British University in Egypt

Department of Economics

Project handbook 2008-9

Module Code: **ECON06H02**

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Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   As part of the degree programmes in Economics you are required to undertake a research project or dissertation. The purpose of this booklet is to help you through that process.

1.2   In order to fulfil the requirements of the dissertation module, all students **must** keep to the following deadlines:

    a. The proposal form in Appendix B must be completed and sent to the module leader by <u>1st November</u>. This will be used to assign you a supervisor who you will then arrange a meeting with.

    b. Your supervisor will provide advice on completing the 2,000-3,000 word Interim Report to be submitted on the last day before the start of the exam period in the first semester (25%). This should comprise at minimum a review of the relevant literature and an outline of your intended future research.

    c. An 8,000-10,000 word Project Report to be submitted on the last day before the start of the exam period in the second semester (75%).

1.2   The final dissertation should:
- Be well conceived and acknowledge earlier research in the field, if appropriate.
- Show your ability to undertake a substantial and informed piece of research.
- Demonstrate your ability to collect, organise, and analyse material to communicate effectively.

1.3   Aims of the module: The production by the student of a well-researched dissertation on some topic in the economics, political economy, finance or banking area. The dissertation should utilise the knowledge gained from one or more modules in the course and either extend this knowledge or apply it in a relevant manner to some problem in the area. The dissertation should demonstrate a capacity for research, originality of thought, and creditable literary quality.

1.4   Outcomes of the module:

- Knowledge: A deeper level of understanding in the chosen area of research, together with the knowledge of how to carry out a research project.

- Skills: The ability to carry out a literature review, theoretical and empirical. The ability to research a topic in a methodologically sound way and write up the results in a thesis with a logical structure that considers the evidence in an even-handed way. It represents an academic project that marks the transition of the individual from student to scholar.

2. Supervisors

2.1 A supervisor will be formally appointed to you upon formal submission of your dissertation summary.

2.2 The supervisory relationship provides a unique opportunity for a detailed exchange of ideas and plans, for the confirmation of good practice, for advice and for evaluative feedback. In short, the quality of the student supervisor relationship is extremely important.

2.3 It is essential for you to keep in regular contact with your supervisor who will guide your work throughout the development of your dissertation.

2.4 You **should**:

- Arrange to meet your supervisor face to face at *least* four times. These are minimum requirements and more meetings are encouraged. You are advised to agree with your supervisor what is best for you. Please note that your supervisor is under no obligation to chase you.

- Plan ahead. Supervisors usually have a very heavy workload and therefore you are advised to make advance appointments and not just show up and expect to be seen. Make appointments for specific dates and times with agreed agendas, which can also act as deadlines and milestones to motivate you to complete particular stages of your work.

- Give your supervisor sufficient time to read your material in order for you to receive good feedback. Giving your supervisor work to read just prior to deadlines will not give him/her sufficient time to offer assistance.

- Keep written notes of the comments of your discussions with your supervisor. It is your responsibility to remember what is discussed and to remind your supervisor if necessary.

- Ensure you ascertain the availability of your supervisor during the summer break.

2.5 You **should not**:

- Expect your supervisor to be a proof-reader. He/she is there to give you guidance not to do the work for you.

- Miss appointments unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If you are likely to miss an appointment ensure that you inform your supervisor as soon as possible.

3.   A Note on Plagiarism

3.1   Plagiarism means the use of the ideas or others without acknowledging them as such. It is an academic tradition that the ideas or words of another are not used without acknowledgement. You must adhere to this tradition; it is totally unacceptable to plagiarise.

3.2   **PLAGIARISM IS AN EXTREMELY SERIOUS ACADEMIC OFFENCE.**

3.3   **IF YOU ARE IN ANY DOUBT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE PLAGIARISING THEN YOU MUST SEEK THE ADVICE OF YOUR SUPERVISOR.**

3.4   **ALL CASES OF SUSPECTED PLAGIARISM WILL BE STRENUOUSLY INVESTIGATED.**

3.5   **PROVEN PLAGIARISM CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR YOU AND YOUR DEGREE. DO NOT DO IT!**

3.6   You can of course make use of the ideas of others. However, this must be acknowledged according to the following conventions:

- Each use of the ideas or words of another must be individually acknowledged. In addition, each work consulted must be listed in the reference section. The mere presence of a work in the reference section does not override the need for acknowledging each individual use of that work in a reference in the text and, though necessary, is by itself insufficient.

