Davidson College
Professor Smith

“Iterative Writing”

When an academic economist completes a research project, she will typically send her work to a professional journal to be considered for publication. Once the editors of the journal receive the paper, the editors select “referees” to read and review the work. Upon completing the review process, referees make a recommendation to the editors about whether or not the paper is suitable for publication. The referees also provide the author with a “referee report” that offers constructive criticism. One of the great benefits of submitting a paper to a journal and putting it through the review process is that the author can receive invaluable feedback that allows her to improve her paper.

The “iterative writing” system I will use for my classes seeks to emulate the strong points of the refereeing system. Specifically, this system will allow you to “revise and resubmit a paper” once you have received the feedback from your “referee” (namely me). My goal in creating this system is to provide students with an incentive to improve their writing. In the past, I have found that students don’t take full advantage of the opportunity to write drafts. This system will provide students with an incentive to carefully write (and rewrite) their papers.

Rules and Regulations

You should read the accompanying document – “How to Write Papers in Economics” (found on my webpage) - and follow its guidelines. You may come in to discuss your paper at any time before the paper is due, and I will be happy to read individual pages and/or sections of your paper prior to the final due date. However, I will not read complete drafts of your paper before the paper is due. I want you to struggle with the material on your own instead of having me micromanage your writing process. Becoming a great writer requires hard work, and I don’t want you to ever think of the writing process as something that involves checking items off of a list – introduction, literature review, etc. Spend time thinking about how your paper needs to be structured. Spend time writing each section carefully, and make sure that the sections fit together in a meaningful way.

Once you have submitted your paper I will read it and place comments on it as I might have in the past. In addition to placing comments on the paper itself, though, I will provide you with a brief “referee report” that will contain your score for the paper and that will identify specific issues that have lowered your grade.

Once I have returned your paper with the accompanying “referee report” the following rules will apply:

- If you have submitted a paper that is carelessly written or inadequately cited, then you will not be given a chance to rewrite your paper. You’ll get a referee report, but it will explicitly indicate that you are not eligible to do a rewrite. (This should not happen to you. If you put in a solid effort when you initially submit your paper, then you will be invited to submit a rewrite.)

- You must submit your revision (along with the original draft) within ten days of getting your paper back. The clock starts on the day that I make the papers available to the class. If you don’t pick up your paper for a week, then you would only have three days in which to complete your revisions.
• **You must also submit a “Response Report”**. You will use the form that you may find on my webpage. You may either write (legibly!) or type the report. The report requires you to do the following:
  
  o Identify which comments from my referee report you have responded to and **how** you have responded to them.
  o Identify where these revisions appear (page number).

• Once I receive the revised paper, the original, and the “response report” I will read all of the documents. I will return your materials, and, depending on the success of your revisions, you may receive a higher paper grade. If you have been **especially** conscientious in your efforts to revise your paper (in other words, if you have made a serious effort to improve your writing), then I may provide you with a second “referee report”. At this point, you would have the option of revising your paper a second time. (All of the previous rules governing revisions would still apply.)

Here are some other issues to keep in mind:

• I rarely award paper grades above 95. A paper that earns a grade above 95 suggests that you have created an **exceptional** piece of work. I take that word seriously – an exceptional paper is just that, a rare piece of scholarship. You'll want to consider this before doing re-writes on papers that have already earned grades in the 90s.

• Making minor changes to a paper – correcting misspellings or incorrect word usage, etc. – will lead to relatively small changes in your paper grade. Making **only** changes of this type will result in your failing to receive a second “referee report”.

• Don’t hesitate to ask questions about comments I’ve written on your paper or anything on your “referee report”.

• Please use the writing center! It is a fantastic resource, and one that I would encourage you to use before you submit your paper the first time.

If you have any questions about the “iterative writing” system, then please don’t hesitate to ask!