Writing component design focuses on teaching economics majors to carry out and effectively communicate original empirical research. Two alternative independent inquiry projects are presented. Students are (1) given a dependent variable or (2) free to select a topic of interest and data sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Importance of the study</th>
<th>Literature review</th>
<th>Empirical model</th>
<th>Empirical results</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Writing quality</th>
<th>Due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Presents statement of the topic and question to be analyzed 40%</td>
<td>Justifies importance of the study/reasons for government intervention 15%</td>
<td>Reviews; at least 4 previous research papers on chosen or similar policy; organize papers either chronologically or thematically 20%</td>
<td>Provides all data sources and presents summary statistics table; defines each variable carefully; presents and interprets empirical results. 40%</td>
<td>Reconciles empirical findings with previous literature; provides policy implications 10%</td>
<td>All outside sources and numbers are referenced 5%</td>
<td>No grammatical errors with clear and correct use of English 10%</td>
<td>Met 10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Draft</td>
<td>Addresses topic concerns if any from proposal stage 5%</td>
<td>Addresses any comments from proposal stage 5%</td>
<td>Addresses comments; add literature review if none was present in the proposal 5%</td>
<td>Applies one empirical model (e.g. regression, difference-in-difference) to chosen topic 15%</td>
<td>Provides all data sources and presents summary statistics table; defines each variable carefully; presents and interprets empirical results. 40%</td>
<td>Reconciles empirical findings with previous literature; provides policy implications 10%</td>
<td>All sources and numbers are referenced 5%</td>
<td>No grammatical errors with clear and correct use of English 10%</td>
<td>Met 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>Add a short (up to 100 words) abstract 5%</td>
<td>Addresses instructor and peer comments if any. 5%</td>
<td>Addresses instructor and peer comments 5%</td>
<td>Addresses instructor and peer comments. Add alternative specifications if necessary. 15%</td>
<td>Addresses instructor and peer comments; add diagnostic tests 35%</td>
<td>Addresses instructor and peer comments; point out the best areas for further research 10%</td>
<td>All sources and numbers are referenced 5%</td>
<td>No grammatical errors with clear and correct use of English 10%</td>
<td>Met 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goals for Independent Inquiry Project**

Through a research project students will learn to:
- formulate a hypothesis to be tested or a research question to be answered;
- apply the appropriate empirical model to analyze the question;
- collect relevant data to test the hypothesis/question;
- provide feedback and discuss the work of peers;
- present their research findings in writing;
- incorporate feedback from the instructor and peers into a formal research paper.

**Research Paper with Drafts**

This approach is built on the belief that the professor's comments are most effective when a student has an opportunity to revise the paper and incorporate the comments to ensure improvement.

Sample structure:
- Proposal, 10% of the grade
- First Draft, 20% of the grade
- Peer Review, 5% of the grade
- Final Paper, 15% of the grade

**Improvements**

- Grading Rubrics
- Literature Review Guide
- UT Libraries
- JSTOR
- Google Scholar
- NBER
- EconLit
- Data Guide
- ICPSR
- Statistical Abstract of the United States
- Historical Statistics of the United States
- Writing Consultant
- Writing Center Help
- Blogging
- Graphic Detail, *The Economist*