- Any use of exact words of another must be acknowledged by enclosing them in quotation marks and by stating their source. For example:

  > *'Confusing the industry with the market is one of the most frequently repeated mistakes in corporate strategy'* (Kay 1996: 202)

- If any part of a passage from a publication is used this should be indicated by replacing the omitted words with a short series of dots. For example:

  > *'Economics is the natural integrative discipline for much of management science. But its past relative neglect of the firm…has severely limited the role it has to play'* (Kay 1996:8)

- If you do not have access to the original source of a quotation but have found it quoted in the work of somebody else you should give the original source (which the author you have found should have quoted) and the reference where you found it. For example:

  > Scherer (1970) quoted by Kay (1996:5)

- If you are not using the exact words of another but are making use of their ideas this should be acknowledged. For example:

As Kay has argued macroeconomic forecasts are at best reliable for short periods ahead (Kay 1996:12).

3.7   Web sites on plagiarism and how to avoid it include:

   http://www.plagiarism.org/
   http://ualr.edu/owl/plagarism.htm
   http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/
   http://wcclibrary2.blogspot.com/2008/01/help-students-avoid-plagarism.html

you can find more with a simple search

3.8   All students are provided with a Dissertation supervision log. This must be completed and any discrepancies will lead to an oral examination.

4.   Identifying a Topic

4.1   At the heart of your dissertation will be a single idea, a closely related set of ideas, which you wish to investigate. Unfortunately, there's no handy formula for finding an interesting topic. Experienced researchers will do a lot of work (reading, thinking and discussing ideas) before they decide on the topic they wish to investigate. To find an interesting topic takes time and students MUST start this process as early as possible.

4.2   The dissertation must be related to one of the areas in which the degree programme specialises

4.3   In choosing your project you should try to develop linkages with the topics you are studying or have studied so far.

4.4   A good project will set out to apply concepts, principles and techniques, acquired through academic study, to problems or issues.

4.5   Begin focusing as EARLY as possible on specific questions, issues and hypotheses. Avoid spending too much time thinking about gigantic, vague problems. The broader the subject, the less depth you can achieve in your study. Try, therefore, to narrow your focus down to smaller aspects of your problem. This will allow you to make concrete progress towards the completion of your piece of work and avoid superficiality.

4.6   In choosing your topic, you will be well advised addressing the following issues:

- Acceptability of the project: You must come to an early agreement with the supervisor.
- Academic validity: You are required to locate the particular problem you are studying within a wider theoretical framework. Therefore, the breadth and depth of the literature available must be a factor in your choice of topic.

- Feasibility: It is important that you appreciate the resource and time constraints. Is the data available? How long will it take to have the data ready for analysis? Do not be overly ambitious.
- Motivation: Working on a project can be a long and lonely affair. It is, therefore, important to select a topic in which you are interested.
- Originality: Give serious consideration to the extent to which your contribution will be original.

4.7   Ninety-nine percent of the time you will be expected to make some sort of claim and use evidence to support it, and your ability to do this well will separate your papers from those of students who see assignments as mere accumulations of fact and detail. When beginning to choose a topic, ask yourself, "what will be my point"? If your dissertation does not have a main point, it cannot be arguing for anything. Dissertations should not just be a mere "information dump".

6.   The Literature Review

6.1   Once you have identified a suitable topic you must work towards developing a literature review.

6.2   The literature review should demonstrate that you have a comprehensive knowledge of the research, theoretical and empirical, that relates to your proposed area of research. You must show how your research will build upon or extend the existing literature. The following guidelines should be followed:

6.3   **What is a literature review?**
A literature review is **NOT** merely a summary of other people's work. It is a critical look at the existing research in a particular area/topic. Of course this will mean that you do summarise some of the relevant research in your chosen topic. However, you must EVALUATE this research. This will include detailing how the research is related and its relevance to your dissertation. You must not simply provide a description of individual research. To maximise your mark you must select the important aspects of the research (e.g. the methodology) and clearly indicate how it relates to the other relevant studies (e.g. What other methodologies have been used? How are they similar? How are they different?). You must then indicate how the research relates to your work (e.g. what is its relationship to your methodology?). A good review must provide the context for your research.

6.4   **How do I write a good review?**

By undertaking a review of your chosen topic you will of course enlarge your knowledge. You should also improve and demonstrate your skills in information seeking and critically appraising the relevant research.

The idea of the literature review is not to provide a summary of all the published work that relates to your research, but a survey of the most relevant and significant work. A good review must:

- be organised to demonstrate how the research is related to your dissertation and the research question you are developing

- synthesise results into a summary of what is and is not known

- identify areas of controversy in the literature

- formulate questions that need further research

In general, students should make sure that the following questions are answered:
- What do we already know in the immediate area concerned?
- What are the characteristics of the key concepts or the main factors or variables?
- What are the relationships between these key concepts, factors or variables?
- What are the existing theories?
- Where are the inconsistencies or other shortcomings in our knowledge and understanding?
- What views need to be (further) tested?
- What evidence is lacking, inconclusive, contradictory or too limited?
- Why study (further) the research problem?
- What contribution can the present study be expected to make?
- What research designs or methods seem unsatisfactory?

