

DukeTAP: Final evaluation of thesis by Research Supervisors

	The writing is too incoherent to assess	No	Somewhat	Yes
1. Is the writing appropriate for the target audience?				
2. Does the thesis make a compelling argument for the significance of the student's research within the context of the current literature?				
3. Does the thesis clearly articulate the student's research goals?				
4. Does the thesis skillfully interpret the results?				
5. Is there a compelling discussion of the implications of findings?				
6. Is the thesis clearly organized?				
7. Is the thesis free of writing errors?				
8. Are the citations presented consistently and professionally throughout the text and in the list of works cited?				
9. Are the tables and figures clear, effective, and informative?				
10. Does the thesis represent the student's original economic research?				
11. Is the literature review accurate and complete?				
12. Are the methods appropriate, given the student's research agenda?				
13. Is the data analysis appropriate, accurate and unbiased?				

Table 1: Rubric I, assessment of writing. A score of “somewhat” indicates that the thesis meets the department’s minimum standards; a score of “yes” reflects the department’s standards of excellence.

Evaluation criteria	No (Unacceptable)	Somewhat (Minimum acceptable standards)	Yes (Standards of excellence)
<p>1. Is the writing appropriate for the target audience? Honors theses should address non-specialist readers with an understanding of basic economics—specifically, any faculty member in the economics department regardless of sub-discipline. Although faculty are experts within their field of research, they are rarely familiar with the language and conceptual nuances of other highly-specialized fields of study. Students should assume their readers understand basic economic theory, but they cannot assume that readers readily remember all the details. Therefore, students should limit their use of jargon, and should explain or define all key terms and concepts that are specific to their sub-field.</p>	<p>The thesis is written with excessive jargon or is greatly lacking in definitions and explanations, making the research inaccessible to non-specialist readers.</p>	<p>The thesis includes some useful definitions or explanations, but some key terms or concepts are still challenging for the non-specialist reader. Non-specialist readers are able to follow the main themes of the thesis, but the writer has not made this task easy.</p>	<p>The thesis has sufficient definitions and explanations to make the research accessible and engaging to non-specialist readers</p>
<p>2. Does the thesis make a compelling argument for the significance of the student’s research within the context of the current literature? The thesis should contain a substantive literature review that places the student’s research within its appropriate economic context. This literature review should not only describe what is known about the student’s topic, but should also identify the specific gaps in knowledge that the student’s project intends to address. The student should make an argument for the broader significance of his/her research when addressing these gaps.</p>	<p>Either the thesis does not present an adequate review of the literature, OR the thesis does not make sufficient connections between the published literature and the student’s own research project to explain its significance.</p>	<p>The thesis presents a literature review, but either does not place the student’s research within the context of current or past economic research, or does not explicitly present an argument for the broader significance of the student’s research.</p>	<p>The thesis reviews the literature, demonstrates how the student’s research fills a gap, and presents an argument for the broader significance of the student’s research.</p>
<p>3. Does the thesis clearly articulate the student’s research goals? The student’s research statement should include a research question or the goals of the project and an overview of the methodological approach.</p>	<p>The student does not explicitly articulate a research question or the goals of the project.</p>	<p>The student articulates a research question or the goals of the project, but at times in an unclear, inconsistent, or disorganized manner.</p>	<p>The student clearly and explicitly articulates a research question or the goals of the project.</p>

4. Does the thesis skillfully interpret the results? (for theses with conclusive and complete results)

The student should interpret their results within the context constructed in the Introduction (this should be done in relation to a hypothesis, if applicable). Student writers often overlook the fact that economic data has complexities that often defy a single interpretation. Therefore, we are also assessing the student's ability to acknowledge this complexity, as well as discuss plausible inconsistencies, uncertainties, alternative explanations, counterintuitive evidence, and/or limitations of his/her results.

(for theses with inconclusive or incomplete results) NOTE: It is not uncommon for students to have inconclusive or incomplete results – this is perfectly acceptable, and students should not try to obfuscate this fact. We do not expect a student to interpret inconclusive or incomplete results *per se*. Instead, in these cases, we expect students to focus their discussion on the limitations of their results. Hence, if the thesis had inconclusive or incomplete results, please apply the following standards.

5. Is there a compelling discussion of the implications of findings? (for theses with conclusive and complete results) We expect students to explicitly explain the implications of their research findings within the context constructed in the Introduction. One way students accomplish this is by making the connections between their results and other published results. Another way is by indicating how their projects could lead to future research within their field of inquiry, which could include suggestions for additional experiments and/or alternative approaches. It is appropriate for students to speculate – this is their opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the big picture.

There is no interpretation of the results (e.g., a simple restatement of the results) or the interpretation is superficial.

There is little or no attempt to explain the reasons underlying the lack of clear results.

The thesis makes little or no attempt to discuss the implications of the findings or does not describe future directions for the project

The thesis presents a reasonable interpretation of the results, and **mentions** inconsistencies, uncertainties, alternative explanations, counterintuitive evidence, and/or limitations of the results, but does not explain the implications of these potential problems.

The thesis provides a reasonably thorough explanation of the reasons underlying the lack of clear results, and includes a reasonable attempt at interpreting whatever results were obtained.

The thesis makes some attempt to discuss the implications of the findings, but does not explain their significance OR the thesis mentions possible future studies without explaining how they would contribute significant new knowledge to the field.

The interpretation of results is insightful, and the thesis **explains** the implications of plausible inconsistencies, uncertainties, alternative explanations, counterintuitive evidence, and/or limitations of the results.

