

# PrincetonEconomics

## Senior Thesis Handbook

### Class of 2025

A resource for Economics majors containing guidelines, requirements and deadlines  
for Senior Independent Work

Copies of this program and more Senior Thesis information may be downloaded from the Economics Department  
website: <https://economics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-program/independent-work/senior-thesis/>

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## **Class of 2025 Senior Thesis Calendar**

**Fri, Sept. 6, 2024**

11am – 12pm In-person Senior Thesis Mandatory Info Meeting (Attendance taken) **Location TBD**

**Mon, Sept. 16, 2024**

Advisor Request Form/Thesis Proposal submitted online by 4pm.

**Tuesday, Sept 24, 2024**

Advisor assignments completed and posted on Canvas; announcement sent via Canvas.

**Thurs, Nov 14, 2024**

Thesis outline and bibliography due to Canvas by 11:59pm

**Fri, Dec. 13, 2024**

Deadline to request data not held at the University (Bobray)

**Mon, Jan 20 – Jan 24, 2024** – Data Analysis Clinics for Independent Work (*schedule TBD*)

**Thurs, Feb 13, 2025**

First draft and TITLE due to Canvas by 11:59pm

**Thurs, April 10, 2025**

DIGITAL COPIES of THESIS due to CANVAS and Thesis Central and Senior Exit Surveys Completed BEFORE 4:00 PM (Late penalties apply)

## **2024/25 Economics SENIOR THESIS At-a-Glance for STUDENTS**

- ✓ **MANDATORY MEETING: Friday, 9/6** 11am – 12pm, Intro to Senior Thesis Meeting w/ Prof. Wilson, ESS, and Librarians
  - Location TBD; **attendance will be taken.**

### *Deadlines*

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	
Advisor Request Form/Thesis Proposal	9/16	All Advisor Assignments posted by 9/24 on Canvas
Outline/Bibliography	11/14	Advisor comments on Canvas
Deadline to request data not held at the University	12/13	Make request with Bobray Bordelon at <a href="mailto:bordelon@princeton.edu">bordelon@princeton.edu</a>
First Draft & Title	2/13	Advisor comments on Canvas
Final Thesis	4/10	Advisor and 2 <sup>nd</sup> reader grade internally; comments and final combined letter grade posted to Canvas.

*Participation:* Students will receive a participation grade, which will contribute 5% to their overall thesis grade and includes completing all deadlines on time. The remaining 95% of the grade will be made up of 1/3 faculty advisor grade and 2/3 2<sup>nd</sup> reader grade.

*Attendance:* Seniors **MUST** attend the initial Intro to Senior Thesis meeting and meet all 4 milestone deadlines in order to receive 5% participation grade.

*One-on-one meetings with faculty advisor* We expect students to contact faculty advisors and schedule times to meet and discuss their progress throughout the year. Students are expected to be proactive in connecting with their advisor and self-disciplined at meeting all milestone deadlines.

*Canvas* All comments will be posted to Canvas. Only a final, combined letter grade and comments will be posted to Canvas on the final thesis. Please note that second readers remain anonymous.

Questions: Andrea Wilson ([awilson@princeton.edu](mailto:awilson@princeton.edu))  
Gina Holland ([gholland@princeton.edu](mailto:gholland@princeton.edu))

### **Participation requirements:**

- Intro to Thesis Meeting w/ Andrea Wilson. Attendance mandatory.
- Meet milestone deadlines noted above.

### **Resources for seniors**

1. Economics Statistical Services (Oscar Torres-Reyna), <https://economics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-program/ess/>
2. Writing Center, <https://writing.princeton.edu/center>
3. McGraw for Teaching and Learning, <https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/undergraduates/learning-strategies-consultations>

## **General Comments about Economics Research:**

Economics research can be organized in several ways. The three main branches of economics research are: macroeconomics which provides the language and tools for analyzing aggregate economic outcomes; microeconomics which offers a framework for studying the interaction among individuals/organizations and the role incentives and information play in these interactions; and econometrics which develops tools for confronting macroeconomic and microeconomic theories with data.

