

ECO 201 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

The final project for this course is the creation of a **research paper**. Every day, millions of economic choices are made by people—from what brand of soap to buy to how many employees to hire for a factory. Microeconomics provides us with the tools, models, and concepts to better understand individual choices in the marketplace and how resource allocation is determined at the micro level. The decisions made by individuals and households impact the market and influence decisions made by firms. Firms use these tools as a way to determine pricing, output, and profit maximization. As a student of economics, you can use the microeconomic principles to gain an understanding of how firms and individuals make decisions and also to make your own conclusions about actions we can take to improve those decisions.

Now, imagine that you are a consultant to the firm of your choice. The firm has hired you to advise it on how it can ensure its future success as a company in its current market. To do this, you will write a 7–9-page research paper analyzing market and business data to explain how the core microeconomic principles impact the sustainability of the firm and what actions it can take to ensure success.

The project is divided into **three milestones**, which will be submitted at various points throughout the course to scaffold learning and ensure quality final submissions. These milestones will be submitted in **Modules Two, Four, and Five**. **The final submission will occur in Module Seven.**

In this assignment, you will demonstrate your mastery of the following course outcomes:

- ECO-201-01: Apply microeconomic models to real-world situations for informing effective business decisions
- ECO-201-02: Analyze business and market data using microeconomic tools for their impact on business sustainability
- ECO-201-03: Evaluate the structure of various markets for informing effective decision-making strategies
- ECO-201-04: Assess the behavior and decisions of individuals and firms for their relation to the microeconomic framework

Prompt

You will work with your instructor to choose a firm for which you can find reliable data and information, both at the firm level and the industry level. The firm you select must be a publicly traded company, must operate in the U.S. market, and must currently be in business. You will need instructor approval before continuing on with your research paper in order to ensure you have met the necessary requirements. Publicly traded companies file reports with a great deal of data that you will find useful for your analysis. Once you have selected a firm for your case study, you will gather information and data relevant to the firm and its industry and use the core microeconomic principles you have learned in class to analyze the information and make a recommendation for your firm. You will compose a 7–9-page research paper in which you will analyze the market and business data to explain how the core microeconomic principles impact the sustainability of the firm, and your recommendation will suggest the actions the firm can take to ensure success.

Specifically the following **critical elements** must be addressed:

I. **Introduction**

Work with your instructor to choose a firm that matches the following criteria: a publicly traded company operating in the U.S. market that is currently in business.

- a) Outline the **purpose** of this paper and how it will inform your conclusion.
- b) Summarize the **history** of the firm, and provide an **overview** for what the firm does and what goods/services it sells.

II. Explore the supply and demand **conditions** for your firm's product.

- a) Evaluate trends in demand over time, and explain their **impact** on the industry and the firm. You should consider including annual sales figures for the product your firm sells.
- b) Analyze information and data related to the demand and supply for your firm's product(s) to support your recommendation for the **firm's actions**. Remember to include a graphical representation of the data and information used in your analysis.

III. Examine the **price elasticity of demand** for the product(s) your firm sells.

- a) **Analyze** the available data and information, such as pricing and the availability of substitutes, and justify how you determine the price elasticity of demand for your firm's product.
- b) Explain the factors that affect **consumer responsiveness** to price changes for this product, using the concept of price elasticity of demand as your guide.
- c) Assess how the price elasticity of demand impacts the firm's **pricing decisions** and revenue growth.

IV. Examine the **costs of production** for your firm.

- a) Analyze the various costs a firm faces, their trends over time, and how they have impacted your firm's **profitability**.
- b) Apply the concepts of variable and fixed costs to your firm for informing its **output decisions**. For instance, analyze how different kinds of costs (labor, research and development, raw materials) affect the firm's level of output.

V. Explore the **overall market** for your firm.

- a) Discuss the **market share** of the firm and its top competitors by providing details on current percentages for each firm and describing the trend over time. You might consider presenting the data graphically.
- b) Analyze the **barriers to entry** in this market to illustrate the potential for new competition and its impact on your firm's future in the market.
- c) Describe the **market structure** for this firm, and analyze how this affects the firm's ability to influence the market.

