

Guidelines for the Preparation of a Thesis at the Chair of Applied Microeconomics

Prof. Dr. Gregory S. Crawford

October 2020

1 Application Procedure

1.1 In a Nutshell

1. Study the research topics in the appendix of these guidelines, read some related literature, and think about possible thesis topics that interest you.
2. Send your complete application to Prof. Crawford (gregory.crawford@econ.uzh.ch)
3. You will receive an answer by email stating whether your proposal is accepted or rejected, possibly with suggestions for more suitable thesis topics.
4. In case of acceptance, you will be redirected to the person in the Applied Microeconomics chair that best matches your thesis topic.

1.2 Required documents

Candidates are requested to send their application in English to Prof. Crawford. The application needs to contain the following documents:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Up to date academic record
3. A thesis proposal where you discuss your topic and the related literature on a maximum of two pages
4. Major field of study
5. List of previously completed pieces of written works (seminar papers, bachelor's thesis etc.)
6. Earliest date of start and deadline

Your application will be answered by email and you'll receive further instructions. These may include a revision of your proposal or a rejection.

1.3 Requirements of the Chair

1. All theses must be written in English.
2. We only accept students from the bachelor's and master's program in Economics that have already passed or currently attain at least one of the following lectures (titles may differ slightly from past semesters):

- Bachelor's program:
 - (a) Industrial Economics
 - (b) Seminar in Competition Policy
 - (c) Programming in Matlab
 - (d) Introduction to Game Theory
 - (e) Contract and Information Economics
- Master's program:
 - (a) Numerical Methods in Economics
 - (b) Advanced Industrial Economics
 - (c) Analysis of Microdata
 - (d) Causal Inference and Program Evaluation
 - (e) Empirical Analysis of Asymmetric Information in Banking and Insurance Markets
 - (f) Empirical Methods, Part 2 (Experimental Economics)

1.4 Formal Requirements for thesis

Your thesis should be structured as follows:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Text (the important part)
- Bibliography
- Appendix (if applicable)

Bachelor's theses should not exceed 40 pages and master's theses are at a maximum of 50 pages. We require you to make use of the text processing system LATEX which will give you easy assistance in formatting the thesis. Concerning citations, references and footnotes you are expected to follow roughly the standard of the American Economic Review.

1.5 Requirements of the Faculty

Besides the requirements of the chair, there are several general requirements of the Faculty of Economics which have to be considered. These can be found here: http://www.oec.uzh.ch/studies/general/theses/oec_en.html.

2 Supervision Procedure

2.1 Supervision

An assistant from the chair is assigned to each candidate to supervise the thesis. Students should contact their advisor when they have major questions. However, it is expected of you to deal with the thesis in an autonomous fashion.

2.2 Procedure

The supervision procedure for each thesis consists of five sequential steps. Students contact their advisor whenever they have completed each step. The steps are as follows:

1. The first step starts with a successful application and ends with the kick-off meeting. After the meeting, advisor and students have agreed on the topic of the thesis, in particular on the literature and the data sets that the thesis will be based on, as well as on the starting date.
2. Based on the kick-off meeting, the advisor formulates the exact title of the thesis and sends it on time to the Dean's office. At the starting date students can pick up their topic at the desk of the Dean's office, where they'll also receive the exact date at which the thesis has to arrive at the Dean's office.
3. After at most a sixth of the working time the students send their advisor an extended table of contents. This document contains all sections of the thesis as well as the bibliography. In each section, the student gives a brief summary of the section's intended content. The advisor gives a short feedback.
4. Not exceeding two thirds of the working time, students send their advisor a preliminary draft of the thesis. All sections and main results of the thesis should already be worked out, even though in a preliminary fashion. Advisors give students an extensive feedback.
5. Students hand in the thesis at the Dean's office before the date specified when picking up the topic (Requirements how many copies etc. to hand in can also be found on the webpage specified above).

3 Evaluation Criteria

The thesis will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Focus on stated research topics
2. Understanding and selecting the most relevant literature for the thesis topic
3. Correct application of empirical and/or theoretical methods to examine the research topic. Explanation of most important aspects of the applied methods (including possible drawbacks).
4. Arguments and their presentation (structure, comprehensiveness, logic etc.)
5. Overall impression (layout, grammar, citations etc.)

4 General Topics (B.A. & M.A.)

Listed below are some broad research areas and specific topics of interest within these research areas of interest to the chair of Applied Microeconomics. The specific topics Professor Crawford or one of his PhD students (Matteo Courthoud and Christian Decker) are currently working on in are labeled with stars.

If you are interested in any one of these specific questions, you should reach out to Professor Crawford to discuss it. Some questions already have data available to address them, while others do not. The short conversation will give you some context to better understand the question and what would be necessary in terms of skills and interests to address it. Note these topics give you an idea of Professor Crawford's interests - if you have a topic not listed here that seems like it would fit in with one or more of these, you should feel free to propose that topic.

4.1 General Research Areas

1. Industrial Organization
 - i.e. the study of consumer demand, firms' costs, and/or competition
2. Applied Econometrics
 - i.e. empirical theses, not theoretical theses (exceptions possible for topics of interest)
3. Media Economics
 - Particularly television, film, and music markets
4. Antitrust and Competition Policy
 - Particularly on pressing issues and/or cases where empirical methods are important
5. Computational Economics
 - i.e. the application of sophisticated computational methods to economic problems
6. Big Data, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence
 - Background in computer science required

4.2 Specific Research Questions

- Television markets in general
 - Horizontal concentration and bargaining power
 - Vertical integration and foreclosure
 - Media bias and political outcomes*
- Antitrust and Competition Policy
 - Mergers and concentration, with focus on influential EU/US merger cases
 - Common ownership and distributed control*
 - Market power: firm productivity, margins, markups*
 - Self-preferencing, bundling, tying and other forms of foreclosure*
- Computational theory and market dynamics
 - Competition dynamics: innovation, entry, exit, mergers à la Erickson & Pakes (1995)*
 - Identification and estimation of dynamic oligopoly models
 - Artificial Intelligence in economics: pricing algorithms, smart policies, ...
- Digital Platforms and the Sharing Economy (in particular, Airbnb)
 - The role of user ratings and strategic rating system design*
 - Impact on the “offline” economy
 - Evaluation of existing regulation/scope for additional regulation
- Economic incentives in pharmaceutical research
 - Selection of research projects and allocation of R&D budget
 - Strategic disclosure of trial results and the drug approval process

- Mergers and Acquisitions of biotech startups
- Behavioral biases in Industrial Organization
 - Nudges and biases in consumer behavior
 - Structural estimation of behavioral models