Finishing Your Thesis

February, 2016
Outline

• How long should it be?
• What is the standard structure?
  – Do you need a model?
• What is important? Not Important?
• How much detail?
• Formatting
• Stata, miscellaneous
How Long Should Your Thesis Be?

• Long enough.
• The length of a standard journal article.
• It depends.
• 50-100 pages.
• But:
  – Less is frequently more.
  – Long enough to do the job, *but no longer!*
Standard Structure

• Introduction:
  – This sets the hook
• Review of Earlier Work (Critical)
• Model: Do you need one?
• Estimation and Data
• Results
• Conclusion
What Is Important?  
What is Not Important?

• Important:
  – Convincing your readers that you have done something that is:
    – New
    – Interesting
    – Correct

• Not:
  – Getting Large t-statistics
  – Solving every problem related to your literature

• Rather, you want a contribution to knowledge; a step, not necessarily a huge leap
How Much Detail?

• Enough to convince the reader of your conclusions.
• The exact amount depends in part on the nature of your results.
• Case 1: really consistent results
  – Then modest amount in text, rest in appendices or footnotes.
• Case 2: messy, conflicting results:
  – Then much more in text.
How Much Detail, continued

• Similar considerations arise in describing your data.

• If it’s a standard, familiar data set (GDP and M for a bunch of countries), then you don’t need a ton of blather.

• If it’s something brand new that you constructed, you have to explain really clearly exactly how you collected the data.
Formatting the Final Product

• See the Thesis portion of the Department’s web site:

  • http://economics.harvard.edu/files/economics/files/thesisformatting15-16.pdf?m=1454525941
Stata, Miscellaneous

• See Kiran’s document on the web site.

• Note that we have a Stata TFs: Jane, Priya.

• RefWorks/EndNote

• Writing Economics handbook