DEE 2025 Extended Abstracts

Contents

Workshop: AI and Assessment: Preparing Students for AI-Driven Careers

Ramin Nassehi, Silvia Dal Bianco, and Parama Chaudhury (University College London), Carlos Cortinhas (University of Exeter), Denise Hawkes (Kings College London), Cloda Jenkins (Imperial College), Antonio Mele (London School of Economics), Stefania Paredes Fuentes (University of Southampton)

Our workshop focuses on two themes: (a) Integrating AI into the classroom and assessment, and (b) The new skill sets required for economics graduates in the AI-driven world.

Part 1: AI and assessment

We begin by presenting findings from a recent survey on how economics departments in the UK are adapting their assessments in response to AI. A summary handout will be provided. To engage participants, we will facilitate a group activity: Groups will identify opportunities and challenges AI presents for assessment, focusing on: Skill formation, Inclusivity and Academic integrity. This will be followed by a discussion on departmental responses, highlighting examples of good practice drawn from our findings at the CTaLE- Stone Centre workshop (June 2025).

Part 2: AI and the changing skill set for graduates

Next, we shift focus to how AI is transforming the skills required for economics graduates. We will present insights from a survey on how economists are using AI at work and which skills are becoming increasingly valuable. For the second group activity, participants will brainstorm:

(a) How economics curricula should evolve to equip students with these emerging skill sets and

(b) Practical strategies for embedding AI-related skills in teaching and learning.

This interactive workshop will provide a structured yet exploratory space for educators to discuss AI’s impact on assessment and graduate skills, sharing best practices and innovative solutions.

Thursday 11.00-12.00 Room 2

Panel: Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Employability at Undergraduate level through Experiential Learning and Work Experience Acquisition

Atisha Ghosh (University of Warwick), Dean Garratt (Aston University), Ritchie Woodard (University of East Anglia), Anthi Chondrogianni (University of Bristol)

Employability is a key metric when assessing the effectiveness of programs in Higher Education. To foster employability at the undergraduate level, universities need to ensure that students have a wide range of opportunities to enhance their employability skills, both within and outside the classroom.

Apart from theoretical learning, many Economics programmes are seeking to equip students with essential skills that are valued by employers, such as analytical thinking and communication skills. Students further enhance their readiness for the job market by acquiring work experiences. The proposed panel aims to discuss current issues surrounding employability in economics and address how students can be guided to wade through an increasingly competitive environment. All speakers have a long-standing interest in employability and enhancing students' employability skills.

The Impact of Assessment Design on Student Attainment: an empirical investigation across dimensions of equality, diversity and inclusion

Fabio Aricò & Ritchie Woodard (University of East Anglia), Laura Harvey (University of Loughborough)

In recent years, assessment design in higher education has experienced rapid change, driven by the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of Generative AI tools. At the same time, developments within the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda in learning and teaching have also influenced assessment patterns. This empirical research, based on a case-study at a mid-sized university in England, analyses how assessment patterns might influence student attainment across undergraduate degree programmes, comparing the experience of Economics with other disciplines. The study uses a rich dataset (n=13,000) from seven cohorts of students graduating between 2017 and 2023. At student-level, we construct indicators accounting for exposure to different assessment formats, such as closed/open-book exams, presentations, performance-based assessments, essays, and technical tests.

Our findings suggest that students perform better when assessed across a variety of assessment designs. However, this effect is reduced, and in some cases reversed, for students with learning disabilities. The positive correlation between assessment design and higher grades is particularly strong for mature students, though this effect is most notable in the first year, fading in subsequent years. Higher weighting of closed-book and open-book exams in students' assessment profiles is associated with higher marks, especially for female students. However, this relationship is not the same for students with learning disabilities, with a significantly negative relationship observed for those affected by mental health difficulties.

In light of these results, we conclude with recommendations for assessment design that simultaneously consider student outcomes, pedagogical soundness, and inclusivity.