6.5 How do I undertake a literature review?

Before writing your review, the student should consider the following questions:
- What type of literature review am I conducting? Am I looking at issues of theory, methodology, policy, quantitative research or qualitative research?
- What are the specific research questions that my literature review helps to define?
- What is the scope of my literature review? What types of publications have I considered? Have I failed to consider other sources?
- Have I critically analysed the literature I have read? Am I considering the strengths and weaknesses of the research, rather than just summarising them?
- Have I discussed studies contrary to my perspective?

Questions that the student should consider for each individual piece of research include:
- Has the author formulated a problem/issue?
- Is it clearly defined? Is its significance (scope, severity, relevance) clearly established?
- Could the problem have been approached more effectively from another perspective?
- What theoretical framework has the author used?
- Are there any methodological flaws?
- Has the author reviewed and evaluated the literature relevant to his/her analysis?
- Does the author include literature taking positions he/she does not agree with?
- In quantitative analysis, how good are the basic components of the study (e.g. does it include diagnostics tests?) Are the conclusions validly based upon the data and analysis?
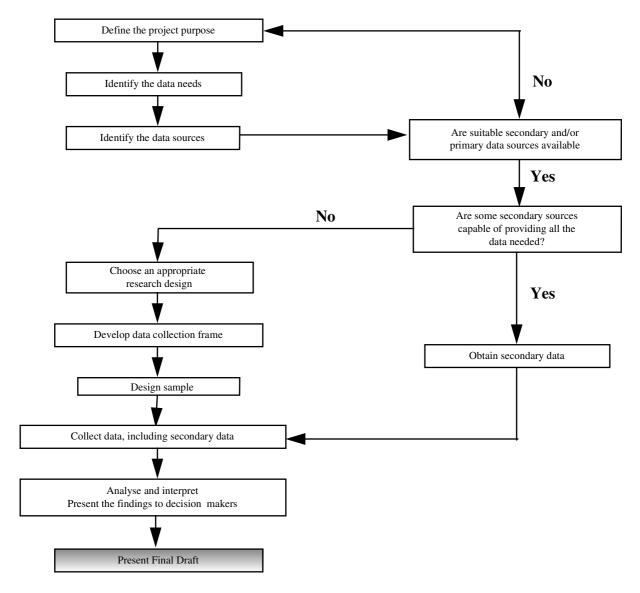
- In what ways does this book or article contribute to our understanding of the problem under study, and in what ways is it useful for practice? What are the strengths and limitations?
- How does this research relate to the specific thesis or question I am developing?

The dissertation must not be purely descriptive. It should involve argument and counter-argument or objection. This will show the reader that you have a deep understanding of the issue you are discussing. By anticipating alternative views and those that may disagree with your position you are showing that your have thought things through.

Students often perform badly because their dissertations are too descriptive and have no theoretical or conceptual basis. Discuss with your supervisor how best to incorporate a perspective on the "bigger picture" or appropriate theorising into your research.

7. Planning and Execution of your Research

7.1 Good planning and execution are essential if you are to complete your dissertation and obtain maximum value from this learning experience. A successful dissertation depends to a large extent in developing a good working relationship with your supervisor and any people whose assistance you need to complete your research.

7.2 The following diagram summarises the different stages of research you may perform for successful completion of your dissertation. Each dissertation will follow some or all of these stages and proper care must be taken in successfully completing the dissertation. It is vital that you discuss these with your supervisor at each stage.

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┌──────────────────────────┐                              ┌──────────────────────────┐
│  Define the project purpose │◄─────────────────────────┤                          │
└──────────────────────────┘                              │
            │                                              │      **No**
            ▼                                              │
┌──────────────────────────┐                              │
│   Identify the data needs  │                             │
└──────────────────────────┘                              ▼
            │                            ┌────────────────────────────────┐
            ▼                            │  Are suitable secondary and/or  │
┌──────────────────────────┐            │   primary data sources available │
│  Identify the data sources │──────────►│                                 │
└──────────────────────────┘            └────────────────────────────────┘
                                                          │  **Yes**
                                                          ▼
                   **No**                 ┌────────────────────────────────┐
        ┌──────────────────────────────── │  Are some secondary sources    │
        │                                 │  capable of providing all the  │
        ▼                                 │        data needed?            │
┌──────────────────────────┐             └────────────────────────────────┘
│  Choose an appropriate     │                            │  **Yes**
│    research design         │                            ▼
└──────────────────────────┘             ┌────────────────────────────────┐
            │                             │      Obtain secondary data      │
            ▼                             └────────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐                            │
│ Develop data collection frame │                       │
└──────────────────────────┘                            │
            │                                            │
            ▼                                            │
┌──────────────────────────┐                            │
│      Design sample        │                            │
└──────────────────────────┘                            │
            │                                            │
            ▼                                            ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│  Collect data, including secondary data │◄────────────┘
└──────────────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│      Analyse and interpret        │
│ Present the findings to decision makers │
└──────────────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│        Present Final Draft        │
└──────────────────────────────────┘
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7.3   You need to approach research systematically. It may be helpful to keep a journal and or to build up a file or portfolio of relevant document, letters, notes of events etc. It is important to think about this task at the start of the dissertation, rather than trying to recall the early phases when the dissertation is under way.

