

Guidelines for Research Paper

General

Students are encouraged to form groups of 2 to 4 students and present a single research paper for the group. All students in the group will receive the same grade.

Topic

The paper focuses on designing a compensation model for a specific real-life incentive problem, such as how to design a course syllabus to provide incentives to students to become life-long learners.

The paper must cover the following topics:

1. Background
 - Describe in sufficient detail the specific real-life incentive problem you study. Discuss the problems with the existing compensation model. Explain what an efficient compensation model would achieve.
2. Proposed compensation model
 - In the text, describe in detail how the model would work. In the appendix, include a mathematical model that clearly specifies elements of the model, lists all assumptions, and derives the optimal solution. Discuss why the model would solve the incentive problem. Discuss when the proposed model would work and when it would not work and how it applies to your incentive problem.
3. Proposed empirical test of the model
 - State the research question. Explain what identification strategy you use and why it may help uncover the causal relationship of interest. Formulate the empirical model, specifying and justifying which control variables you would include in the study.
4. Alternative compensation models
 - Discuss two alternative compensation models that could apply to your incentive problem. Explain why they are unlikely to work for your specific problem.

Format

The assignment should be typed on a double-sided paper. It should be less than 2,500 words (approximately 5 pages), excluding the mathematical appendix. The appendix should not exceed 2 pages.

Due Dates

- July 7 Each student should be assigned to a group. Each group has to submit a one-paragraph description of the incentive problem they wish to write the paper about.
- July 14 Each group has to submit a full background section about the incentive problem, not to exceed 2 pages.
- July 30 Each group has to submit the final version of the paper.

Writing

Good writing will be rewarded. Good writing means not only that your paper is free of spelling, typographical and grammatical errors, but also that your paper is easy to read, clear, and concise. Writing is hard work, and you may need to revise your paper several times. An excellent reference is Deirdre McCloskey, "Economical Writing", available from the bookstore.

Help

To assist you with development of your research paper, we will have workshops each Thursday during regular class hours, except during the first and last week of the class. You may also wish to talk to me during my regular hours on Tuesdays, 7-8, or by appointment.