

Guide to 4th Year Undergraduate Research Projects in Economics

(For Faculty Advisors and Students, Academic Year 2025–26)

1. 4th Year Undergraduate Research Projects: Structure and requirements

The 4-year BA (Hons) with Research in Economics programme includes a research project designed for students to demonstrate advanced research capabilities in Economics. Students undertake an independent research project under faculty supervision, culminating in a substantial dissertation or a thesis that showcases original thinking and rigorous academic analysis.

Required credits:

- Students of the 4-year BA (Hons) with Research in Economics programme must complete all 20 economics courses required of the 4-year BA (Hons) Economics programme.
- In addition, they must complete a research project of 12 credits in their fourth year.
- The 12 credits of the research project are spread over two semesters, with 4 credits being taken during Monsoon and 8 during Spring.
- Students should expect to spend ~10 hours/week on their research projects during *both* Monsoon and Spring semesters of their 4th year.
- It is strongly recommended that students discuss their choice of electives with their advisor so that they can get the necessary training required to complete their research project.

Eligibility:

- To pursue a fourth-year research project in Economics, students must hold a cumulative GPA of at least 3.6 in courses that count towards their Major at the end of their third year.
- Students must have identified a permanent member of the Department of Economics (i.e. Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor) who has agreed to be their research project advisor and supervise the writing of their dissertation.
- Students must get a minimum grade of B on the 4-credit Monsoon Semester component of the research project to be able to continue with the research project in the Spring Semester.

Conversion to an ISM:

Students can exit the research track at the end of the Monsoon semester if they wish. Similarly, if students fail to get a B on the research project in the monsoon semester, they

will no longer be allowed to continue with the research project. In both cases, the 4 credits obtained during the monsoon semester will be converted to an ISM. Note that this ISM cannot be counted towards fulfilment of the credits in the chosen major, but can be counted towards fulfilment of total credits.

2. Research Project expectations and timeline

Expectations:

The research project culminates in a dissertation that must reflect the academic rigour of a senior undergraduate thesis. All students undertaking the research project are expected to identify an appropriately motivated research question in economics and conduct a thorough review of the literature. For research projects in applied economics, students must conduct original empirical analysis where they take a hypothesis to data. For research projects in theoretical economics, students need to create a simple workable model and present preliminary findings from their model.

There is no minimum word limit or page length.

Timeline:

An indicated timeline for the research project is suggested below:

Preparation Stage (Summer):

- Students are expected to identify a permanent faculty member who has agreed to supervise their research project by the beginning of the summer (at the end of their 3rd year).
- Students are expected to finalize their research question(s) by the end of June.
- Students are also expected to conduct a preliminary literature review to understand the feasibility and relevance of their research question and get it validated by their respective advisors.

Proposal Stage (Monsoon Semester):

- Students submit a detailed draft proposal for their research project to their advisor in October (around the midterm break of the Monsoon Semester).
- Students finalise their research project proposal by the end of November.
- The proposal is presented in a poster format during the annual conference in December (post the exam week).

Paper writing Stage (Spring Semester):

- Students work intensively on the research paper, meeting their advisor frequently to discuss progress.
- Students should be able to establish significant progress on their final paper by March (midterm break of the Spring Semester).
- The main results of the dissertation are presented before faculty (including the advisor) and other students at the end of April (reading week of the Spring Semester).

3. Faculty advising

- Students are responsible for identifying a research advisor. It is strongly recommended that students begin the process of reaching out to potential advisors in the spring semester of their third year.
- The advisor must be a permanent member of the Department of Economics at Ashoka University (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor). Students may also have an advisor who is not from the Department of Economics or is a visiting faculty at Ashoka, but they must always have at least one advisor who is a permanent member of the Department.
- **Advisor expectations:** Advisors are expected to meet students regularly. As a suggestion, many advisors meet their students once every two weeks while they are developing their proposals and every week once they are finalizing their papers. Advisors are expected to guide students on the choice of their research question, methodology and literature review. They should provide substantive feedback on the draft proposal, the draft, and the final paper, as well as monitor progress against the target timeline. They should help students meet a minimum academic standard with their proposal and dissertation. They are also responsible for grading all 12 credits of the research project.
- **Student expectations:** Students are responsible for reaching out to their advisors to schedule meetings, adhering to all submission deadlines and project milestones, and maintaining research integrity. They are also expected to spend at least ~10 hours/week on their research projects through Monsoon and Spring semesters.

4. Research Funding Guidelines

To support independent research, students may apply for limited funding which is intended to help students complete their 12-credit research thesis.

Eligible Expenses (examples):

- Survey/data collection costs (enumerator wages, transport for fieldwork).
- Purchase of datasets.
- Software licenses specific to research that are not otherwise available through Ashoka University
- Printing, photocopying, transcription, or translation services.
- Payment to subjects in a lab/field experiment

Ineligible Expenses:

- Personal equipment (laptops, iPads, phones, etc.).
- Travel not directly linked to research data collection.
- General living expenses.

Application Process:

- Students submit a short budget proposal (1 page) with justification to the 4th year research coordinators, cc'ing their advisors.
- Funding decisions will be made by the Department Research Committee, which will include the 4th year research coordinators the PhD coordinators.
- Students need to submit a status report (both of the project and the funding) at the end of the Monsoon semester.
- Receipts and a brief expenditure report must be submitted at project completion.