



The Economics Network Newsletter

Issue 21
Spring 2013



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The Economics Network is generously supported by the Royal Economic Society, the Scottish Economic Society and 37 UK higher education economics departments. More information on our supporters and joining the Network is available on our website at: <http://economicsnetwork.ac.uk/about/supporters>.

Benefits for supporting departments include:

- Free priority access to Economics Network activities such as graduate teaching assistant and new lecturer workshops which are held at selected member institutions.
- Advice, support and consultancy for internal departmental workshops and away days.
- Publicity on the Network's website.
- Reduced or waived fees and priority booking for events and conferences.
- Invitations to participate in the Network's pedagogical research activities.

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ECONOMICS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Editorial

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Understanding how the current HE environment impacts the teaching and learning of economics is a key focus of our work. One strand of this involved hosting a one-day symposium, **Changing expectations: implications of the new funding era for the teaching of economics**, at HM Treasury, (see p.4). At this event, we also updated delegates on the collaborative research project, **Economics students' changing expectations**, involving over 20 departments from across the UK which is investigating this area over the next 2 years (p.10).

Further updates and discussions concerning this project will take at the **Developments in Economics Education** conference in September, at the University of Exeter's Business School. This year's conference, with a keynote address from leading economist, John Kay, has received a record number of paper submissions and promises to provide both inspiration and practical tips for all those with an interest in economics HE teaching. See page 8 for more details.

The EN's **Teaching Awards** will be presented at DEE – both staff and students can nominate individuals or teams who have achieved excellence in their teaching of economics (p.6). Please do nominate any worthy colleagues, and encourage others, including students, to do so too.

The DEE conference will also have a session entitled **Undergraduate degrees in Economics in the UK**, which is new report available on our website. This report (see p.10 for a summary) analyses departments' offerings in economics and as such should provide a useful overview of provision.

The success of the EN is dependent on both funding and working with individual enthusiasts and departments from across the UK to provide events, resources and research to support the teaching of economics. One key example is our very successful autumn workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants and New Lecturers (see p.5), which we run in collaboration with our Associates – individual academics from across the UK. If you would like to become more involved with the EN by becoming an Associate please do contact us at econ-network@bristol.ac.uk.

The Economics Network is generously supported by the Royal Economic Society, the Scottish Economic Society and 37 UK higher education economics departments. If your department is not yet part of this community please see our website for more information about benefits and how to join: <http://economicsnetwork.ac.uk/about/supporters>.

Ros O'Leary
Economics Network



EN Spring Symposium

‘Changing Expectations: Implications of a new funding era for the teaching of economics’

Ashley Lait

On 1st March, the Economics Network hosted its Spring Symposium at HM Treasury in London. The event, entitled ‘Changing expectations: implications of a new funding era for the teaching of economics’, set out to explore students’ expectations and behaviour in the light of recent changes in higher education (in particular, the increase in fees), and how the discipline of economics can tackle the challenges these changes bring.

The event was introduced by Diane Coyle, who is also engaged in the debate on the economics discipline and curriculum. To date, Diane has organised the Government Economic Service-Bank of England conference in February 2012 and published the accompanying book ‘*What’s the Use of Economics?*’ Along with a small working group, she will also be releasing a statement suggesting the way forward for economics education. Diane was therefore well placed to note the importance of the Economics Network event, especially with its focus on implementation of changes and how to

take the next steps from suggestions to actions in the classroom. She also highlighted the need to unpick the external pressures on lecturers and universities, as well as issues of resistance to change and incentives not to, which can block progress.

The first panel then discussed the overarching issue of managing student expectations and the impact of increased fees on students, teaching staff and university management. The panel was made up of Alison Wride (GSM), Margaret Bray (LSE) and Chris Thomas (a recent graduate now working at the GES). This session emphasised the pressures felt by universities as they compete not only with one another, but also with new online courses, including MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and to improve league table measures. In addition, lecturers are under pressure to find time for their students inside and outside the classroom alongside their own research and administrative duties. And lastly, in a competitive job market, students feel under increasing pressure to

find internships and apply for jobs, which may eat into their study time.