7.4   It is always advisable to work out the time it will take to complete the dissertation. One of the potential difficulties of studying is that structured activities will generally take precedence over unstructured work. The self-management task is to put enough structure and timetabling into the research activity that is it assumes **priority** over other structured activities such as shopping etc. One way of achieving this is to spend time at the beginning in planning and establishing tasks for the dissertation and estimating times for each of the tasks. You should outline the number of tasks that need to be completed, and put them in order of priority with the estimated time required for completion.

7.5   A regular note of the amount of time spent on research activities, compared to time spent on other matters, might alert you to question whether your major resource (time) is being used to its full potential.

7.6   Try from the outset to set yourself a timetable and keep to it. The first task here is to estimate the amount of time you are likely to spend on each task. Agree this with your

supervisor. You should define the major research task connected with your project and estimate the time required for each.

7.7   Students consistently underestimate the time to write-up research. For the final manuscript the standard estimate is four hours per double-spaced, typewritten page. Many students require more than four hours per page. The summary and conclusions are often rewritten several times, so the standard time is doubled to eight hours per page. Appendices, which may include computer printouts, copies of questionnaires, etc. can take considerable time to collate.

7.8   The important concept is **realistic** planning and this must depend on realist time estimates. The best estimates are usually made by breaking down the activities into small tasks and combining these estimates. You should not be dissuaded from making time estimates because there is a task that cannot be estimated. You should estimate the other activities and then include a pessimistic, optimistic, and best estimate for the hard-to-estimate activity. It is better to have an imprecise estimate than no estimate at all.

8.   Researching on the Internet

8.1   To ensure your literature review is comprehensive it is vital that you utilise all available electronic services available to you. The following provides some indication of what services are available. Depending on your chosen topic, many of these sites may not be useful. However, it is only by experimenting with the sites available that you will be able to evaluate them.

NB The notes below are for guidance –some of the links may not work anymore. If not try a search.

8.2   **Library Provided Sources**

NB This was not written for the library here, but may be of some help. Check the library website and with the librarians to see what is available.

The library provides access to several sources of online articles and online bibliography services. Given that these services are search engine based, it is highly recommended that you use these services when designing your project proposal. They will illustrate what research has been completed in your chosen topic and provide direction and possible questions to answer. They are also extremely important in ensuring that you review the literature adequately. **All** students should therefore consult these services to maximise their grade.

Most of the library provided resources require users to enter an ATHENS username and password. Others are controlled via I.P. address and are therefore only available from computers attached to the University network.

Registering for an Athens personal username:

        URL: <see library website>

For bibliographic searches (important in finding journal articles on your subject and to ensure you have reviewed the available literature) the following site is highly recommended:

BIDS: http://www.bids.ac.uk

BIDS' ISI service has been replaced by The Web of Science. This service can be found at the following address:

URL: http://wos.mimas.ac.uk

BIDS should not be the only bibliographic service used. Using only one such service will mean that it is likely that your literature review is incomplete. OCLC *Firstsearch* should also be used. (http://newfirstsearch.uk.oclc.org). This service also provides an opportunity to search for books. The username and password for this service is available in the library.

A review of the business resources provided by the library can be found at the following address:

URL: <u><see</u> library website**>**

The following relevant resources can be found at this address:

- **Ebsco Masterfile**

This provides access to the full text of over 1,000 publications via MasterFILE and World Bank Magazine database. MasterFILE features indexing and abstracts for over 2,000 general interest, academic, business, health, women's and multi-cultural journals and full text for over 1,000 titles.

- **Searchbank**

This contains three databases: European Business ASAP which provides mainly full text access to around 1,000 journals; F&S Index which provides in depth international business, product, market, industry and company information; Investext which provides current investment data including company and industry research reports. Each of these databases can be searched individually or together as required.

Other Full-Text Electronic Journal Services:
IDEAL, BIDS ingentaJournals and Emerald-Library services.