The smaller areas within the branches listed above are called fields. Examples of fields are monetary economics, international finance, industrial organization, public finance, finance, labor economics, health economics, development economics, political economy, behavioral economics, experimental economics and international trade. Most fields fall under one of the main branches, typically macro or microeconomics. Some fields straddle multiple branches, (e.g. finance) others have their own unique features that make it difficult to classify them as macro or microeconomics. Roughly speaking, branches can be identified with the required courses for an Economics major and the titles of departmental courses correspond to (or identify) the fields.

Another and perhaps more useful way to organize economic research is by methods. Most research in academic economics and the vast majority of senior theses in economics are *empirical*. That is, the authors of these papers work to identify and quantify relationships among economic variables by applying econometric methods to data. Alternatively, economic research can be *theoretical*. Researchers in economic theory develop models that are abstractions of economic behavior (of, for example individuals, groups of individuals, or firms) and their interactions (in, for example, markets, political interactions, elections, bargaining). Some empirical work is closely tied to a particular theory. Many of the variables in the empirical models represent the ones that appear in the corresponding theory and the empirical relationships themselves mimic the relationships that the theory identifies. Most empirical papers however, measure relationships that are informed by one or more theories but are not specifically tied to a particular model. Some empirical papers, including some senior theses, measure the relationship among economic quantities without any guidance from theoretical work. Finally, some economics papers (and a small number of theses) are *experimental*. These papers analyze the behavior of subjects engaged in a structured economic activity. Experimental papers tend to involve simpler econometric techniques. The challenge in an experimental paper is in identifying an interesting question and designing and implementing the suitable experiment to address it.

If you look at titles of economics research papers, you will notice an impressive range of titles and subject matter. What makes up an economics paper? What is common to economic research? What distinguishes economics research from research in the other biological and social sciences and humanities? A precise and complete answer to these questions is impossible and fortunately not necessary. It is enough to know certain common features of economic research papers and certain attitudes or values that economists share. Without any pretense at being exhaustive or of a reflecting a consensus, here is a list of such criteria:

- (1) Economics is quantitative. Numbers matter, measurement is key. In this sense, a paper that is primarily descriptive, or one where data does not exist on the topic, would be considered characteristic of a *poor* paper.
- (2) Abstraction is permitted and valued. For example, GDP, sunk costs, utility, consumers' surplus, risk, and externality are neither the simplest concepts nor the most intuitive ones; yet they are central to economic analysis because they identify important economic categories or reflect useful compromises between what is of interest and what can be measured.
- (3) Agency matters. Economic outcomes emerge from choices that result from the interaction of individual preferences and individual and institutional constraints. Things happen because an individual or a group of individuals make them happen. In many cases, as you would expect, the individual is the agent of interest. In others, the firm is the agent of interest, either in its entirety or the various departments within the firm. The appropriate choice of agent depends on what questions you want to ask. If you are studying international trade, one agent could be an entire country. One key to economic research is identifying the right agent. One thing is clear, "we as a society," "humanity," "ideas," are not suitable agents for any economic analysis.
- (4) Arguments should be clear, logical and whenever possible formal. A beautiful paragraph of prose is nice but does not substitute for a logical flaw in an economics paper.
- (5) Economic research offers positive results not normative judgments. However, in the introduction or better yet, in the conclusion of a paper an author may consider some of the normative motivations and implications of her analysis. Often, the analysis indicates some advantages or disadvantages of a particular policy. However, an economic research paper typically isn't about identifying or defining what is good or what is fair. Introductory economics texts often state that economics can be divided into normative and positive economics. This is extremely misleading since what these books describe as normative economics is something you are unlikely to encounter in any top economics journal. One old textbook describes normative economics as follows: "*Normative economics involves ethical precepts and value judgments ... These issues can be debated, but they can never be settled by science or appeal to facts. There are no right and wrong answers to these questions because they involve ethics and value judgements rather than facts.*" (Samuelson and Nordhaus (1990)). The last sentence offers the best description of what is not a good topic for an economics research paper.
- (6) The tone should be detached, unemotional and analytical. A research paper in economics is not a polemic or a call to action. No matter how strongly the author feels about the issue overall, within a research paper, she should only offer positive arguments and facts. Whether she feels strongly or genuinely about the issue or is undertaking the project purely as an intellectual exercise is irrelevant.