Another crucial issue that was raised in this session was the importance of communicating with students, not only so that they feel part of the department, but also and perhaps more importantly, so that they know what is expected of them throughout their university lives. A gym analogy was used by one speaker to demonstrate that paying £9,000 tuition fees will not guarantee a knowledgeable and skilled graduate at the end of three years, in the same way that a gym membership fee doesn’t guarantee fitness, without work being put in by the individual.

The second panel, which included Guglielmo Volpe (Queen Mary), John Sloman (Economics Network), Jon Guest (Coventry) and Andrew Gurney (GES), moved on to a discussion of the specific attributes and skills that students need to be well-rounded graduates, effective employees and knowledgeable economists. Of course, there is always the issue of what can be left out of the curriculum or skills

development, as there isn't time or resources to cover everything. To this end, Guglielmo Volpe gave a short introduction to the problem-based learning approach he has used at Queen Mary. This style of teaching is effective as it allows students to develop skills (such as data collection, data analysis, report writing, team work and communication) as they work through economic problems, which in many ways reflects what they will be doing in their careers post-university.

Through the discussion in this second section, it became clear that while assessment is vitally important for students and universities, it can sometime be a barrier to the implementation of more innovative teaching methods. This is not only as it may be harder to assess modules which integrate such methods, but also because for students and league tables, assessment is of number one importance and therefore shouldn't

be interfered with. This is therefore an obstacle which will need consideration and perhaps more creative thinking to overcome.

Juliette Stephenson and Carlos Cortinhas (both University of Exeter), Martin Poulter (Economics Network) and Caroline Elliott (Lancaster) led the final panel of the day, which looked into the practicalities of teaching and time saving in more detail. All four speakers discussed how careful and planned use of technology can help teaching staff to be more efficient and engaging in the classroom – however, the emphasis here was not on using technology for technology's sake but rather thinking through how, for example, clickers, mobile phones or digital paper can enhance students' learning. The presenters also demonstrated how some of these technologies can be used and along with audience participants, shared their

experiences, which was particularly helpful for those considering using them for the first time or even those looking for way to integrate them more fully into a module.

The aim of this event was to further the discussion on the future of higher education economics and the challenges it faces in the light of both recent changes in HE, in particular the increase in tuition fees, and also the financial crisis. Above all, the Spring Symposium set out practical ways for teaching staff to manage student expectations and to be innovative in their teaching. The Economics Network is currently carrying out a collaborative inter-departmental research project to look into the issue of student behaviour and expectations and this will also be a theme at our upcoming Developments in Economics Education conference in September this year.

Autumn Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants and New Lecturers

The Economics Network will be running its programme of workshops for GTAs and New Lecturers this Autumn. We will be running:

- **Up to 5 department focused GTA workshops**
- **Up to 7 general GTA workshops**
- **A GTA conference to complement these workshops (spring 2014)**
- **A new lecturer residential workshop**

If your department is interested in hosting a workshop, or if you would like to become a presenter on this programme, please contact Ashley (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk).

EN Learning and Teaching Awards

In recognition of exemplary teaching practice

The EN teaching awards are given in recognition of exemplary teaching practice that encourages understanding of and inspires interest in economics.

This year's teaching awards will be given in two categories:

- **Outstanding Teaching Award** (experienced lecturers)
- **Best New Lecturer Award** (up to three years in post)

The judging panel will be looking for teaching which possesses some or all of the following qualities:

- **Inspires and encourages students' interest in economics;**
- **Challenges and motivates students towards academic excellence;**
- **Has made a positive impact on the economics teaching community.**

This could be on the basis of one activity or across a number of activities – examples are suggested, but not limited, to the following:

- Designing and/or delivering excellent teaching, learning and/or assessment practices;
- Utilising new ways of teaching, e.g. technology-enhanced learning tools, games and experiments, problem-based learning;
- Innovative curriculum development;
- Excellent provision of support for students;
- Leadership in economics education within the institution or across institutions.

Any member of staff at a UK university or a student registered on a UK university course may nominate an individual or team for this award. Heads of Departments will be asked for a short supporting statement.