A full list of journals available is given at:
URL: <see library website>

8.3   General Internet Search
In the following sections there are recommended internet sites. It should be noted that the lists are not exhaustive. It is important for students to ensure that they have reviewed all relevant material available on the net. General internet search engines should be used and the following procedures applied:

a) Starting a search
- Frame questions using 'keywords'. If extra help is required consult the following sites:
  Web dictionary: http://www.dictionary.com

Oxford English Dictionary: http://dictionary.oed.com
(This is only available to computers on the university network.)
Web Thesaurus   http://www.thesaurus.com

b) Choose search engine and enter keywords
General Search engines:
Google   http://www.google.com.eg/ or http://www.google.com/
Google Scholar http://scholar.google.com.eg/   or   http://scholar.google.com.eg/
Yahoo   http://www.yahoo.com

Economics specific search engine
Inomics   **http://www.inomics.com/query/search**

Economics search   http://www.economicsearch.com/research

8.4   **Internet Resource Guides**

a. Economics
  i. Resources for Economists on the internet (by Bill Goffe) http://rfe.org/
  This lists more than 1,000 resources on the internet of interest to economists.

  ii. WebEc http://www.helsinki.fi/WebEc
  WebEc categorises the free economics information that is available on the web.n
  Examples of Addresses

  iii. Intute: Social Sciences : http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/
  This site is funded by the British ESRC and includes a comprehensive section on
  economics resources on the net. Includes a search engine

  iv. Biz/Ed Gateway http://bized.ac.uk
  The Business and Economics information gateway contains links to a large number of
  Internet resources in the broad fields of economics and business, as well as primary
  materials, most notably case studies, work sheets and substantial datasets not found
  elsewhere on the Internet.

  v. RDN Virtual Training Suite http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/
  This site offers a tutorial in using the internet for Economics and includes many of the
  sites listed in this document.

b. Finance

Examples of the resource collections included on this site are as follows:

  i) For students interested in finance related topics the Journal of Finance links page is
  highly recommended. This can be found at the following address:
       http://www.cob.ohio-state.edu/fin/journal/jofsites.htm

The site has many links, including finance journal, working paper sites, online textbooks and financial data.

ii) Professor James R. Garven's gateway to Internet resources 'providing substantive information concerning economic and finance-related information, including links to databases and to major finance and economics journals':

> http://www.finweb.com

The University of Tennessee provides another good resources page at the following address:

> http://web.utk.edu/~jwachowi/

c. Banking

i. The European Central Bank can be found at http://www.ecb.int

ii. Sources of information on monetary history and forms of money can be found at:

> http://www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/money.html

iii. Links to over 1400 banks, to stock exchanges from 65 countries, to major financial markets and news:

> http://www.qualisteam.com/eng/

d. International Business

Sources of information on international business can be found at:

> http://ciber.bus.msu.edu/busres.htm

8.5   Economics newsgroups (includes searchable archives)

> http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/

8.6   Online Working Papers

Recent research that may yet to be published in refereed journals are available at the following addresse:

a. General working papers, articles software -searchable

> http://ideas.repec.org/

b. Heterodox Economics Resources

.   http://www.heterodoxeconomics.net/
         http://www.orgs.bucknell.edu/afee/hetecon.htm
         http://www.econ.utah.edu/hesa/

c. The Marx/Engels Archive

Includes biographical material about Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and many full-text translations of the seminal works of Marxism

> http://www.marxists.org/

d. History of Thought

> http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/
> http://cepa.newschool.edu/het/

e. US Department of State Country Reports

From data compiled by US embassies, this site provides reports on economic and trade policies of over 80 nations. Information provided includes key economic indicators, exchange rate policies, export subsidies and debt management policies.

URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

d. UK Government Publications Online

To search for UK public sector information on the net students are advised to use the search engine at the following site:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm

8.8   Newspapers

Students should note that newspapers could be useful for information that is too recent or local for academic analysis. Online sites will often provide free archive search engines. Links for online international newspapers can be found at:

URL: http://www.onlinenewspapers.com

Students, however, should note that because newspapers deal with contemporary events, often of a political nature, articles are likely to be biased, with no clear distinction between facts and opinions

9.   Data

9.1   Finding the appropriate data can be the most difficult part of the project. You should check that the data is available before deciding on a topic and make sure you are clear what the data is. You can use time series data, cross section data (observations at one moment in time over countries, regions, families, etc.), or panel data which combines time series and cross section.

9.2   Make sure there are enough observations and variables. The sample size can be important in determining the techniques you can use and the precision of our results. Aim to have at least 30 observations for annual or cross section data; more for quarterly or monthly data. Unless you have experience of large data sets, or can get help in handling them, do not go much above 100 observations.

9.3   Make sure you know the exact definition of your data and what they are measuring. Terms like income and prices are not acceptable as they give little information. The sort of questions you should consider are:
- Are the data current or constant price?
- What is the base year?
- What is the coverage (Net or Gross, Domestic UK or GB)?
- Are they seasonally adjusted?
- Have the definitions changed over the sample period?
- If it is constructed data, how was this done?
- Is the data based on a sample?

9.4   You may have to do a lot of work to make the data useable or comparable. If so provide information on this work, possibly in the form of a data appendix, so that you can be given credit.

9.5   You may have to adjust the data in various ways to deal with missing observations, to splice series on different bases, or to convert them into a different currency. Published data are not infallible, so always be on the look out for possible mistakes.