Group work as Assessments: Perspectives from UK Educators

Arpita Ghosh (University of Exeter), Atisha Ghosh (University of Warwick), Anastasia Papadopoulou (University of Bristol)

Group work enables students to learn in a cooperative way, equipping them with important transferable and employability skills of communication and negotiation (Herrmann, 2013; Hammar Chiriac, 2014). As such it is considered to be one of the authentic assessment tools. However, it also invites criticisms of “free riding” and “social loafing” i.e. students' individual efforts may not be identifiable within a group leading to lower effort by an individual student (Mellor, 2012; Noonan, 2013). Recent literature has examined ways to encourage students to participate actively in team-based learning by providing effective incentives (Jenkins and Chaudhury, 2015; Cagliesi and Ghanei, 2022). In this context, an open question remains on what are the key considerations from educators' perspective in taking the decision to implement group work in their courses. This is important to consider because

though most educator's believe that group work has academic value and fosters collaborative learning, thereby preparing students for future, they also share concerns about fairness in marking, implementation issues and student dynamics in the process (LeBeouf et al., 2015).

In this paper we bridge this gap by providing evidence on the perceptions on group work as assessments from a hypothetical choice experiment conducted in the UK. Evaluating 145 responses from Economics educators, we find that on average the reduction in probability of introducing group work in a quantitative course is 0.44 in comparison to mixed courses. However, when faced with modules like second year Econometrics, the probability to introduce group work increases by 0.46. Thematic analysis of open-ended answers on group work by educators point to skills and employability, team work, efficacy of assessment method, and student experience as the main benefits; whereas the concerns evolve around student and instructor experiences around fairness and accountability and complaint handling as major obstacles.

Co-creating group summative assessment with undergraduate student collaborators

Satadru Mukherjee (University of Bristol)

Assessment co-creation offers student's the agency to actively contribute to designing the evaluation of learning and promotes authentic assessment where students can examine real world economic problems by constructing questions that stem from their study interests. By collaborating, educators get an in-depth view how students engage with the subject, what they value in their learning; the knowledge educators can use to develop curriculum that makes learning more stimulating and impactful for students. Co-creation requiring intensive intellectual contribution from students instils higher order study skills, and the collaboration process contributes to further development of graduate attributes. Additionally, co-creation fosters assessment literacy, and its inclusive approach strengthens student's sense of belonging which has wider welfare implications.

The literature shows how co-creation promotes authentic learning (Lubicz-Nawrocka &Bovill 2023) and how this democratic approach contributes to deeper learning, better student engagement, better assessment performance (Deeley & Bovill 2017, Doyle, Buckley & McCarthy 2021).

In this project, funded by the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) for 2024/25, we co-created the summative coursework of a year 1 Statistics unit with six 2nd year UG students at University of Bristol. The summative coursework counts for 30% of the unit mark. The project was advertised to all 2nd year UG Economics and finance students as an excellent opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of their learning and become an enabler of authentic assessment which is a priority set in the University Assessment and Feedback strategy 2022-30. Students were informed about the time commitment of 8 hours and the hourly/total remuneration from working in this project.

The idea of involving second year students to design first year assessment was to utilize their first-year experience and gain from the student perspective in generating content whereby students creatively implement ideas, demonstrate and develop knowledge, skills in designing assessments. Students passionate about developing academic content could

draw from their experience (for e.g. economic interactions) and use their expertise in building assessment involving issues, policies that they think are important to study thereby making the assessment and the subject more relatable to students.

We collaborated with 6 students who volunteered to work. Students who had previously taken the unit worked as research partners. In signing up to the project, students were required to answer the following questions:

“What interests them about the project?

“What according to them is an authentic assessment?”

“What skills they would like to develop”?

Students were interested in bringing a fresh perspective to designing assessment, collaborate in a creative process, use their mentoring experience, offer stepping stones to help peers. For most students, authentic assessments were about practical, hands-on experience, projects, presentations that require critical thinking, problem solving and that do not involve memorization, reproducing content. Students were interested in developing critical thinking, research, analytical skills, as well as in developing collaboration, teamwork skills. While students were informed about using these responses to screen participants, eventually we did not use them as we decided to work with all who signed up to the project.

Upon completion of student recruitment which was done through the University Temporary Staffing Service we began working on the project in January 2025. We created the content through 4, 2 hourly group meetings which ended in March 2025.

In the first meeting we discussed the objectives of the project, the project timeline, the work involved, characteristics of a good statistical question. Students were provided two Financial Times articles and were encouraged to build, share questions based on them. In preparing them for the project we also discussed the coursework from 2023/24, the ideas behind each question, what works and how those questions can be improved. We also finalised the assessment topics (both chosen by students). The first topic examines the impact of Covid on labour market outcomes, and the second analyses the impact of the 2008 financial crisis on socio-economic outcomes.