The deadline for nominations is Friday 28th June.

To nominate, please visit:

<http://www.survey.bris.ac.uk/ltsn/awards>



Paul Johnson – new EN Patron



The Economics Network is pleased to announce that Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies is the latest individual to become a patron of the Economics Network.

Paul has been director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies since January 2011.

He has worked on the economics of public policy throughout his career. As well as a previous spell at the IFS in the 1990s (including a period as deputy director) Paul has been chief economist at the Department for Education and director of public spending in HM Treasury, where he had particular responsibility for environment (including climate change), transport and public sector pay and pensions. Other positions include a period as head of economics at the FSA and as a senior associate with Frontier Economics.

Between 2004 and 2007 Paul was deputy head of the Government Economic Service. He has served on the council of the Economic and Social Research Council and was a founder council member of the Pensions Policy Institute. In 2010 he led a review of the policy of auto-enrolment into pensions for the new government. He has been a member of a number of advisory boards and commissions including the Pension Provision Group, the Commission on taxation and citizenship, the Youth Justice Commission and the Commission on Living Standards. He is currently an editor of the Mirrlees Review of tax economics and policy.

Paul has published and broadcast extensively on numerous issues in the economics of public policy including tax, welfare, pensions, education, climate change and public finances.

For information on other EN patrons, please visit www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/about/patrons

www.studyingeconomics.ac.uk

► TIPS FOR WORKING EFFICIENTLY



Don't forget that our student website Studying Economics has great tips for students who are revising for exams or writing dissertations this term!

dee conference 2013

DEVELOPMENTS IN ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Date: Thursday 5th and Friday 6th September 2013
(with a drinks reception on Wednesday 4th Sept)

Venue: University of Exeter Business School, Exeter



The Economics Network's international DEE conference explores **advancements and innovation in economics education**. This year's event will have a particular **focus on recent changes in higher education**, including increased tuition fees and their impact on students' expectations. DEE 2013 will explore **how economics can tackle these challenges** and how skills development can be integrated into teaching provision.



We are delighted to announce that John Kay, one of the UK's leading economists and a patron of the Economics Network will be giving the keynote address at DEE 2013.

Booking is now open on the DEE website.
Please visit: www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/dee2013

Subscribe to the Economics Network

Benefits for members



The Economics Network continues to be supported by the Royal Economic Society and the Scottish Economic Society. In addition, since 2012, a number of higher education economics departments have committed funds to the Network through a subscription model established by CHUDE.

The EN is continuing this funding model for the coming years and is currently requesting subscriptions from UK economics departments for the next one to three years. This funding allows us to offer key activities to the higher education economics community and specific services to subscribing departments.

Costs

The pricing details for the 2013/2014 academic year are as follows:

- £250 for units with fewer than 10 FTE;
- £1,000 for units with 10-19 FTE;
- £2,000 for units with 20-40 FTE;
- £3,000 for units with 40 or more FTE.

It is possible for departments to pay for one year now or for three years upfront.

Benefits

There are a range of benefits for departments that subscribe to the Network. These include:

- Priority access and booking, plus discounted rates at EN events, including workshops for graduate teaching assistants and new lecturers, the Developments in Economics Education conference and other one day events, such as the Spring Symposium.
- Advice, support and consultancy for internal departmental workshops and away-days.

- Opportunity to be involved in EN research activities, e.g. our current collaborative project exploring student expectations and behaviour under the new funding regime.
- Priority access to unique research and data resources requested by departments to support them in planning their teaching (e.g. summary KIS data for economics).
- Collaborative initiatives and events with employers (e.g. GES) and other key stakeholders.
- Publicity of your department and its support of the Network, through online links.
- Dedicated email communications giving early notification about EN events, resources and initiatives.

Join

If you wish to contribute to the Network and join the community of departments engaging in our work, a full information pack is available at:

www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/about/supporters

Alternatively, please contact Ashley (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk).



