

Problem Set 4

EC2450A

Fall 2016

Write a 2-4 page referee report on ONE of the papers below.

You can choose the more empirically-oriented paper (which still has some theory, because even good data work often requires at least some framework!) or the more-theoretically oriented paper (with a numerical analysis).

Bear in mind these papers are not yet published – they may have mistakes and issues in them. This is mimicking a real refereeing process.

Online, you can find lots of good advice on how to write referee reports. There is no standardized way, but for the sake of this problem set, I give you my guidelines.

A referee report should contain the following elements:

1. A BRIEF summary of the paper (this is key: you need to not repeat the abstract or the intro, but rather say what the paper is doing in a way that the editor can very quickly grasp. Editors are busy people.)
2. An overall assessment of the paper with a recommendation for the editor (recommendations are “accept”, “revise and resubmit”, or “reject.”) Sadly, “accept” never ever happens in a first round! Imagine here that the paper has been submitted to a top 5 journal, so the bar is high.
3. A list of comments about the content of the paper and the contribution. You need to critically discuss weak points of the paper, and, since this is a problem set, also suggest improvements (you only do that if you are a nice referee in the real world). You also need to frame the contribution of the paper relative to the previous literature.
4. A list with more minor comments: do you have suggestions on how to improve the exposition? The tables? The figures? The text?

Paper 1 (theory + numerical): “Optimal Need-Based Financial Aid” by Sebastian Find-eisen and Dominik Sachs.

Available here: http://www.dominiksachs.com/downloads/need_based.pdf

Paper 2 (empirical): “VAT Notches, Voluntary Registration, and Bunching: Theory and UK Evidence” by Li Liu and Ben Lockwood.

Available here: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/blockwood/vat_bunching_restuds__11_7_16.pdf