In the second and third meetings we worked on each topic, students built a set of preliminary questions and further developed questions for each topic using articles and data sets shared with them. In the final meeting we continued developing existing questions and then we ran a focus group led by a BILT student fellow for students to reflect upon and discuss their experience of working in the project. The summary of these conversations can be seen in Table 1. After each meeting, students were encouraged to share their reflections of the session (based on project critical friend’s input). A summary of these reflections can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1: Summary of student discussions from focus group

Experience of working on the project	● Enjoyed group work, collaboration, exploring how assessments are made. ● Liked crafting questions with latest news. ● Fun experience which also boosts critical thinking.

Did the assessment really push your critical thinking?	• Yes, through creating questions from the basics, applying real world applications. • Contextualising and applying learnings from course.
What made you choose these topics?	• Stemmed from prior interests in American civil studies. Interested in exploring how the 2008 financial crisis affected the UK economy, countries in the West and the East, analysing the varied perspectives. • Meaningful topic based on experiences of the Covid-19 period.
The process of choosing the topic: Did you come up with the topic together? Was there some sort of discussion involved?	• Initially driven by lecturer choosing relevant stories that worked as a starting point. • The topics were eventually developed based on our feedback, those we thought relevant, interesting.
How was the process working alongside with an academic?	• Discussion based experience made it easy to interact. • Not the usual teacher student experience
Do you think the academic offered good amount of guidance in this process?	• Good guidance on the layout of sessions. • Helpful guidance elucidating the point of the project. • Sessions managed during times that worked well for everyone. • Regarding theme choices, stories shared by academic were relevant and interesting.
Do you think co-creation benefited you in your degree, in your studies, and do you think you acquired new skills?	• Project management. • Designing a logical question. • Careful evaluation of statistics. • Critical thinking. • Apply theoretical concepts to real life examples. • Dynamic way of thinking than approaching same old questions with similar patterns of answers.
How do you think first years will benefit from an assessment that was co-designed by second year students with an academic as opposed to an assessment that was	• Working on topics students are likely to be interested in. • Benefitting from student driven insights on the level of question, the structure of question. • Second year student inputs making the work relatable for first year students. • Academic led questions may be more challenging for some students, or based on topics that students are not interested about.

just made by an academic?	
Will these inputs make assessments more accessible, better engaging for students?	● Coursework will be more relevant for students. ● Updating marking criteria, word limit following the co-creation discussions can enable students to perform better.
Did you find any challenges during the process? If so what were they?	● Getting started with assessment design. ● Deciding on questions that are super important. ● Sharing reflections from the sessions.
How do you assess the support you received from your lecturer? Do you think there was any area where you feel like there could have been more guidance?	● Good organization. ● Reflections provided a good opportunity to give feedback. ● More guidance upfront on aims of the project could have been beneficial.
Do you think any units you have taken that would benefit from an assessment model like the one you designed?	● Most modules would benefit from having student input. ● Good to get a range of perspectives. ● Bridges the gap between academics and students which exist for many different reasons.
Do you think more people would benefit from doing this sort of co-creation?	● Getting student inputs will improve assessments in future. ● Keep the work more relevant for everyone.
How do you think a project like this could grant more attention?	● Sharing information through lectures and seminars. ● Advertising through TV screens in the university. ● Sharing posters (in venues like the Social Sciences Library) ● Promote projects via platforms like Career Services. ● Sharing further information on BILT.
Do you think you gained employability skills? Will you be mentioning this project in internship/grad job applications?	● Critical outside the box thinking ● New ways to approach things. ● Discussed the project in *Get Hired Fair* with corporate manager, production manager, HR that generated interest. ● Added project experience to CV.

Do you feel this like an assessment where you had to apply critical thinking, skills that you have learned?	● Not at first. Good opportunity to use accumulated knowledge in work. ● The discussion opportunities allowed learning from mistakes, the conversation based environment allows that learning opportunity.
Did you use AI at any point in the process? If so, do you think it was useful, or did you still not use it?	● Used AI to gather information, generate overall structure using the dataset. ● Not used AI. AI can't really help with independent/out of box thinking.