VI. **Recommendation**

- a) Develop a recommendation for how the firm can manage its **future production** by synthesizing the data presented.
- b) Suggest how the firm's position within the market and among its competitors will allow it to take your **recommended action**.
- c) Describe how the firm can **sustain its success** going forward by evaluating the findings from demand trends and price elasticity.

Milestones

Milestone One: Introduction

In **Module Two**, you will submit a draft of the **introduction** (Section I) of your research paper, including all critical elements of Section I as listed above. In one to two pages, you will detail the purpose of the paper, summarize the history of the firm, and provide an overview of the firm. **This milestone is graded with the Milestone One Rubric.**

Milestone Two: Supply and Demand Conditions and Price Elasticity of Demand

In **Module Four**, you will submit a draft of the **supply and demand conditions** (Section II) and **price elasticity of demand** (Section III) of your research paper, including all critical elements as listed above for each of those sections. Each of these sections should be one to two pages in length and should incorporate relevant data and supporting evidence. **This milestone is graded with the Milestone Two Rubric.**

Milestone Three: Costs of Production, Overall Market, and Recommendation

In **Module Five**, you will submit a draft of the **costs of production** (Section IV), **overall market** (Section V), and **recommendation** (Section VI) of your research paper, including all critical elements as listed above for each of those sections. Each of these sections should be one to two pages in length and should incorporate relevant data and supporting evidence. **This milestone is graded with the Milestone Three Rubric.**

Final Submission: Research Paper

In **Module Seven**, you will submit your **research paper**. It should be a complete, polished artifact containing **all** of the critical elements of the final project. It should reflect the incorporation of feedback gained throughout the course. **This submission will be graded with the Final Project Rubric.**

Deliverables

Milestone	Deliverables	Module Due	Grading
1	Introduction	Two	Graded separately; Milestone One Rubric
2	Supply and Demand Conditions and Price Elasticity of Demand	Four	Graded separately; Milestone Two Rubric
3	Costs of Production, Overall Market, and Recommendation	Five	Graded separately; Milestone Three Rubric
	Final Submission: Research Paper	Seven	Graded separately; Final Project Rubric

Final Project Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Your research paper must be 7 to 9 pages in length (plus a cover page and references) and must be written in APA format. Use double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, and one-inch margins. Include at least five references cited in APA format.

Critical Elements	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (85%)	Needs Improvement (55%)	Not Evident (0%)	Value
Introduction: Purpose	Meets “Proficient” criteria and uses industry-specific language to establish expertise	Outlines the purpose of the paper and how it will inform the conclusion	Outlines the purpose of the paper, but does not explain how it will inform the conclusion	Does not outline the purpose of the paper	6.5
Introduction: History and Overview	Meets “Proficient” criteria, and choice of company is well suited to the analysis	Comprehensively summarizes the history of the firm and provides an overview for what the firm does and what goods/services it sells	Summarizes the history of the firm and provides an overview for what the firm does and what goods/services it sells, but summary is not comprehensive or overview lacks details	Does not summarize the history of the firm or provide an overview	6.5
Conditions: Impact	Meets “Proficient” criteria and explains in detail reasons for the trend	Effectively evaluates trends in demand over time and explains their impact on the industry and the firm	Evaluates trends in demand over time, but evaluation is ineffective or does not explain their impact on the industry and firm	Does not evaluate trends in demand over time	6.5
Conditions: Firm’s Actions	Meets “Proficient” criteria and is well qualified with concrete examples	Analyzes information and data related to the demand and supply for the firm’s product(s) to support recommendation for the firm’s actions and includes graphical representation of data and information	Analyzes information and data related to the demand and supply for the firm’s product(s), but information and data do not support recommendation for the firm’s actions or do not include graphical representation of data and information	Does not analyze information and data related to the demand and supply for the firm’s product(s)	6.5
Price Elasticity of Demand: Analyze	Meets “Proficient” criteria and uses research to illustrate claims	Analyzes the available data and information and justifies how the price elasticity of demand for the firm’s product was determined	Analyzes the available data and information, but does not justify how the price of elasticity of demand for the firm’s product was determined	Does not analyze the available data and information to determine the price elasticity of demand	6.5
Price Elasticity of Demand: Consumer Responsiveness	Meets “Proficient” criteria and reviews all factors of elasticity	Explains the factors that affect consumer responsiveness to price changes for the product using the concept of price elasticity of demand as a guide	Explains the factors that affect consumer responsiveness to price changes for the product, but does not use the concept of price elasticity of demand as a guide	Does not explain the factors that affect consumer responsiveness to price changes for the product	6.5

