

Finishing Your Thesis

February 1st, 2017

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning”



My thesis is due in 37 days!



A Timeline

- Mar 9th submit the thesis
- Feb 23rd begin final revisions
- Feb 16th circulate draft to advisor and instructor for feedback
- Feb 9th write up results
- Feb 1st extend initial analysis

Why am I doing this?



We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.

(John F. Kennedy)

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: Clear statement of question
 - This sets the hook
- Review of Earlier Work
- Model: Do you need one?
- Data Description and Estimation Strategy
- Results and Analysis
- 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?

- Persuade the reader of your conclusions.
- 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.

Discuss all the data you present (and omit numbers about which you have nothing interesting to say)

How Much Detail, continued

- Similar considerations when describing data.
- If it's a standard, familiar data set (World Bank GDP data), then you don't need a lot of detail
- If it's something brand new that you constructed, you have to explain really clearly exactly how you collected the data.
- Summary statistics tables are essential

When is it finished?

- Thesis = $f(\text{work})$
- $f'(\text{work}) > 0$
- Opportunity cost of thesis work = ?
- With more opportunity to work on it, no doubt you could improve it further
- 4.55 pm, Mar 9th you can stop working on it

How should I use the next six weeks?

- Be realistic
- You have plenty of time if you use it wisely
- Hopefully you already have a “result”
- A “result” does not have to have stars
- Once you have a result, can start writing around it
- Can add a model to illustrate the economic mechanism you study
- Can extend the question to explore what drives the result
Can run a placebo test on the data
- But remember how long it took to prep the core data for analysis before looking for more data

We all want you to succeed

Help is available, but you have to ask for it

- Ec 985 instructor
- Your faculty advisor
- The STATA team: Greg Bruich, Stacey Gelsheimer, Egor Abramov

Solicit comments on your draft

If areas need clarifying, or more work, better to hear it now, than from your readers' reports

Formatting the Final Product

- See the Thesis portion of the Department's web site:

<http://economics.harvard.edu/files/economics/files/thesisformatting16-17.pdf>

Stata, Miscellaneous

- Stata support: Greg Bruich, Stacey Gelsheimer, Egor Abramov
<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/19323>
- Computing power: Harvard-MIT Data Center's Research Computing Environment
<http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/hmdc/book/research-computing-environment>
- Library sessions on RefWorks/EndNote
<http://guides.library.harvard.edu/c.php?g=310833&p=2072959>
Tues Feb 7th, 11-12.30; Tues Feb 14th, 11-12.30, Weds Feb 15th, 2-3.30
- Writing Economics handbook:
http://economics.harvard.edu/files/economics/files/writingec_f2014_0.pdf

Handing It In

- Economics: pdf uploaded online and physical copy due to Dani Doyle (Littauer 112) by 5 pm, March 9th
- AM/Ec: pdf due by 4 pm Mar 31st to am-submit@seas.harvard.edu and online at <http://etds.lib.harvard.edu/college/>

Preparing the Hard Copy

- Laser print single-sided on acid-free paper
- Bound in a spring binder
- Dept distributes some binders at study break, Feb 22nd, 12-2 (first-come, first-served)

- Double-spaced text, 12 point font
- Two copies of the title page, one to be pasted on the front of the binder

Preparing the Electronic Copy

- Upload once [link](#) is active
- Name the file
Lastname_Firstname_thesis17.pdf
- Think about how Figures will appear in black and white

Afterwards



- Thesis celebration party, Mar 9th 4-6 pm
- Poster session, Apr 27th, 12-2