Undergraduate Degrees in Economics in the UK

New Economics Network Report

Inna Pomorina

The curriculum of undergraduate degrees in Economics has been the focus of several recent discussions, including the GES/Bank of England event in February 2012, the Employability report prepared by the Economics Network and at the Festival of Economics in Bristol in November 2012. A census of Economics teaching had been previously prepared for the EN in 2008 by Paul Riethmuller, University of Queensland. This study focused on the core subjects studied in virtually all economics degrees, but its scope excluded elective modules and other questions. Among the main issues raised by this year's employers' survey was UK students' understanding and application of knowledge gained from the various modules on offer. We decided to undertake a new census of Economics teaching, focusing on the way Economics L100 or Economics majors are taught here in the UK.

The data for this report were compiled from various open-access sources, including entry requirements listed by UCAS. For information on selective modules we consulted the web pages of UK universities offering this degree programme. For information on how courses

are taught and assessed we used UNISTATS, who publish Key Information Sets (KIS). It would be useful to weight the data by the size of cohorts taking the course, but unfortunately these data are not openly available at present.

The report, which is available in the projects area of the Economics Network website, explores entry requirements for UK economics courses, the modules (compulsory and elective) that are offered to students, and how the courses are taught and assessed. In particular, we have analysed the data to highlight similarities and differences between BA and BSc courses and to make comparisons between courses offered in Business Schools and those offered departments that are part of a Faculty of Social Science, or Faculty of Economics, for example.

We believe this report will be of interest to Heads of Departments going through institutional review, to lecturers in Economics in the UK and other countries interested in departmental planning and curriculum development.

To see the full report, please visit:
www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/bsc_ba

Update on the EN Interdepartmental Research Project

The EN is leading a collaborative research project which is exploring **how economics students' expectations, attitudes and behaviour may have changed**, as a result of the changes to funding in higher education and the raise in tuition fees. We will also **consider how economics teaching and learning practice and curricula might be adjusted to meet emerging needs**.

We are currently collating and beginning the analysis of the data. We plan to **present any initial findings** at our **Developments in Economics Education conference** in September, where we will also hold a **project meeting** (4th September, 4pm, University of Exeter).

For more information, please see:
www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/research2013



Upcoming Events

Business and Economics Employability Symposium, 30 May 2013

This event run by Loughborough University will introduce student, graduate, employer and educator perspectives on employability.

20th International EDiNEB Conference, 5-7 June 2013



Registration (including day rates) is still open for the 20th International EDiNEB Conference, hosted by the **Open University Business School**, in Milton Keynes, 5-7 June 2013.

This year's conference theme relates to '**Future Skills for Competitive Business Education**', and features keynote speaker, Ronald van den Hoff, a Dutch entrepreneur, 'disruptive business concept explorer' and author of 'Society3.0'. Please visit: www.edineb.org for more information.

Econometrics of Models with Strategic Interaction, 5-6 June 2013

A Cemmap masterclass by Elie Tamer (Northwestern), UCL Economics Department, London

The class will provide a preview of the econometrics questions that arise when analyzing models with multiple decision makers interacting simultaneously. A **full programme** and **booking information** can be found at: <http://www.cemmap.ac.uk/cemmap/event/id/773>

Labour Productivity and Wages Over the Course of the Recession, 12 June 2013

A Fiscal Studies Journal Event, IFS, 7 Ridgmount Street, London

The IFS's journal, *Fiscal Studies*, is publishing a special issue on what has happened to labour productivity, wages, income, consumption, wealth and investment in the UK over the course of the recession. It also considers some of the potential policy implications of these patterns. Full details: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/events/899>

Developments in Economics Education (DEE) 2013, 5-6 September 2013

We are pleased to announce that our biennial conference, Developments in Economics Education will take place on Thursday 5th and Friday 6th September 2013 at the University of Exeter. The conference's keynote address will be given by one of Britain's leading economists, John Kay. For more information, please visit www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/dee2013.

Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants and New Lecturers

The Economics Network will be running a programme of workshops this autumn specifically designed to meet the needs of Graduate Teaching Assistants and New Lecturers in economics. Keep an eye on our website at www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/news for further details!

Please contact Ashley Lait (Ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk) or visit the events page of our website (www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/news) for any further information on these events or any other matters relating to the newsletter.