

## Department of International Economics Guidelines for the *Mémoire Préliminaire de These*

In economics, most students decide to write a dissertation that includes 3 or 4 separate essays. The *Mémoire Préliminaire de These* (MPT) should demonstrate that the student has a clear and implementable plan for one or two of these essays and has done some work towards the remaining essays. The Department of economics has no precise instruction on word counts, but most MPT range between 5000 and 8000 words.

The MPT should show that the student: (i) has a good knowledge of the broad aspects of the literature which is relevant for his/her research project and knows in detail the scholarly work most closely related to his/her planned work; (ii) can write well and clearly, has the ability to formulate an interesting research question and place the question in the literature by clearly spelling out what is the proposed contribution of the thesis to the existing literature; (iii) has access to the necessary data and, more in general, the technical skills necessary for implementing the proposed research work.

The description of at least one or two proposed essays should include the following elements:

1. An **introduction** that clearly states the research question and objectives of the essay as well as the contributions that it will make to the literature.
2. A **literature review** that demonstrates how the research question relates to the existing literature, commenting specifically on how other scholars have addressed similar questions and how the essay plans to fill a gap in the existing literature. The literature review should not be a mere list of existing work, but revolve around the planned research work, always emphasizing how the proposed paper relates to the existing literature.
3. A **research design** section that defines how the student plans to conduct his/her research. If the essay is empirical, this section will need to describe what type of data is needed and the student's ability to access these data. It will also need to describe the testable hypothesis and provide details on the empirical methodology, with particular focus on how the student plans to address causality. If the student plans to do theory, he/she should provide details on the basic set-up of the model he/she plans to develop. This part of the proposal should also discuss the strength and weaknesses of the proposed methodology.
4. A **comprehensive and carefully formatted reference list**.

Before starting to working on their MPT, students should carefully read John Cochrane's *Writing Tips for PhD Students*.<sup>1</sup> While they do not need to (and should not) follow all of Cochrane's suggestions, they will learn a lot from his advice.

The defense of the MPT will last approximately an hour and will involve initial remarks by the student, not to exceed 20 minutes, followed by questions from the examiners about the MPT and the issues it raises.

ECO/November 2015

<sup>1</sup> [http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/teaching/papers/phd\\_paper\\_writing.pdf](http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/teaching/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf)