

About Your Prospectus

Department of Economics, SUNY-Binghamton

What does the department expect of a prospectus presentation? How can you make sure that your prospectus is accepted?

First, make sure that ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMITTEE have read a written dissertation proposal, and have signed off on it. There is a standard form on which these signatures should be placed, which is sent to you upon successful completion of your last comprehensive exam. If a committee member has made comments or suggestions about your topic in the past, respond to those comments and suggestions.

In the written proposal to your committee, and in your prospectus presentation in the seminar, address the following points.

1. What is the central question of your project? Why is this an interesting question that merits more research?
2. How is it different from previous work (i.e., provide a relevant description of the existing literature on the issue)? Exactly what is the hole in our knowledge of the topic that you are planning to fill?
3. What model or set of models guides your approach? Why are these models the *most appropriate* ones for this question? If you are constructing your own model, make sure you answer the following questions.
 - What do you want your model to show? What implications are you going for?
 - What are the key assumptions in the model? Be honest. Highlight, do not hide, goofy assumptions.
 - How is your model different from existing models?
 - What are the basic equations of the model? Write them out.
4. What data will you use to answer the question, or test your new model? Why are these the *most appropriate* data to answer the question? Know the properties of your data—for example, what exactly they measure, how they were collected, whether they describe the whole population or only a subset.
5. What econometric techniques will you be using? Why are these the *most appropriate* techniques?
6. Present some preliminary results, that is, a subset of the results that will appear in your dissertation, or an example of the KIND of thing that will appear in your dissertation.
7. Provide a time schedule that shows when you plan to have accomplished which task (this won't be cast in stone, but it is necessary to have a realistic time frame in mind). The purpose here is to show that your project can actually be done, by you.

Overall, a prospectus presentation is different from a dissertation defense or a seminar. The purpose of the prospectus is to convince the faculty that you have chosen a viable project of PhD-level quality that you can accomplish in the proposed time. It is therefore entirely appropriate to devote most of your presentation time to the description of what you plan to do and how you plan to be doing it. At this time, it is not necessary to dazzle your audience with great results—keep those for your defense and for the job market.