form to that effect which is available from the Department. A brief description of the topic must be given at that time. The form must be signed by the professor who has agreed to supervise the paper and by the Director of the M.A. Program. It is important that the form be submitted *before* the student starts working on his (her) paper. Except under exceptional circumstances, the supervisor must be a regular professor in the Department of Economics. Students having difficulties finding a supervisor may wish to consult the Director of the M.A. Program.

If a student decides to change his (her) topic or supervisor during the course of his (her) work, he (she) must fill out the form again. It is important that the Director of the M.A. Program and the former supervisor be informed by the student of the proposed change.

After the paper is written and accepted by the supervisor, the student must provide one (1) paper copy and one (1) electronic copy to the Department. Note that every semester, there is a firm deadline for submitting the major paper to the Department. Furthermore, students must make sure that they submit a complete draft to their supervisor early enough for her (him) to read it and for the student to make any subsequent adjustments before the deadline.

Once the paper has been submitted to the Department, an evaluator will be chosen by the Chair of the Department (the supervisor of the paper may wish to propose a potential evaluator, but the final decision belongs to the Chair).

The result of the evaluation is one of the following:

- (1) The paper is acceptable without modifications;
- (2) The paper is acceptable with minor modifications. The modifications are verified by the supervisor;
- (3) Important changes must be made for the paper to be acceptable. The changes are verified by the evaluator;
- (4) The paper is unacceptable.

After the final version of the paper is accepted, the student must provide one (1) unbound paper copy and one (1) electronic copy (in .doc or .tex format) to the main office of the Economics Department.

## **STYLE GUIDELINES**

Major papers and thesis must be written according to the rules that govern scientific papers. There are many books on the market that may provide useful guidance to that effect (see, for example, Turabian, K. L., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Thesis and Dissertations*, Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 1973). Students should, however, be aware that there is no unique set of rules; these rules tend to vary from one discipline to another, and (to a lesser extent) even within the same discipline. As such, there is some flexibility in the way to provide quotations, footnotes, references, etc. Having said this, the student must consistently follow one approach (one set of rules) throughout the entire paper. The simplest way to ensure consistency is to follow the style (rules) of one well-respected economic journal (such as the *Canadian Journal of Economics* or *American Economic Review*).

The following presents the rules/style favoured by the *Canadian Journal of Economics*.

### **1) References**

A list of references is given at the end of the paper in alphabetical order of authors. Only include works mentioned in the major paper. Here are three examples of various types of references that follow the *Canadian Journal of Economics* style:

#### **References**

Card, David (1995) 'Earnings, schooling and ability revisited.' In *Research in Labor Economics*, ed. Solomon W. Polachek. Vol. 14. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press

Cunha, Flavio, and James J. Heckman (2008) 'Formulating, identifying and estimating the technology of cognitive and noncognitive skill formation.' *Journal of Human Resources* 43, 738–82

Lee, David S. (2002) 'Trimming for bounds on treatment effects with missing outcomes.' NBER Technical Working Paper No. 277

Note that titles of books or journals are in italics. Titles of articles, chapters of books, working papers or other documents are in quotation marks.

In-text citations (following the *Canadian Journal of Economics* style) are as follows:

As suggested by Card (1995) the effect of...

This assumption was made by several authors (Bhagwati, 1968; Boulet, 1975).

Note that it is not necessary to use footnotes just to refer to an author's work and that complete references are indicated only once, at the end of the paper.

## **2) Footnotes**

Footnotes should be used for substantive comments which are not necessary to the line of argument, but which nevertheless provide useful information. Footnotes are numbered sequentially from the beginning to the end of the paper. They may be put at the bottom of each page or (perhaps more conveniently) all together at the end of the paper. The *Canadian Journal of Economics* style has the footnotes at the bottom of the page.

## **3) Tables and diagrams**

Tables and diagrams should only be included if they are discussed in the major paper. They must be numbered and referred to in the text by their number. The exact presentation will depend on the journal style chosen. For the *Canadian Journal of Economics* style it would take the form “Table 1 presents descriptive statistics...”

If a table presents the results of a student's own econometric work (which also include tables of descriptive statistics), it is not necessary to indicate a source. However, the data and methods must be described clearly in the text. Please refer to an economic journal as to how to present a table of results. If statistical information was obtained from a secondary source, both the primary and secondary sources must be given at the bottom of the table. A table or a diagram should not usually appear in the paper as a photocopy taken from an article or a book.

## **4) Quotations**

Direct quotations from an author must be indicated clearly. Short quotations are given between quotation marks. Longer quotations are in a separate single-spaced paragraph with the, left margin indented to the text. Sources can be indicated using the method described above to provide reference. The page of the quotation must also be given. For example, (Oates, 1972, page 40). In addition, any idea or argument which is borrowed from another author must be accompanied by the appropriate reference. Paraphrasing from another author (repeating someone's argument using slightly different words) without citing her/him is plagiarism and is not acceptable.

## **5) Language Quality**

The student must ensure that the memory is written in an acceptable French or English. It is not the role of the supervisor to correct grammar and spelling. It is recommended that students, who have writing difficulties, have their texts revised by someone else before submitting. Resources are also available at the University (for example, the Mentoring Centre, and the Academic Writing Help Centre).

## **6) Title Page**

See the attached model.

MODEL FOR TITLE PAGE

Economic Theory

by Joe L. Blow

(Student number)

Major Paper presented to the  
Department of Economics of the University of Ottawa  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the M.A. Degree  
Supervisor: Professor John S. Doe

ECO 6999

Ottawa, Ontario  
July 2014

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