

Module EC9AA ‘The Practice of Economic Research’

Further Guidance 2023-24

Introduction

EC9AA is a core module, which is taught in year one but for assessment purposes is included in the year two average. Teaching takes place in summer term of year one and the student is required to complete a research report over the summer and to submit this on the first day of term in year two (**Monday 30th September 2024, for 2023 entrants**). The mark awarded for the research report accounts for 100% of the module mark.

In the taught component of the module, students learn about various research methods in economics and in social sciences more generally, particularly those research methods, which received less emphasis in the other year one core modules. In the research project, students apply this knowledge to gain practical experience with research methods.

The Research Project and Payment for Research

The EC9AA research report will be based on a research project undertaken by the student during the summer. Students are permitted to arrange a research assistantship or internship position themselves or to take up one of the research assistantship positions offered by the department, ***but in all cases, students are required to have a supervisor based in the department, who will be responsible for marking the report.***

The department will provide a list of projects (offered by members of faculty), which the student can choose to work on over the summer and subsequently produce the research report. The list of available projects will become available at the beginning of summer term. However, students can contact faculty members to discuss possible projects in their area of interest in advance of this, if they wish to do so. Students should approach the member of faculty directly to discuss the project and their suitability. Faculty will be available during the third term to discuss projects and provide guidance to students; however, please be aware that their availability may be more limited over the summer vacation. It is therefore a good idea to schedule meetings in advance.

Students will continue to receive their stipend over the summer and will not receive additional payment from the department for the research project undertaken. There may be cases where the student secures a paid research assistantship with a faculty member who has a research grant. This is permitted. If the student’s EC9AA research report is to be based on this research project, it would be expected that there would be an agreement between the faculty member and the student with regard to what would be included in the student’s research report and the faculty member would act as supervisor and be responsible for marking.

Students should bear in mind that presenting material in the EC9AA research report, which has been used in other academic work is not permitted. In other words, students could not reuse the work if it was published as part of their research assistantship, or if it was actually published by anyone else in their team. It would then turn into a standard reference and they could gain no benefit from it.

UKVI Restrictions

Please note that if you hold a Student visa, you are only permitted to work a maximum of 20 hours per week. This includes *both paid and unpaid work* and it is incumbent on the student to ensure that they do not breach this requirement, as doing so is considered a criminal offence by the UK authorities. Hours cannot be averaged over more than one week and a week is considered to run from Monday to Sunday.

Further details about EC9AA

EC9AA is a 15 CAT module, equating to approximately 150 hours of learning effort. This would break down as follows:

- in class for 30 hours;
- work as research assistant for 80 hours (max); and
- spend 40 hours on the research report.

The Format of the EC9AA report

Your research report should demonstrate the following learning outcomes: that you have gained a comprehensive understanding and an advanced knowledge of the main research methods and techniques deployed in economic research and analysis; and that you are able to critically evaluate and select appropriate research methods and deploy these in independent self-directed economic research and analysis.

The format of the report is 5000 words (**maximum**) including footnotes and tables of main results, and excluding title, abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents and bibliography. You are also permitted an accompanying appendix (maximum 10 pages) containing aspects of data description, including such things as list of variables names, data sources, questionnaires, intermediate results, robustness analysis, etc. Note that these 10 pages of appendix should not contain tables or discussion of your 'key' results.

The structure of your report should include: Introduction; Literature review; Methodology; Data section; Results section; Conclusion; Appendices; References. The exact format of your report will to some extent depend on the type of project you work on over the summer, so for more detailed guidance on the format of the report, please seek the guidance of the member of faculty with whom you are working.

Marking of the Report

As the EC9AA research report is a single individual piece of work (similar to the MRes dissertation), where there is no 'right' answer and the quality of analysis and argument is particularly important; it is marked using the same scale as the MRes dissertation. This scale is based on the department's assessment criteria for postgraduate modules and is typically used for essay-based subjects and dissertations. All reports will be first marked by the supervisor and marks will be moderated by the Director MRes/PhD. See Appendix for further information on MRes dissertation marking.

