

Finishing Your Thesis

January, 2018

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://www.economics.harvard.edu/files/thesisformatting12.pdf>

Stata, Miscellaneous

- See Ec Stata web site.
- RefWorks/EndNote
- Writing Economics handbook