There are three learning goals of the thesis experience that reflect the six criteria above. First, through their work on the thesis, seniors are expected to command the *methods* suitable for their topic. For an empirical thesis, this means seniors should not only understand the relevant econometric techniques but also show awareness of the limitations of those techniques both in general and in the context of their own work. Theoretical work should display an understanding of how to construct a model, how to manipulate it and how to draw conclusions from it. Experimental work should reveal an understanding of current experimental protocols and their rationale. Second, students should command the relevant literature. That is, they should be able to place their own work within the field (or subfield) so that the marginal contribution of the work is clear. They should also be able to relate the methods used to those of others in

the same field or, when appropriate, different fields and know the relevant historical or institutional background. Finally, students should learn to write economics in a *style and tone* that reflects current conventions and preferences. Being able to identify a “fashionable” topic is useful, but an up-to-date treatment of the topic is essential. The tone should be factual and detached. The author may express the normative implications of their analysis but should do so without becoming an advocate. They should also identify and state the limitations of and possible difficulties with their broader conclusions.

## **Reminders**

Please read this program carefully before you see your thesis advisor. This information and more are available in the “Undergraduate” section of the Department website at:

<https://economics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-program/independent-work/senior-thesis/>

**Thesis is due on Thursday, April 10, 2025 before 4:00 pm.**

There are **never** any extensions given for **any reason**. A departmental committee assesses penalties, and the department has adhered firmly to the doctrine that fairness **requires rigid adherence to the submission deadline, including the 4:00 pm deadline**. Grade reductions have been quite severe in the past. The penalty committee may consider mitigating circumstances submitted in writing with the late thesis, but the committee rarely reduces the penalty as a consequence of the excuse. **Get your thesis in on time**. The penalty scheme more than covers the expected improvement in a student’s grade resulting from the extra days taken to submit it. You have almost seven months until the due date. That is more than enough time for the production of a first-rate thesis.

## **Choosing a Topic**

A first-rate thesis in economics is either an empirical paper or a theoretical paper or a combination of both. This means that you will either collect/acquire/organize and analyze data or you will build/modify/find and study a model (or both). A small fraction of seniors do experimental work as their theses. Such theses tend to have both an empirical and theoretical component.

The most important step in choosing a topic is deciding whether you will write an empirical thesis or theoretical thesis. You should look at some theses from previous years to understand what an empirical and/or theoretical thesis entail. Here are a few questions to consider as you choose your topic:

- What economic variables will I study? How are these variables measured? (Relevant for both empirical and theoretical theses.)
- What work has been done on this topic so far?
- Will I be able to find data? What econometric techniques will I use? (Empirical)
- What kind of model will I study? E.g., game-theoretic, competitive equilibrium, non-competitive equilibrium, decision-theoretic/behavioral? (Theoretical)
- What experiments will I run?

One way to understand what a thesis entails and to figure out what kind of thesis you want to write is to review some theses from previous years (available online at the Department website) and to evaluate them for yourself. Was the thesis empirical or theoretical? Was it successful? Did it look like the kind of work you would like to do? Do you need to adjust your course selections for this semester to better prepare yourself for writing your thesis? Can you do the analysis in a reasonable length of time? (Use at least two months of full-time effort as your estimate of time available.)

Make use of the resources and staff available in Firestone Library. See <http://library.princeton.edu/econlib>. The librarians include Bobray Bordelon ([bordelon@princeton.edu](mailto:bordelon@princeton.edu), A-13-J-2 Firestone), Charissa Jefferson ([charissaj@princeton.edu](mailto:charissaj@princeton.edu)), and Mary Carter ([mc6838@princeton.edu](mailto:mc6838@princeton.edu)). See the Catalog of Senior Theses (<https://library.princeton.edu/resource/4423>) for information on previous theses.

Please note that there is a deadline of **Friday, December 13, 2024** to request data not held at Princeton University. Contact Bobray Bordelon (ext. 8-3211 or [bordelon@princeton.edu](mailto:bordelon@princeton.edu)) as soon as possible.

### **The Economics Statistical Services (ESS)**

The ESS unit provides data analysis assistance to students enrolled in the economics department working on an independent research project like the Senior Thesis.

If you need help with the application of statistical or econometric methods, or with the use of statistical software like Stata or R/RStudio, or help with collecting, downloading, cleaning or preparing data for analysis the ESS team is here for you.

