

Research Methodology

Introduction to the Course

Nicola Viegi

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Objectives

The dissertation (paper from now on) is a device used to assess your ability to:

1. define a feasible project (find a topic and plan your schedule ahead)
2. make use of a particular methodology (time series, cross-section, panel data, microeconometrics)
3. work with data (you have to collect, clean and format a dataset)
4. work independently (the supervisor is there for you, but not all the time, coordination matters and planning is essential)

The Research Process

The Question

First: Read

Read for work, Read for fun ,
Just read

Second: Count

Be comfortable with data - find, organize and present

Third: Write

Writing in Economics as any other writing
Keep it simple

The Supervisor

The role of the supervisor is:

- ▶ to advise you on the feasibility of your topic
- ▶ to provide you with some general references in your topic
- ▶ to provide you with some references on the methodology
- ▶ to provide you with comments on the final draft of your paper

The role of the supervisor is not:

- ▶ to correct your grammar and vocabulary
- ▶ to be available at your own convenience
- ▶ to spend more than 8 (eight) hours supervising you (which includes direct contact, e-mails and reading of your final draft)

The Research Proposal

You need a research proposal and it must not be longer than 1,000 words (excluding appendices, footnotes, tables and references), and it should address the following:

1. the purpose of your paper; what is your research question, what is the hypothesis to be tested?
2. the motivation; why is it an important, or worthwhile, question? Why is it interesting? Avoid questions where only one answer is interesting. In science there is no "good", "bad" or "does not work"
3. literature; what past research has shown (remember the 3 or 4 top papers written by the 3 or 4 leaders and published in the 3 or 4 top journals), what are the weaknesses and gaps in the literature, how can you mitigate those weaknesses, what are the weaknesses of your paper (given the data you have)?
4. the methodology or how you do it; the dataset, sources, econometric technique, specification and possible problems

The Presentation

- ▶ You have 10 minutes to present your proposal and then 5 minutes for questions and comments (time is limited, so time yourself)
- ▶ you have to tell the audience what is your research question, why is it important, what past research has shown
- ▶ the methodology; the dataset, sources and econometric technique
- ▶ speak loudly, slowly and clearly, and pay attention to the questions and comments you receive (take note of them so that you can improve and refine your proposal).

The Paper

- ▶ Your paper must not be longer than 8,000 words (excluding appendices, footnotes, tables and references)
- ▶ things you must bear in mind about your paper:
 - ▶ what is the central result, or the central contribution of your paper
 - ▶ readers want to know your basic result as soon as possible (readers, and by readers I mean your supervisor and the external examiner, are impatient, they can always do something else ...)
 - ▶ use the newspaper style, say, start with what is important, the punchline must be right at the beginning of your paper good writing requires simplicity, clarity and unity

The Paper

- ▶ The structure of the paper is simple and clear:
- ▶ abstract, introduction (and literature review)
- ▶ data, methodology, results (and discussion) and conclusion
- ▶ you can also have appendices and then the references