

## Economics Honors Program Application

### 1. Personal Information

Full Name (as recognized by the University Registrar): \_\_\_\_\_

UID: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Pre-requisite course grades

Attach transcript and highlight the following

BA: ECON305 or 306 \_\_\_\_\_ ECON402, 424, or 426 \_\_\_\_\_ Field course<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

BS: ECON325 or 326 \_\_\_\_\_ ECON321 or STAT401 \_\_\_\_\_ Field course<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Proposed thesis topic

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: Attach a one-page statement describing your proposed topic.

Read and follow the guidelines on the next two pages as you write this statement.

**\*\*You may base this on a research proposal developed for an earlier ECON class.\*\***

### 4. Thesis advisor

A thesis advisor must be a professor with research experience in the area of your proposed thesis topic. You should discuss your topic, refine your topic statement if appropriate, and obtain his/her support and signature.

*"I have discussed the thesis topic proposed by the applicant, support this application for the Economics Honors program, and am willing to advise this student."*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Advisor's Name and affiliation)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Advisor's Signature)

### 5. Additional information

List any other courses relevant for your topic and also highlight on your transcript

\_\_\_\_\_  
If you have any prior research experience (e.g. undergraduate RA, Gemstone, internships), please attach an additional page briefly describing your work.

### 6. Submission

Email the signed form, transcript, and proposed topic statement in a SINGLE PDF file with subject: "Honors application" AND your last name to [npope@umd.edu](mailto:npope@umd.edu) by the application deadline of April 26<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> List of possible field courses: <http://econweb.umd.edu/~edinger/undergraduate/FieldCourseList.pdf>

## Suggestions to identify an initial topic and advisor

There is no simple recipe for identifying what is an interesting and feasible topic and question. You need to be curious, persistent and open to switching or adapting your topic. The required field course is one good source of interesting questions.

A very good option is to take a class where a research proposal is a requirement or an extra credit. Please contact us for an update list of such classes.

In addition to this option, here are some basic guidelines that should be helpful:

1. Identify topics or specific questions.
  - i. Write down a list of topics that you are interested in. Identify any common themes among them. These can be topics that you explored in field courses, current economic issues that you have read about, long standing questions that have lead you to study economics.
  - ii. Look at [previous honors theses](#) to get an idea of what is interesting and feasible
2. Identifying a potential advisor
  - i. Search for [faculty](#) with expertise in the topics in which you are interested. If you are unable to find an advisor on the topic then contact Dr. Limao for suggestions and/or consider alternative topics.
  - ii. Arrange to meet with a potential advisor keeping in mind that you may have to try a couple of alternative faculty.
3. Before meeting with a potential advisor:
  - i. Do initial research on the topics, e.g. search for literature reviews or the most cited articles on it (for now you can use google scholar for academic articles, in 396 you will learn about many other sources).
  - ii. Formulate questions about a couple of these topics and start addressing the points for the proposal to prepare for your meeting.
4. Meet with the potential advisor to obtain feedback on your initial topic/question(s)
  - i. Is it interesting and important?
  - ii. Does it seem feasible?
  - iii. Are there any specific references and/or data that may help you sharpen your question?
  - iv. Are there related topics that may generate a better match for the two of you?
5. Review your initial statement
  - i. Incorporate the potential advisor's feedback
  - ii. Do additional research
6. Submit the edited proposal to the advisor and ask for his/her support and signature for your application.

For additional information on the Economics Honors Program, see [http://econweb.umd.edu/~edinger/undergraduate/Honors\\_Info\\_Session.pdf](http://econweb.umd.edu/~edinger/undergraduate/Honors_Info_Session.pdf)

## Guidelines for the proposed topic statement

The initial stages of research involve formulating and refining a topic both interesting and feasible to investigate. This application is only a first step in that process, to be followed over the summer by writing a fuller research proposal. The proposed topic statement in the application will typically not have as much detail as the full proposal, but it is important that you do enough of the initial work now so that you do not reach the Fall and find out that: (i) your question either has been answered by others; (ii) there is no available data to answer the question or (iii) your proposed question is simply not feasible given the current state of the art literature, your current set of skills, and the timeframe of the coming year. So, thinking ahead to the proposal will help you write a successful application.

Your research proposal before the start of the Fall semester should include

1. A specific economic question(s) and why it is interesting and important; whether there is any work addressing it; and how your work would differ from it.
2. A clear set of testable hypothesis related to this question  
(e.g. I conjecture that the effect of policy x on personal income is positive in states with high inequality because...)
3. A methodology to test those hypotheses, e.g. a theoretical and/or empirical model (e. g. I would regress personal income on policy x, controlling for other determinants of income such as ...)
4. A list of potential data sources relevant for those tests.
5. A description of any difficult issues to be tackled.  
(e.g. suppose that an individual benefits from policy x only if that individual has certain characteristics that are not observable. Then there is a potential endogeneity problem that you will have to address. It will be even better if you add some ideas on how you may do so).