ESS provides assistance through one-on-one-meetings, walk-in services, and online via data analysis tutorials. For more information about ESS please visit <https://economics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-program/ess/>. If you have any questions, please contact Oscar Torres-Reyna at [otorres@princeton.edu](mailto:otorres@princeton.edu).

### **Advisor/Advisee Assignments**

Your Thesis Proposal/Advisor Request Form is due on **Monday, September 16, 2024**, by 4:00 pm. Please submit your form online here: <https://ecoforms.princeton.edu/senior-thesis-advisor-request-thesis-proposal-form/>. After having received your request form, you will be assigned an advisor by the faculty member overseeing senior independent work this year, **Prof. Andrea Wilson**. You must request an advisor to have one assigned. Professor Wilson will consider your topic and advisor request when making the final assignments. Principally because some faculty advise a small number of theses, some students will not be assigned a requested advisor or will receive an advisor who is not primarily an expert in the student's area of research interest. Please understand that a perfect match is not always possible. All faculty advising theses can guide the student through the process of writing a thesis with sound economic reasoning. All students are encouraged to seek advice and information from other faculty members with expertise in their research area. Student/Advisor assignments will be posted on Canvas on **Tuesday, September 24, 2024**.



Some seniors develop a working relationship with a faculty member who agrees beforehand to supervise their thesis. If a faculty member agrees to advise you, have them send a confirming e-mail to Gina Holland, the Undergraduate Program Manager ([gholland@princeton.edu](mailto:gholland@princeton.edu)). These agreements can only be assured if Gina is notified before Professor Wilson undertakes the advisor/advisee match (**i.e. before Monday, September 16**).

We do not object to mutually agreeable exchanges of advisors between students. By “mutual,” we mean that all parties (students and faculty) agree to the trade. Please have the relevant advisors notify (by e-mail) the Undergraduate Program Manager ([gholland@princeton.edu](mailto:gholland@princeton.edu)) of any such trades.

Though it is rare, you may discover that you and your advisor are incompatible. If you cannot arrange a suitable trade, please email Professor Wilson before the end of October to discuss obtaining a new advisor (not always possible). Please do not try to work on an unsupervised thesis. Note, however, that changing advisors is not feasible after **November 1st**.

In extremely rare circumstances, an advisor turns out to be totally unhelpful. If this happens to you, don't panic. Discuss the problem with Professor Wilson, who will try to arrange some alternative or additional help. Do not leave this until it is too late in the academic year.

### **Your Advisor and Your Schedule**

Writing a senior thesis requires neither constant supervision nor complete independence. Opinions as to how much guidance an advisor should provide differ greatly among advisors (and seniors). Hopefully, over time, you will find out where the optimum is for you and your advisor. It is crucial your advisor likes your approach and output. To achieve this outcome, it helps to follow their recommendations. If you disagree with your advisor, it can be fruitful to discuss your differences. However, you are not required to follow every recommendation.

Once you find out who your advisor is, see them as soon as possible! When you reach out to your advisor (either during pre-matching or after being assigned), we suggest you attach your JP to your introductory email as a way of introducing yourself and your past experience with independent research. This will give your advisor an idea of your strengths, as well as those areas needing improvement. The following schedule should give you a general idea of time management after you have contacted your advisor. It is always a good idea to be ahead of schedule so that you can respond flexibly to unexpected difficulties and problems (and there are always unexpected difficulties). If you are late in getting your work to your advisor, you cannot expect them to give you timely feedback.

- 1) Settle on a topic in consultation with your advisor — ASAP
- 2) Read background material
- 3) Complete a proposal (including outline, bibliography, primary sources, main modeling idea etc.) and submit it to your advisor and on Canvas by **Thurs, November 14, 2024**.
- 4) Complete the bulk econometric work or modeling and first draft. Submit it to your advisor/Canvas by **Thurs, February 13, 2025**.
- 5) Submit *digital copies* of your thesis (PDFs to [Thesis Central](#) and Canvas) and all senior exit forms online: (<https://economics.princeton.edu/undergraduate-program/independent-work/senior-thesis/>) *before* 4:00pm on **Thurs, April 10, 2025**.

