

Senior Thesis Oral Examination Rubric

Department of Economics, Union College

1. Clarity of focus of study

A score of 5 requires a question which is precisely stated and establishes a testable hypothesis for analysis that is innovative and relevant to an important economic problem or issue. A score of 4 implies that the testability of the hypothesis, or relevance of the question, is acceptable but less than ideal. A score of 3 implies that both are acceptable but not ideal, or one is deficient. A score of 2 implies one is acceptable and one is deficient; a score of 1 implies that both are deficient.

2. Knowledge of institutional and historical context

A score of 5 requires the student to be fully aware of both the economic institutions relevant to the question and the historical context in which the question arises. A score of 4 implies that the student is generally aware of these but is missing some details of these contexts. A score of 3 implies that the student is unaware of one or more substantive points but is otherwise well-informed. A score of 2 implies that the student has substantially incomplete knowledge of institutions and context, and a score of 1 implies little or no knowledge of institutions and context.

3. Knowledge of relevant economics literature

A score of 5 requires a thorough knowledge of past research on the topic. A score of 4 implies solid knowledge but may have some small gaps. A score of 3 implies good knowledge of past research but some substantial gaps in knowledge. A score of 2 implies incomplete knowledge with major gaps; a score of 1 implies little or no knowledge of relevant past research.

4. Understanding of basic economic model

A score of 5 requires a well-specified economic model suggesting a causal relationship among the concepts the thesis addresses (e.g., supply and demand, IS-LM, utility maximization, Heckscher-Ohlin) which the student is able to manipulate to demonstrate the hypothesis (e.g., a shift of a demand curve increasing price). A score of 4 implies a broad understanding of theory but may not have some details or may not be able to manipulate the model. A score of 3 implies difficulty explaining the model but analysis rooted within some basic theory. A score of 2 implies the student cannot articulate the model but a model is possible. A score of 1 implies that the analysis cannot be supported by an economic model.

5. Selection of evidence base to test hypothesis

A score of 5 requires identification of an appropriate evidence base (data source for theses involving statistical analysis; source documents for historical analysis; other source as appropriate for other theses) and the ability to explain how the evidence base will be used to answer the question. A score of 4 may not have completely located the evidence base or may not

be fully clear on how it will be used. A score of 3 implies that both the location of the evidence and the use of it are less than ideal, or one is deficient. A score of 2 implies that one is deficient and the other less than ideal. A score of 1 implies that both are deficient.

6. Understanding of limitations of the analysis

A score of 5 requires awareness of all factors that will limit the ability of the analysis to address the question (factors not included in the model, unavailable evidence, etc.) and how those limits may affect the results of the analysis. A score of 4 implies less than full awareness of limiting factors or their effects on the results. A score of 3 implies that awareness of both is less than ideal in both or awareness of one of the two is deficient. A score of 2 implies that one is deficient and the other less than ideal. A score of 1 implies that both are deficient.

7. Plan for completion of the work

A score of 5 requires a detailed understanding of the steps that must be carried out to complete the analysis and determine the findings and implications. A score of 4 implies a broad understanding of these steps but not all of the details. A score of 3 implies a general knowledge of what must be done but with some gaps in understanding. A score of 2 implies only a partial understanding of what work is to be done. A score of 1 implies no understanding of the work that is to be done.

8. Understanding of possible implications of findings

A score of 5 requires discussion of specific implications that may come from the possible findings. A score of 4 implies discussion of broad implications but not details. A score of 3 implies general awareness of implications but limited ability to discuss them. A score of 2 implies awareness of some but not all possible implications. A score of 1 implies little or no awareness of implications.

9. Clarity of oral expression

A score of 5 requires presentation of a coherent agenda for the analysis in a logical manner, uses facts and ideas well, and speaks clearly and convincingly. A score of 4 implies acceptable performance on all three criteria and excellent performance on at least one. A score of 3 implies acceptable in all three criteria but excellent in none. A score of 2 implies deficiency on some criteria. A score of 1 implies deficiency in all criteria.