

Appendix A: PhD Research Paper Requirement¹

The writing of a publishable paper is required during the first two years of the PhD program.² The paper must be sole-authored and worthy of submission to an economics or related journal with a Google Scholar h-index of 25 or above. Examples of journals meeting this standard are given in the Attachment. Students are encouraged to begin development of research ideas immediately upon entering the graduate program. Initial ideas for the paper (consisting of a concise research question, a sketch of a framework for investigation, and verification of available data) must be submitted to the Paper Committee by January 31 of the first year as part of the Special Topics course (described later).

Based on the paper idea and student nominations, the Paper Committee assigns a Paper Advisor to each student. Thereafter, students report to and interact frequently with their Paper Advisor. Students are also encouraged to seek advice or reactions to drafts from faculty throughout the development of their paper, just as a faculty member might seek advice from a colleague. But the paper must be solely the student's work, which excludes work done jointly with faculty here or elsewhere (such as a professor in prior undergraduate/graduate work). Plagiarism standards of the journals apply, and violations could result in expulsion from the university (see Student Academic Honesty Code www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/ahc.html.)

The student's progress is evaluated by the Paper Committee together with the Paper Advisor. To assist the student in meeting the paper requirement, the Paper Committee will teach a 3-hour course on the basics of writing for journals. In this course, which is offered Fall Semester, students submit a formal Paper Prospectus and make an oral presentation on the development of their paper ideas. Attendance is required.

The student's paper must be submitted to the Paper Committee by July 31 following the first year of course work. The only exception to this deadline is for students taking the written prelims in August, who will have until October 31 to submit their paper. After soliciting a thorough review of the paper by the Paper Advisor and two independent reviewers selected from the faculty, the Paper Committee classifies the paper into one of three categories: (i) the paper meets the standard as is, (ii) the paper could meet the standard with minor revision, or (iii) the paper needs substantial work. Students with papers in the first category are finished with the paper requirement. Students with papers in the second and third categories are given careful advice on how to bring their papers up to journal quality, and continue to work with their Paper Advisors (which subsequently includes the independent faculty reviewers).

The revised paper must be submitted by January 31 of the second year (March 31 for those taking the prelim), when a similar evaluation process occurs. If the revised paper fails to meet

¹ Appreciation is expressed to the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, for permission to use their web material in developing this description, some of which is verbatim.

² Students are assumed to have earned a MS degree or equivalent at the start of the program. For students entering with a BS degree, the paper requirement will be deferred until the equivalent of a MS degree is earned, which typically occurs after two years of classes.

the standard, a second revision will be due May 31 (June 30 for those taking the prelim). If the paper at that point does not meet the standard, or could not do so with straightforward revisions, the student will not be allowed to continue with the PhD program. These students have the option of changing to a terminal MS program, or leaving the PhD program. The chair of the Paper Committee conveys the committee's final evaluation for each student in writing to the Graduate Program Officer, who, in turn, provides written notification of the final decision to the student and the Department Chair.

Appeals of decisions made by the Paper Committee must be tendered to the Department Chair within one month of the decision. The appeal must be in writing, and state clearly the reasons for the appeal. The Department Chair will appoint an *ad hoc* committee consisting of three faculty members who hold Level 2 Graduate Faculty status to consider the appeal. At least one of these members must be from outside the department (e.g., Economics or Forest Economics). The *ad hoc* committee will inform the Graduate Program Officer of its decision, who will then notify the student. In filing the appeal, the student is entitled to the due process procedures described in *The Tiger Cub*, which is available online at <http://www.auburn.edu/tigercub/>.

| Year of PhD Study | Initial Paper Idea Submitted to Paper Committee | First Draft Submitted to Paper Committee | Review Returned to Student | Revision Submitted to Committee | 2 nd Review Returned to Student | Final Draft Submitted to Committee | Final Decision to Student |
|-------------------|---|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | January 31 | July 31 Oct. 31* | August 31 Nov. 30* | | | | |
| 2 | | | | January 31 March 31* | February 28 April 30* | May 31 June 30* | June 30 July 31* |

*Dates for students taking the written prelim exam.

Tips on Producing a Successful Paper

- 1) Select a topic that contributes to the Department's research program. Most faculty have research projects funded by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, or outside contracts and grants. Familiarize yourself with these research projects, with the aim of developing a researchable idea that contributes to the research objectives. This will align your interest with faculty expertise, and thus result in higher quality feedback as the writing process unfolds.
- 2) Do a thorough review of the literature with the aim of identifying gaps, problems, or puzzles that your work could address. Focus on work published in the better journals, i.e., those with a GS h-index higher than 25. Avoid unpublished work, and work published in "popular" outlets, i.e., those intended for a non-scientific audience. And be sure that the review is up to date, i.e., includes the most recent work on the topic. A good place to find relevant articles is *EconLit*, the electronic data base maintained by the American Economics Association.
- 3) Assemble a data base early in the research process, ideally by the end of the first semester of classes. This will give you an opportunity to explore alternative hypotheses, apply

econometric techniques learned in class, and develop a realistic understanding of what can be accomplished given data limitations and time constraints.

Policy on Late Papers

Consistent with university policies laid out in *The Tiger Cub*, paper deadlines will be strictly enforced. A student who misses a deadline without the prior approval of the Paper Committee will be terminated from the program. Requests for deadline extension must be received at least one month before due date.

ATTACHMENT: Examples of Journals that meet minimum standard for the PhD Research Paper

| Impact Factors of Selected Journals Source: Harzing's Publish or Perish http://www.harzing.com/resources.htm accessed 5 October 2009 | h-index |
|--|---------|
| <i>Agribusiness: An International Journal</i> | 35 |
| <i>Agricultural Economics</i> | 55 |
| <i>Agricultural and Resource Economics Review</i> | 26 |
| <i>American Journal of Agricultural Economics</i> | 119 |
| <i>Agricultural Systems</i> | 54 |
| <i>Applied Economics</i> | 70 |
| <i>Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resources Economics</i> | 34 |
| <i>Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics</i> | 31 |
| <i>Coastal Management</i> | 32 |
| <i>Education Economics</i> | 33 |
| <i>Empirical Economics</i> | 52 |
| <i>Energy Economics</i> | 51 |
| <i>European Review of Agricultural Economics</i> | 52 |
| <i>Food Policy</i> | 52 |
| <i>Growth and Change</i> | 39 |
| <i>Journal of Agricultural Economics</i> | 50 |
| <i>Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics</i> | 30 |
| <i>Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics</i> | 44 |
| <i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i> | 43 |
| <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i> | 184 |
| <i>Journal of Development Economics</i> | 116 |
| <i>Journal of Environmental Economics and Management</i> | 118 |
| <i>Journal of Housing Economics</i> | 37 |
| <i>Land Economics</i> | 93 |
| <i>Marine Resource Economics</i> | 35 |
| <i>Papers in Regional Science</i> | 61 |
| <i>Review of Agricultural Economics</i> | 38 |
| <i>Regional Science and Urban Economics</i> | 70 |
| <i>Southern Economic Journal</i> | 72 |
| <i>The Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics</i> | 51 |
| <i>World Development</i> | 146 |