

Communicating Economics - Assessment Strategy



Assessment philosophy

The assessment strategy is designed to align closely with the aims of *Communicating Economics*. It assesses students' ability to interpret, evaluate, and communicate economic ideas to different audiences. Assessments therefore emphasise authentic tasks that mirror the activities economists undertake in professional practice.

The assessment strategy also reflects the progressive development of students' skills throughout the semester. Assessments can be structured so that they initially focus on critical evaluation of existing economic communication, while later assessments require students to construct their own evidence-based arguments for increasingly diverse audiences.

Six different assessment options are provided below as examples.

Example Assessments

i. Reflective reading journal entry

Format

- Submission of two reading journal entries each of 500 words
- Individual
- Take-home coursework
- 4 to 5 weeks

Description

Students keep a weekly reflective reading journal over a period of time, for example 4 weeks. Students must pick one economics-related media article published in the preceding week, and write a critical report which reflects on the economic content of that article. A particular focus of these entries should be the way in which the economics is being communicated by the article's author(s). Each entry should be no more than 500 words in length.

Students may wish to address the following questions in their reflective journal entries:

- What purpose does the article have?
- What economic ideas does the article build on?
- Is the article convincing? Why, or why not?

Students should complete a new entry each week, and then choose their best two entries and submit these for assessment. These should be improved, edited, polished versions of the draft entries written in the preceding weeks.

Students are strongly encouraged to choose articles published in a range of different media outlets, from authoritative reportage and analysis appearing in general-interest economics and business magazines and newspapers like *The Economist* and *The Financial Times*, to partisan tabloid journalism from *The Mirror* or *The Daily Mail*. Students should also choose a range of

different types of communication, from straight news items reporting on new economic facts, to op-eds interpreting those facts.

ii. **Research synthesis video presentation**

Format

- Submission of a 90-second recorded presentation plus storyboard
- Individual
- Take-home coursework
- 3 to 4 weeks

Description

Students must present one 90-second synthesis of a piece of economics research, in the style of a briefing to a policymaker chosen from the following list:

- Government minister
- Economic regulator
- Central banker

This briefing must be based on an article chosen from either [Economics Observatory](#) or [VoxEU](#), published in the preceding year. Students must summarise and contextualise the findings of this article in a short piece of verbal communication. Note that some articles can be significantly longer than others: in such cases, students may wish to focus on one aspect.

The briefing must provide the audience with the necessary facts and analysis with which to inform a policy decision, and simplify the economic intuition for a non-specialist audience. What does the policymaker need to know about the problem under investigation? What should the policymaker do? And why?

Students must submit a video recording of their presentation. Students can do this by recording themselves in Microsoft Teams (or other software of their choice). The presentation can use slides, and may contain some sort of data visualisation, such as a graph or infographic. Content shown on screen should be carefully chosen to communicate the key message in a way which is appropriate for the chosen audience. Presentations are assessed with a particular emphasis placed on accuracy, clarity, and cogency.

Students must also submit a one-page storyboard of their presentation, which should include a full bibliography of works consulted. This storyboard can be drafted in PowerPoint (or other similar software), but should be saved and submitted as a one-page PDF document.

iii. Economics op-ed column (take-home)

Format

- Submission of a 1,000-word op-ed column
- Individual
- Take-home coursework
- 2 to 3 weeks

Description

Students must write an economics op-ed column on a topic chosen from a list provided by the Module Coordinator. The column should be written in the style of columns published in specialist policy blogs such as [The Conversation](#), [VoxEU](#) and [Economics Observatory](#). It must communicate an economic idea in an effective way which convinces the reader.

The topics provided will be quite broad. Students must narrow their enquiry down. They must define the problem they are addressing, and describe the context in which they are applying their economic analysis. A particular emphasis in marking will be placed on effective use of language and critical evaluation. The column should be no more than 1,000 words in length, and it must be fully referenced.

Optional: Students may wish to make use of one item of data visualisation (e.g., a graph) of their own design as part of their communication. But using data visualisation comes at a cost: one item of data visualisation will be counted as equivalent to 250 words.

iv. Economics op-ed column (in-person)

Format

- Individual
- In-person exam
- 3 hours

Description

Students must write an economics op-ed column targeted at a specific audience, based on the resources provided 2-weeks in advance of the assessment date. The column should be written in the style of columns published in specialist policy blogs such as [The Conversation](#), [VoxEU](#) and [Economics Observatory](#). It must communicate an economic idea in an effective way which convinces the reader.

Resources may include policy briefings, reports, news articles, data visualisations, academic articles, etc. The intended target audience is shared with students at the beginning of the exam. Students must construct an op-ed column which uses the resources provided to convince the target audience of their key message. This key message to be communicated can be chosen by the student, but it must be consistent with the target audience, with the choice of resources included (and excluded) clearly reflecting this.

v. Data Visualisation Portfolio

Format

- Individual
- Take-home coursework
- Three data visualisations plus 300-word description each
- 3 to 4 weeks

Description

Students design three separate data visualisations which communicate different economic datasets to three different audiences, based on three datasets provided by the Module Coordinator.

For each data visualisation, students must provide an accompanying 300-word description. This provides the rationale for the chosen chart type, including the trade-offs associated with their choice, as part of communicating a specific message to an audience as chosen by the student.

vi. Unseen Media Analysis

Format

- Individual
- In-person exam
- 2 hours

Description

Students receive three economics-related pieces of media:

- Newspaper article
- Data visualisation
- Short opinion piece

Students should write a separate response to each piece of media, answering the following questions:

- What purpose does each piece of media have?
- What economic ideas does it build on?
- Is it convincing? Why, or why not?

As part of assessing whether each piece of media is convincing, students should:

- Analyse the use of positive and normative economics
- Critique the type of evidence included
- Assess persuasiveness