**Setbacks and flexibility.** Uncertainty is an inherent feature of novel research. You may be lucky: your first attempt at data gathering and your empirical specification work smoothly, or your conjectures regarding a tractable theoretical model prove correct. However, setbacks are common: you may find that data collection takes longer than expected, or some data is not available after all, or it is in an unworkable format, or you discover that someone else has done something extremely similar to what you were proposing to do. This uncertainty is an additional reason to get started early so that you have time to cope with potential obstacles without compromising the quality of the thesis. Do not count on the process to work completely smoothly.

**Do not expect your advisor to read drafts overnight.** In general, if you give them adequate time to read drafts, you will get good feedback on your work. Give yourself adequate time to respond to your advisor's comments. Remember, your advisor is not just a grader but also someone who is willing to help you write a better thesis. Take advantage of this; don't surprise your advisor with the finished work. Make sure you know what she/he thinks of your work long before the final version is due.

### **Extensions and Penalties**

The penalty for submitting your outline or draft late is the following: Your advisor may not be able to respond to your questions and give you adequate feedback in time. As a result, you will not be able to correct and improve your work.

The penalty of submitting the final version of the thesis late is one-third of a letter grade for a submission that is up to one day late and two-thirds of a letter grade for a submission that is two days late, with greater penalties for later submissions as determined by a faculty committee. **Your advisor cannot grant extensions of time** and extensions are granted only in very rare (i.e., almost never) circumstances. Neither time pressure from other academic or extra-curricular commitments, nor computer or printer problems are sufficient grounds for grants of extra time. Be sure to budget your time prudently.

### **Academic Infractions, Academic Fraud, and overlap with JIW and other Papers**

A senior thesis which contains academic infractions or which is in any way the result of academic fraud **will automatically receive a failing grade**, independent of the result of disciplinary action. Please be sure to cite correctly, and to give proper credit to other authors for their ideas and language.

The university has severe restrictions and rules on how much the content of the JIW and the Senior Thesis can overlap, the manner in which the Senior Thesis can develop ideas and methods developed in the JIW, and how students should cite their own JIW. As a general matter, it is best to start the senior thesis as an entirely new project completely independent from prior work. We do not wish to completely discourage theses that have some overlap with prior independent work including JIW and papers you wrote as class assignments. However, in all instances, the thesis has to deliver a major innovation on this prior work.

**Please consult the senior thesis coordinator, Professor Wilson if you suspect that the topic, ideas or content of your JIW and Senior Thesis may overlap.**

### **Guidelines for using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools:**

Students who use generative AI tools (like ChatGPT and Bard) must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Students must inform their advisor in writing if they utilize a generative AI tool for any portion of their independent work.
2. Since students are required to state the work they submit is original and their own (RRR 2.4.3) and acknowledge sources in academic work (outlined in RRR 2.4.6), students must also include an explicit acknowledgment and description of how the tool was used in developing and/or writing the paper.
3. Students are required to keep and share with their advisor full records of engagement with generative AI tools.
4. Since generative AI tools may provide incorrect information, all output provided by a generative AI tool must be verified. If incorrect information is AI generated and included in a submission, the student will be held responsible.

If a student does not adhere to the above guidelines, a report will be submitted to the Committee on Discipline and may have serious consequences.

## **Grading Standards and Practices for Senior Thesis Research in Economics**

### **1. How your thesis will be assessed**

- Participation: Students will receive a participation grade, which will contribute 5% to their overall thesis grade.
- Attendance: Seniors MUST attend the initial Intro to Senior Thesis meeting and meet all milestone deadlines in order to receive 5% participation grade.
- The remaining 95% of the grade will be determined as described below.
- Your primary advisor and the senior thesis committee will grade your thesis. Each will give the thesis a number grade between 0 and 100. The scale is 97-100 A+, 93-96 A, 90-92 A-, 87-89 B+, 83-86 B, 80-82 B-, 77-79 C+, 73-76 C, 70-72 C-, 60-69 D, below 60 F.
- If the two readers' grades are within 6 points of each other, then your final grade will be the weighted average with 1/3 weight to the advisor and 2/3 weight to the committee reader.
- If the two readers are 7 or more points apart, then both advisor and second reader will meet to discuss to see if they can come to resolution. If they cannot come to a resolution, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> reader committee will resolve the conflict.
- The numerical average is converted back to a letter grade. You will receive only the final letter grade and comments by both advisor and second reader. 2<sup>nd</sup> readers remain anonymous.