The thesis provides an insightful explanation of the reasons underlying the lack of clear results.

The thesis provides a compelling discussion of the implications of the findings, including a thorough consideration of possible future studies.

(for theses with inconclusive or incomplete results) NOTE: Although we *do* expect a discussion of the implications of negative results, this is not appropriate for inconclusive or incomplete results. In these latter two cases, we expect students to focus their discussion on future directions. Hence, if the thesis had inconclusive or incomplete results, please apply the following standards.

6. *Is the thesis clearly organized?* The thesis should be organized. Within paragraphs, sentences should be cohesive and logically organized.

7. *Is the thesis free of writing errors?* The mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and presentation of the thesis should be correct and professional.

8. *Are the citations presented consistently and professionally throughout the text and in the list of works cited?* The citation format adheres to APA standards.

9. *Are the tables and figures clear, effective, and informative?* Tables and figures should be consecutively numbered, cited in consecutive order, and captions should be in the appropriate location (above tables, below figures). The thesis should refer explicitly to each table or figure (e.g., "...reveals an upward trend (Fig. 1).") and the visual elements of all tables and figures (including photographs) should be clear and easy to read or interpret. The captions should provide a clear description of the table or figure.

The thesis makes little or no mention of future directions or alternative approaches for the project.

The thesis is not organized, or the writing within paragraphs is frequently difficult to follow.

The thesis contains excessive errors or is presented in an unprofessional manner.

The thesis does not adhere to APA standards or is missing citations.

Many of the tables or figures are misleading, incorrect, unclear, or inappropriate, or the captions are incomplete or unclear.

The thesis provides some discussion of possible future studies or alternative approaches without explaining how they would contribute significant new knowledge to the field.

The thesis is organized, and the writing within paragraphs is usually easy to follow.

The thesis contains some errors.

The thesis adheres to APA standards, although there may be some minor inconsistencies or errors.

In general, the tables, figures and captions are clear and appropriate.

The thesis provides a thoughtful and thorough discussion of possible future studies or alternative approaches.

The thesis is organized, and writing within paragraphs is easy to follow in almost all cases.

The thesis is virtually free of obvious errors.

The thesis adheres to APA standards.

The tables and figures are exceptionally well constructed, and the captions clearly describe the visual elements.

Table 2: Rubric II, assessment of accuracy and appropriateness of research project. A score of “somewhat” indicates that the thesis meets the department’s minimum standards; a score of “yes” reflects the department’s standards of excellence.

Evaluation criteria	No (Unacceptable)	Somewhat (Minimum acceptable standards)	Yes (Standards of excellence)
<p>10. Does the thesis represent the student’s significant economic research? To graduate with honors, students should demonstrate the ability to conduct original research. For the award of High Honors, we are especially interested in identifying those students whose work represents significant economic innovation or insight.</p>	<p>The thesis represents little more than a term paper that pulls together existing ideas, but does not contribute any novel thoughts or explanations.</p>	<p>The thesis demonstrates the student’s ability to contribute his/her own thoughts and ideas into a significant research project.</p>	<p>The thesis not only represents the student’s original thoughts and ideas, but also demonstrates exceptional innovations, insights, or creativity.</p>
<p>11. Is the literature review accurate and complete?</p>	<p>The literature review is incomplete, missing many salient articles.</p>	<p>Although the literature review may have missed a few relevant articles, the literature review nevertheless makes a strong argument for the relevance of the student’s research in the context of the current literature.</p>	<p>The literature review fully and accurately summarizes the salient literature.</p>
<p>12. Are the methods appropriate, given the student’s research question? Often, students will use the methods they are most familiar with rather than the methods that are most appropriate for addressing their research question.</p>	<p>The methods chosen are ineffective and/or inefficient, given the student’s research question.</p>	<p>The methods selected were appropriate, given the student’s research question.</p>	<p>The student demonstrated creativity or innovation in selecting a methodology that would not only address his/her research question, but would also answer that question efficiently or highly effectively.</p>
<p>13. Is the data analysis appropriate, accurate and unbiased? Did the student accurately and appropriately analyze the data? Were the interpretations of the results accurate and unbiased?</p>	<p>The data analysis was inappropriate, inaccurate, or biased.</p>	<p>The data analysis was appropriate, accurate and unbiased.</p>	<p>The data analysis was not only appropriate, accurate and unbiased, but the approach was also particularly insightful or proposed creative new approaches for future research in this field.</p>

Table 3: Rubric III, holistic assessment of thesis quality.

I nominate this thesis for:

Honors	For a thesis to be considered for the award of Honors , the student must have demonstrated <i>proficiency in economic research</i> , as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An original, independent, and substantive research question,• Care in data collection and analysis, and have produced a written thesis that achieves the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is written to a broad audience of economists (rather than only specialists in the field of research),• Situates the research in the appropriate economic context,• Explicitly interprets results in relation to the hypothesis,• Discusses inconsistencies, uncertainties, or limitations of the results, and• Is coherent, reasonably free of errors, and otherwise professionally presented.
High Honors	For a thesis to be considered for the award of High Honors , the thesis must meet all the criteria for the award of Honors. In addition, the student must have demonstrated <i>an exceptional ability to conduct economic research</i> , as demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation, insight, or creativity, OR• Exceptional care in data collection or analysis, AND have produced a thesis that is compelling and well-written.
Disqualified for Honors	A thesis should not be nominated for honors if it does not meet the standards outlined above.