9.6   You should know something about the relevant history and institutions, such as important events, like strikes, wars, or changes of government.

9.7   Once you have loaded the data onto the computer, you should conduct a descriptive analysis. Print the data out and check carefully for typing errors. Plot the data and note the distinctive features such as trends, temporal dependencies, seasonality, unusual observation, etc. Calculate the means variances of your variables and their correlations.

9.8   Repeat this process after you transform the data in any way:
- growth rates or ratios (the savings rate, the velocity of circulation, the share of profits) are often more informative because they are not dominated by trends.
- logarithmic transformations are often used in economic models as the coefficients can then be interpreted as elasticities; the change in the logarithm is approximately equal to the growth rate; variances are more likely to be constant; and many interesting economic hypotheses can be expressed as linear restrictions in logarithmic models.

9.9   Where there are a number of possible measures for a series use all of them and try to decide which is best. You can report this in the project. e.g. Do wages respond more to the consumer price index or the retail price index? Do not decide a priori, test and find out.

9.10   Keep detailed notes on the sources of data and anything you do to them. Its easy to forget at a later stage. You might end up with some adjustments you made and forgot about dominating your results.

9.11   Keep at least two backed up copies of your data on separate discs, stored separately. There are many ways of loosing or corrupting disks and it can be a lot of work typing the data in again.

9.12   There are numerous sources of data. Examples include:

For international data:
World Development Report: published by the World Bank
OECD Main Economic Indicators
International Financial Statistics: Published by IMF
Eurostat: data on the European Community

For the US:
Economic Report of the President: has an appendix giving the main economic aggregates.

Financial data:
> Datastream: provides various financial and company accounts information and is available in the library. It also has some coverage of international macroeconomic and financial data. Students are advised that the Library can offer training to groups of four students at a time. Training can be booked at the Library Enquiries Desk.

There are also a number of publications which present data, such as:
> Maddison (1982) which gives long runs of historical data for the main capitalist countries.
> Berndt (1991) provides data on a floppy disc.

10. Preparation and Submission

10.1 Structure of dissertation
Your dissertation should be presented in the following sequence:

> Title Page
> Abstract
> Acknowledgements
> Table of contents
> List of tables
> List of figures
> Introduction
> Body of the dissertation (divided into appropriate chapters)
> Summary/Conclusions/Recommendations
> Appendices
> References

Let's look at each of these in turn:

10.2 Title and title page
The title should describe the content of the report accurately and concisely. The reader's first impression of your document is based on the title, so be clear and imaginative. Remember that many people use electronic databases to locate material such as dissertation in libraries, so make sure that the words in your title equate with the contents.
In addition to the title itself, the title page should also provide the following information:

- the qualification for which the dissertation is submitted
- the name of the institution to which the dissertation is submitted.
- the year of submission.

10.3 Abstract

An abstract is a resume (approximately 300-1000 words) of the subject under investigation, the aim of the dissertation, and how it was tackled, together with a short reference to the main conclusions and recommendations.

10.4 Acknowledgements

This item gives the student the opportunity to express thanks to her/his employer and other individuals who have given any assistance or advice. Avoid being too flippant at one extreme or too humble and pathetic at the other.

10.5 Table of contents

The table of contents follows the title page. It should list in sequence, with page numbers, all relevant subdivisions of the report including the titles of chapters, sections and sub-sections as appropriate.

10.6 Lists of Tables and Figures

There should be a list for each and they should appear on a separate page. Give the titles and the page numbers for each table or figure.

10.7 Introduction

A typically introduction would include the following elements:

- **The background**: briefly explaining and introducing the subject of your dissertation.

- **The objectives**: a clear and precise statement of the aims of your dissertation.

- **The methodology**: a concise statement of the theories and concepts employed in your research.

- **The methods**: details of the way you met the research objectives. For example, if this involved a survey you would have to give details of who was contacted, how they were selected, how many co-operated, and how the data was collected and analysed. Also provide your rationale for adopting a particular research method rather than another.

- **An overview** of the way the dissertation is structured. Describe the contents of each chapter briefly and explain how they fit together.

You **must** avoid writing an introduction that is vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring. It provides the reader with an initial impression of your writing and the quality of your work. It should be concise, engaging, and well written. It should capture the reader's interest, ensuring that they want to read the rest of your paper.

It is not necessarily true that you should write your introduction first. You may find that it is more effective to wait until later, given that it may be the case that it is only through the experience of writing your paper that you discover your main argument. An introduction written at the beginning of that discovery process will not necessarily reflect what you wind up with at the end.

10.8 Body of the Dissertation

Clearly it is difficult to prescribe the structure for the body of your dissertation. It will typically be between five to eight chapters in length, each with a number of sub-headings

covering relevant topics. (Paragraph numbering is optional but if is applied it should be done so consistently throughout). Without question the main weakness with student dissertations is a lack of structure. Your task is to explain your objectives and take your reader logically through the evidence that led to your final conclusions and recommendations.