### **2. Evaluation criteria and Learning outcomes**

The department expects undergraduate majors in the program to be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes. Students should:

- A. Command the language of all three branches: Macroeconomics, Microeconomics and Econometrics.
- B. Understand the tools of all three branches sufficiently to be able to follow and participate in policy debates.
- C. Master the tools of at least one of these branches to the extent necessary to understand the existing literature.
- D. Acquire adequate knowledge of the institutional context and applications relevant to at least one subfield of economics or develop advanced training in the tools of one of the main three branches.
- E. Use this knowledge of methodological tools and applications to conduct original research.

A minimal requirement is for the student to show mastery of the language and concepts of economics and the ability to understand and participate in a policy debate. Hence, the thesis should provide evidence that the first three learning outcomes have been attained. A good or excellent thesis must provide correct and novel empirical or theoretical analysis or experimental work. By demonstrating mastery of advanced tools and

conducting original research, good and outstanding students can demonstrate that they have achieved learning outcomes (D) and (E).

More specifically, the following are key components:

A senior thesis can be thought of as falling above, below, or on an imaginary line in the grading scale. In general, independent work that meets the top four criteria below will receive grades above the line (A+, A, or A-). Those that do not meet these four criteria will receive grades below the line (regardless of how well they fulfill the other criteria).

- 1) **Question or Problem.** A well-defined question or problem that requires economic analysis and that is motivated (in terms of the economics/finance literature and/or the proposed methodology), feasible (in terms of the available data for empirical projects, and the available mathematical and computational methods for theoretical projects), and presented explicitly and early in the document.
- 2) **Innovation and Independence.** Demonstration of insight and independence of thought or approach, whether in terms of the question or problem posed, the methodology specified, or the results.
- 3) **Methodology.** A well-developed, appropriate, and sophisticated methodology (an empirical approach or a theoretical modeling strategy) that informatively addresses the question or problem. For empirical projects, this means (1) a clear statement of the hypothesis or hypotheses, (2) a detailed characterization of the data set and why it was chosen, (3) the identification and justification of the statistical and econometric technique used (for example, linear or probit regression analysis), (4) careful and thorough implementation of the technique, and (5) review and discussion of applicable test statistics. For theoretical projects, this means (1) a complete statement of the structure of the model, (2) justification of solution methods (for example, closed-form analytical or numerical solutions), and (3) solution of the model.
- 4) **Results.** An explicit statement and discussion of the new results emerging from the project and their relevance to economics and/or finance. This discussion should also include details of (1) how the results relate to economic intuition and/or the findings of related previous research, (2) possible limitations of the results, and (3) directions for further research.
- 5) **Structure.** A visible, easy-to-follow structure consistent with the conventions of economics. A reader can easily identify sections that typically occur in papers in the economics/finance literature, such as Title, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Conclusion, and References.
- 6) **Literature Review.** The situating of the question or problem in the literature—not an attempt to exhaustively cite the literature, but rather to establish a link between the question/problem and the existing literature in economics/finance.
- 7) **Style.** Lucid, informative, readable sentences; well-defined key terms and concepts; appropriate gauging of readers' knowledge; presentation of sufficient context; clear and concise writing.
- 8) **Source Citations.** The proper and consistent use of a citation style found in the economics/finance literature—such as APA style or Chicago style.

### 3. Grading Rubric

Grade	Range	Description
A+	97-100	An <b>A+</b> senior thesis meets all of the criteria and makes a significant contribution to the Economics/Finance literature.
A range	90-96	An <b>A</b> thesis fully meets all criteria. An <b>A-</b> thesis fully meets the top four criteria and is competent with respect to the other four.
B range	80-89	A thesis in the <b>B range</b> is problematic in terms of any of the top four criteria (e.g., has a well-defined question/problem but a poorly rationalized methodology and inconclusive analysis, or an imprecise question/problem but an interesting set of results derived with appropriate methodology, or a competent analysis of a well-defined question but with only limited new insight or limited applicability) and is competent with respect to the other four criteria.
C range	70-79	A thesis in the <b>C range</b> is faulty in terms of any of the top four criteria and may be less than competent with respect to the other four.
D	60-69	A thesis in the <b>D range</b> is deficient in most of the criteria and adds nothing to one's understanding of the subject beyond what might be gleaned from superficial reading in the area. Even a D independent research project, however, must demonstrate that the writer has some knowledge and understanding of the economic issues.
F	0-59	An <b>F</b> thesis is similar to D work in that it fails to meet most criteria. A failing grade indicates that the student did not research the subject at all adequately and/or fails to bring economic tools to bear on the problem.

## **Formal Requirements**

With respect to typing, footnotes, bibliographies and references, buy a copy of Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Use it! The formal requirements are:

1. A title page (see example attached)
2. A detailed table of contents
3. A complete bibliography
4. Adequate documentation of footnotes so that source material can be found. Footnotes should be placed at the bottom of the page. Parenthetical references are acceptable.
5. You must sign the honor-code pledge at the end of the thesis.
6. The manuscript must be typewritten, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.
7. An abstract is optional.
8. Digital copies of the thesis are due **Thursday, April 10, 2025, before 4:00pm**. You must submit your thesis to both Thesis Central and Canvas. Do not submit the copies to your advisor directly.
9. Please remember to number the pages.
10. All economics senior exit forms must be submitted online with your thesis to complete your submission. Only complete submissions will be accepted.

Seniors are asked to stay within the recommended page limits for an empirical senior thesis (50-80 pages). Theses significantly longer than 80 pages should be shortened by presenting the same material more concisely or by narrowing the focus of the thesis. However, theoretical theses tend to be shorter than 50 pages. Efforts to “pad” a thesis to make it seem longer, by including irrelevant graphics or using abnormally large typeface and margins will typically result in a lower grade. The recommended page limits do not include bibliographies and appendices. Please be sure that your valuable computer files are backed-up.

A hard drive failure or corrupted storage media will not excuse a late submission.

## **Thesis Funding**

Funding is available for research expenses. To be considered, students must submit an application through [SAFE](#).

## Prizes

The following prizes will be awarded by the Department of Economics this academic year:

**The John Glover Wilson Memorial Award**: Prize awarded for the best essay on international economics or politics by a student in the Department of Economics.

**The Walter C. Sauer Prize**: An annual Prize awarded to the student whose thesis or research project on any aspect of U.S. foreign trade is judged most creative. Joint eligibility between Economics, Politics, and WWS.

**The Griswold Center for Economic Policy Studies Prizes**: Awarded annually to the top five policy relevant theses.

**Burton G. Malkiel \*64 Senior Thesis Prize in Finance**: Awarded annually for the most outstanding thesis in the field of finance.

**The Elizabeth Bogan Prize in Economics**: Awarded annually for the best thesis in Health, Education, or Welfare.

**The Daniel L. Rubinfeld '67 Prize in Empirical Economics**: Awarded annually for the best thesis in empirical economics.

**The Hugo Sonnenschein Prize**: The best senior thesis in economic theory.

**The Wolf Balleisen Memorial Prize**: An annual prize for the outstanding thesis by a senior in the field of economics

**Halbert White '72 Prize in Economics**: Awarded annually to the most outstanding senior economics major as evidenced by excellence in departmental coursework, and creativity in the junior papers and senior thesis.

Previous prize winners may be on our website here:

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**Template: Title Page—Senior Thesis**

TITLE OF THESIS

BY

Name of Student

Advised by: Name of Advisor

Submitted to Princeton University  
Department of Economics  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the A.B. Degree

Date

PLEDGE:

This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations.

Signature

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
Department of Economics  
Class of 2025  
SAMPLE

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**Important Note:** You must submit the online form. If you already have an advisor, it must be noted on your proposal form before submitting.

On this form, you will be asked to describe the project that you intend to undertake for your senior thesis. (State and describe your proposed topic and indicate whether you intend to do empirical, theoretical or experimental work.) This description will be used for assigning you to a faculty advisor, so be as specific as possible. If there are any faculty advisors you would like to request, you will select them in ranked order on the form.

**You must also disclose any overlap in topic between your intended thesis topic, your JIW, and work submitted for any other course. Failure to do so may be seen as a violation of the University's Honor Code.**

**Your senior thesis proposal must be submitted online by Monday, September 16, 2024. Assignments will be posted on Tuesday, September 24, 2024.**

THESIS TOPIC: Before making your requests for particular advisors, consult the list of senior thesis advisors and their interests available on the Canvas home page.