Price Elasticity of Demand: Pricing Decisions	Meets “Proficient” criteria and uses research to illustrate claims	Accurately assesses how the price elasticity of demand impacts the firm’s pricing decisions and revenue growth	Assesses how the price elasticity of demand impacts the firm’s pricing decisions and revenue growth, but assessment is inaccurate	Does not assess how the price elasticity of demand impacts the firm’s pricing decisions and revenue growth	6.5
Costs of Production: Profitability	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides concrete examples to substantiate claims	Analyzes the various costs a firm faces, their trends over time, and how they have impacted the firm’s profitability	Analyzes the various costs a firm faces and their trends over time, but does not discuss how they have impacted the firm’s profitability	Does not analyze the various costs a firm faces, their trends over time, or how they have impacted the firm’s profitability	6.5
Costs of Production: Output Decisions	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides insight into how the firm can manage those costs	Accurately applies the concepts of variable and fixed costs to the firm for informing its output decisions	Applies the concepts of variable and fixed costs to the firm for informing its output decisions, but applies concepts inaccurately	Does not apply the concepts of variable and fixed costs to the firm for informing its output decisions	6.5
Overall Market: Market Share	Meets “Proficient” criteria and presents the data graphically and over time	Discusses the market share of the firm and its top competitors by providing details on current percentages for each firm and describing the trend over time	Discusses the market share of the firm and its top competitors, but does not provide details on current percentages for each firm or does not describe the trend over time	Does not discuss the market share of the firm and its top competitors	6.5
Overall Market: Barriers to Entry	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides specific examples of successful and/or failed entrants into the market	Analyzes the barriers to entry in this market to illustrate the potential for new competition and its impact on the firm’s future in the market	Analyzes the barriers to entry in this market, but does not illustrate the potential for new competition or its impact on the firm’s future in the market	Does not analyze the barriers to entry in this market	6.5
Overall Market: Market Structure	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides specific examples to demonstrate the market structure and firm’s influence	Describes the market structure for this firm and accurately analyzes how this affects the firm’s ability to influence the market	Describes the market structure for this firm, but does not analyze how this affects the firm’s ability to influence the market or analysis is inaccurate	Does not describe the market structure for this firm	6.5
Recommendation: Future Production	Meets “Proficient” criteria and relates recommendation to the economic principles presented in the paper	Effectively develops a recommendation for how the firm can manage its future production by synthesizing the data presented	Develops a recommendation for how the firm can manage its future production, but recommendation is not effective or is not based on a synthesis of the data presented	Does not develop a recommendation	6.5

Recommendation: Recommended Action	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides advice for how to strengthen its position in the market	Suggests how the firm’s position within the market and among its competitors will allow it to take the recommended action	Suggests how the firm’s position within the market and among its competitors will allow it to take the recommended action, but suggestions are not appropriate	Does not suggest how the firm’s position within the market and among its competitors will allow it to take the recommended action	6.5
Recommendation: Sustain its Success	Meets “Proficient” criteria and provides specific ideas for how the firm can sustain its success	Describes how the firm can sustain its success going forward by evaluating the findings from demand trends and price elasticity	Describes how the firm can sustain its success going forward, but does not evaluate the findings from demand trends and price elasticity in the discussion	Does not describe how the firm can sustain its success going forward	6.5
Articulation of Response	Submission is free of errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization and is presented in a professional and easy-to-read format	Submission has no major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization	Submission has major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that negatively impact readability and articulation of main ideas	Submission has critical errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that prevent understanding of ideas	2.5
Earned Total					100%