Ensure that the arguments you are presenting are based on evidence rather than anecdote. They must be based on valid empirical or secondary data in a way that is consistent with existing theoretical perspectives on this issue.

Also ensure that arguments flow in a logical way that is clear to the reader. The chances are that if you have written 500 words without introducing a sub-heading then you are drifting into a "wooly" essay, as opposed to a tightly structured dissertation.

10.9 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions are often the most difficult part of an essay to write, and many writers feel that they have nothing left to say after having written the paper. A writer needs to keep in mind that the conclusion is often what a reader remembers best. Your conclusion should be the best part of your dissertation.

A conclusion should

- stress the importance of the dissertation's main statements,
- give the dissertation a sense of completeness, and
- leave a final impression on the reader.

Suggestions

- **Answer the question "So What?"**
  Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.
- **Synthesize, don't summarize**
  Don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points your made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.
- **Redirect your readers**
  Give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
- **Create a new meaning**
  You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.
- **Echoing the introduction**
  Echoing your introduction can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full-circle. If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay was helpful in creating a new understanding.

10.10 Appendices

Appendices are not counted as being within the word limitation of the dissertation (10000 words) but must not exceed 25 percent of the text. Material for appendices, e.g. organisation

charts, copies of questionnaires, sales turnover for particular products for particular time periods should be letter referenced in the text, e.g. see Appendix A, see Appendix B., etc.

10.11 References

Written and electronic material used in your dissertation project should be referenced using a standard referencing convention such as the Harvard system detailed below.

References cited in the text should give the author's name and the date in parentheses, e.g. Smith (1995). Where there are two co-authors both names should be given, e.g. Taylor and Smith (1997). Where there are more than two authors, the name of the first should be given, followed by an et al., e.g. Taylor *et al.* (1999)

If an author has produced more than one work in a given year, this should be identified as Becker (1970a), Becker (1970b) etc.

The reference section of the project should list all the text references in alphabetical order of the authors' surnames. The details given enable the sources to be traced.

Examples:
When referring to a book:

Kay, J. (1996), *The Business of Economics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Golding, G. and Middleton, S. (1982), *Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty*, Blackwell: Oxford.

When referring to an article in a book:

Rosati, D.K. (1992), Problems of post-CMEA Trade and Payments, in Fleming, J. and Rollo, J.M.C (eds) *Trade, Payments and Adjustments in Central and Eastern Europe*, London: RIIA and EBRD.

When referring to a journal article:

de Vos, K. and Garner, T. (1991), 'An Evaluation of Subjective Poverty Definitions. Comparing Results from the US and the Netherlands', *Review of Income and Wealth*, Vol. 37, pp. 267-285.

Zucker , G.S. and Weiner, B. (1993), 'Conservatism and Perceptions of Poverty - An Attributional   Analysis', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol, 23(12), pp. 925-943.

When referring to government and other publications:

Department of Employment (1973), Characteristics of the Unemployed, *Department of Employment Gazette*, June.

Economist (1992a), *Economics Focus: Japan's Troublesome Imports*, 11 January.

Economist (1992b), *Trade Watch: A Good tanning*, 22 February.

George Edwards Library, *The preparation and presentation of theses and dissertations [online]*, Guildford: University of Surrey, 1999. Available from: http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Library/theses.html [Accessed 1 September 2000]

11. Writing Style

11.1 Your dissertation should be written using simple language. Avoid long-winded, rambling accounts with no natural flow or sequence. It should be written in the past tense and usually, in the third person, not the first person singular. For instance, say "it could be argued that this shows..." and not "I think this shows...". The exception is where you are reporting your own action/decisions or where you wish to introduce a personal note in your final recommendations (e.g. "I think the way ahead is...").

11.2 Remember that most people redraft dissertations many times to reach the final polished version. Try to make use of a word processor. This will considerably enhance your presentation and may help your writing.

11.3 It is also important to thoroughly check the report for errors, omissions or inconsistencies. Four checks are usually needed:

- a check for inconsistencies in the logical flow of the written arguments.
- a check for accuracy and constancy of numerical data;
- a check for spelling or typing error.
- a second typing and spelling check (try to get a friend or colleague to do this as you may be too close to it by this stage).

11.4 Spelling mistakes, whilst of limited importance themselves, tend to lower reader confidence in the overall thrust of the argument, so make every effort to avoid them. Use the spell checker function on the word processing package and, if available, the grammar checker too.

11.5 Writing hints for beginners (puns intended):

- Verbs has to agree with their subjects.

- Prepositions are not words to end a sentence with.

- And do not start a sentence with a conjunction.

- Avoid clichés like the plague.

- Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.

- Be more or less specific.

- Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.

- No sentence fragments.

- Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.

- One should never generalise.

- Do not use no double negatives.

- Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.

- Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary.

- Never use big words when a diminutive one would suffice.

- Kill all exclamation marks!!!

- Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.

- Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not required.

- Puns are for children, not groan readers.

- Proof read carefully to see if you any words left out.

11.6   Advice on writing skills is available at the following address:
URL: http://www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide/

11.7   Online guides to writing research papers:
1) http://web.mit.edu/writing/index.html

2) http://campusgw.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/manntom2.cgi?section=help&URL=newhelp/newhel

11.8   Study skills support (English for academic writing) is available from the Faculty. Ask at the desk.

11.9   For more information on help available to students with disabilities please see the University's intranet site.

12.   Assessment

12.1   Your dissertation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- The aims and objectives of the report should be clearly stated.

- The ability to use relevant theoretical knowledge should be demonstrated.

- A clear description of the research method(s) adopted and the reasons and the justification for the choice of method(s) should be provided.

- A clear description of sources of data, method of collection and analysis should be provided

- A justification for the appropriateness of data collected and data analysis should be provided and awareness of the limitations imposed by, and opportunities offered by, the chosen project design should be demonstrated.

- The research findings should be analysed and their implications set out clearly.

- Appropriate structuring of the report and presentation

- Succinct and coherent presentation of material.

- Acknowledgement and citing of all external sources throughout the report.

12.2   Two internal markers will mark the dissertation, one being your supervisor.

12.3   You may be examined orally (a "*viva voce*") by a small panel of internal and/or external assessors if there are any concerns about the academic practises involved in your dissertation (e.g. plagiarism).

APPENDIX A

Technical production of the project.

Paper size and typing

The project should be typed on A4 white paper, and lines should be one and one half spaced.

Margin

The left hand margin should be not less than 40mm and the other margin not less than 20mm.

Page Numbering

All pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the project report, including the appendices. The page numbers should be located centrally at the bottom of the page approximately 10mm above the edge.

Tables

Tables should be numbered consecutively throughout the dissertation.

Numbering

The opening pages (Abstract, Acknowledgements etc.) may make use of Roman numerals, with text having Arabic numerals.

Appendix B

Initial Dissertation Proposal Form

Name:
Student Number:
Programme of Study:

PROVISIONAL TITLE
This may be your first attempt at a title. It may change as your work progresses.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH
This should briefly summarise the research you plan to do why it is worthwhile. It is useful to suggest research questions and the methods you plan to use to answer them.

(Max 200 words)

FOR MODULE LEADER USE ONLY

Suggested supervisor	

Appendix C: Mod Spec

Module Code: ECON06H02	Title: Projects in Economics
Modular weight: 40	Examination weighting: 0%
Prerequisite modules: Intermediate Macroeconomics, Intermediate Microeconomics, Econometrics & Practicum	
Reassessment:	
Internal examiner:	
Semester taught: Semester One & Two	
Key words: communication skills, Development of the Underlying Theory, Research hypotheses Project, Research,	
Date of latest revision: 21/8/07	

Aims
The aim of this module is to help students learn more about the research process by producing a substantial research paper under the supervision of a faculty member.

Intended Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students should:

Knowledge and Understanding
1. Be able to understand the issues arising in completing an economics research project. This includes the knowledge of the relevant economic theory, the development of testable hypotheses, and the collection of relevant data and literature.

Subject Specific Skills
2. Have a thorough grasp of the literature in a specific topic of research chosen by them in conjunction with the supervisor. This topic will incorporate both theoretical and applied economics.

Key Transferable Skills
3. Be able to know how to plan and execute a piece of economic research, how to collect and evaluate relevant data and evidence, how to present the literature review, analysis, evidence and conclusions in an acceptable, informative and attractive presentational format, which enables readers to understand the material presented for themselves.

Contents

Projects will usually be: either an empirical study based on appropriate econometric or statistical analysis or a literature-based review and analysis of a particular theoretical or empirical topic. The project must include: planning the project in consultation with a supervisor and writing a project proposal; carrying out literature searches and completing a literature review; collecting and analysing data; writing a report.

Methods of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Total student effort for the module: 400 hours on average running over two semesters.

Learning methods
Lectures/Tutorial: There will be one to two two-hour group lectures. In addition, each student will have a minimum of four contact hours with her/his supervisor.

Private Study: This should comprise guided reading, research activity and preparation associated with the chosen topic; preparation and production of data and the drafting of dissertation chapters.

Type of assessment & contribution to mark
Assessment will be based on (i) a 2,000-3,000 word Interim Report to be submitted on the last day before the start of the exam period in the first semester (25%); and (ii) an 8,000-10,000 word Project Report to be submitted on the last day before the start of the exam period in the second semester (75%).

Reading List
Gibaldi, J. (2003) *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.*
Greenlaw, S. (2006) *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research.*