APPENDIX

Marking Grid for MRes dissertations

Background

The points on the scale are based on the department's assessment criteria for postgraduate modules. The dissertation mark is an important part of the criteria for achieving progression to the PhD.

The Scale

Dissertations should be marked on a scale from 0 to 100. However, we provide additional guidelines here in recognition of the fact that marks on too fine a scale would not be comparable across students and markers. All markers are required to use the grid and only permitted to mark outside the grid in exceptional circumstances, for which they must provide an explanation to the examination board.

Please note the following:

- The pass mark for MRes modules is 50%. An average mark of 60-69.9% implies a merit and an average mark of 70% or above a distinction.
- Students would automatically progress from the MRes to the PhD if they (minimum): achieve an average of 65% (over all taught modules in year 1 and 2); and demonstrate strong performance in the Year 1 core modules (i.e., an average of not less than 60 across EC9A1, EC9A2, EC9A3) and achieve a mark of at least 65% in the dissertation.

The permitted points are:

1. **45 (Fail) A failing piece of work.** The student would be offered a resit and the mark for the re-sit would be capped at 50% (except in mitigating circumstances). A weak attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models or techniques. Demonstrates an inability to reflect critically to address questions and issues. Ideas poorly explained and organised.
2. **55 (low pass) Work with sufficient merit for award of MRes degree but not for progression to PhD (except in mitigating circumstances).** Satisfactory work demonstrating reasonable knowledge and understanding and a grasp of key economic concepts. Limited critical reflection and limited ability to tackle questions and issues raised. Ideas are adequately explained, although some confusion and lack of organisation.
3. **60 (Minimum merit) Work with sufficient merit for award of MRes degree but not for progression to PhD (except in mitigating circumstances).** A competent piece of work demonstrating a sound grasp of the subject, with some attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models and techniques. Some critical reflection and attempt to tackle questions and issues raised. Work is organised and ideas explained clearly.
4. **65 (Mid merit) Work with sufficient merit for the standards of the MRes degree. Based on the dissertation, the student should be allowed to progress into the PhD programme.** A very good piece of work demonstrating a very good attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models and techniques. Some good critical reflection

and attempt to tackle questions and issues raised. Work is well organised, and ideas explained clearly.

5. **70 (Minimum distinction) The quality of the dissertation is above the threshold for progression to the PhD.** *A very good piece of work showing some mastery of the subject and a well-developed ability to analyse, synthesise and apply concepts models and techniques. Good critical reflection and ability to tackle questions and issues raised by the work. Ideas explained clearly and in a well organised manner.*

6. **75 (Distinction) The quality of the dissertation is above the threshold for progression to the PhD.** High quality work demonstrating an excellent command of many key concepts and their applications, with some elements that exceed expectations of students at this level. A good use of economic analysis (both theoretical and empirical) drawing on some good evidence. Demonstrates a very good ability to critically evaluate and synthesise relevant economic theories and ideas in a manner that demonstrates a capacity for original thought. Excellently structured and presented work.

7. **85 (High distinction) The quality of the dissertation is excellent, and in line with what we would expect from a top student progressing into the PhD programme.** High quality work demonstrating an excellent command of many key concepts and their applications, with many elements that exceed expectations of students at this level. An excellent use of economic analysis (both theoretical and empirical) drawing on much good evidence. Demonstrates an excellent ability to critically evaluate and synthesise relevant economic theories and ideas, which shows very good capacity for original thought.

8. **95 (Excellent Pass) The quality of the dissertation is outstanding and in line with what we would expect from the very best student progressing into the PhD programme.** Exceptional work of the highest quality, demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding, analysis, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills. Work, which is close to publishable standard, demonstrating an excellent capacity for original thought. This mark is exceptional and should only be awarded if the idea is very novel, the agenda very promising and/or progress on the data is impressive for this stage in the career of the student. Excellent structure and very well presented, excellent use of academic writing techniques.