Table 2: Summary of student reflections from the group meetings

Reflect and share your thoughts about the project on co-creating assessment		
Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
The articles, listening to the group's perspectives, ideas provided further clarification on statistical questions. The meeting provided understanding on the aims and objectives of the project. The articles were an interesting read. The discussions offered the opportunity to voice opinions/raise questions. Efficient. Productive meeting. Enjoyed the open group discussion. Enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate and sharing of ideas. Highly relevant topic that allows exploration of important concepts.	Discussed practical and applicable scenarios of the use of statistical methods. Peer ideas offered helpful inputs in expanding one's own questions. The articles on Covid-19 and the 2008 financial crisis were interesting to read and dissect. The questions that the group came up with are worthwhile to investigate. More inputs on the structure/construction of statistical questions would be better.	Productive discussions clarifying key aspects of the project. Effective team collaboration, diverse perspectives contributed to a well-rounded approach. Explored structuring questions using specific data. Well thought out meeting in the wider scheme of things. Gradually built on the questions considered during last session. Group discussion helped in formulating one's own ideas/questions.

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Elaine Doyle, Patrick Buckley & Brendan McCarthy (2021) "The impact of content co-creation on academic achievement", Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 46:3, 494-507.

Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka & Catherine Bovill (2023) "Do students experience transformation through co-creating curriculum in higher education?", Teaching in Higher Education, 28:7, 1744-1760.

Would they produce a higher quality of work if they felt they were being more authentic? The (de)valuing of authentic connections in teaching and learning

Mike Reynolds (University of Leeds)

The literature around authenticity focuses on teaching identity and pedagogy (e.g., Kreber, 2010; Ramezanzadeh et al, 2017), how authenticity might enhance student engagement and belonging (Johnson and LaBelle, 2017) or what students value in teachers (Brookfield, 2015). However, there are limited studies that examine and compare staff and student perspectives on the value of authentic teaching. This paper discusses the results of focus groups run at the University of Leeds exploring staff and student experiences of authentic teaching in higher education settings. We conducted two staff and two student focus groups, which have been examined using a form of reflexive thematic analysis. The results of the focus groups suggest that enthusiasm for authenticity differs between staff and students, at least on the surface. Staff participants care deeply about authenticity and this concern appears to intensify as their teaching identity evolves. Whilst staff acknowledge there are boundaries to expressing their authenticity, they perceive that students value authenticity and see this as a way to enhance student education. Conversely, students' perceived authenticity differently, focusing on ensuring that 'content' was delivered. Whilst students saw some benefit to staff being able to practice authenticity, they did not want authenticity to be prioritised over the delivery of key content. Staff understanding of authenticity was understandably more complex, which is likely due to staff having reflected further on the concept (Kreber and Klampfleitner, 2013). We will make a series of recommendations for staff and students to consider, demonstrating how SoTL work can help to foster connections.

References

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Johnson, Z.D., and LaBelle, S. 2017. An examination of teacher authenticity in the college classroom, Communication Education, 66:4, 423-439, DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2017.1324167

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Assessing students' comprehension and feedback in a small group setting using the One Minute Paper (OMP) technique

Andreas Markoulakis (University of Warwick)

In this presentation, I will discuss some of the findings from utilizing the One Minute Paper (OMP) in a small group setting (seminars). OMP is an instrument to assess the level of comprehension of the students at the end of the seminars of an economics module. OMP is a teaching tool which has been applied broadly in academic fields but has received little attention in economics (Whittard et al., 2022). Nonetheless, it has been found that OMP can impact positively economic knowledge irrespective of students' ability levels (Chizmar and Ostrosky, 1998). Importantly, OMP can be a very useful tool for the tutor to collect feedback and comments from the students as well as to assess their level of comprehension of the taught material.

OMP was implemented by asking students at the end of the seminars to answer a pair of questions on the most important things they learned during the seminars and on things they have not understood or questions they might still have. The OMP was adopted during the seminars for the module EC138 (Introduction to Environmental Economics), a module which has 4 seminars, delivered every second week.

The first pair of questions was asked during seminars 1 and 3 (denoted S1, S3) and the second pair during seminars 2 and 4 (S2, S4). The OMP questions were as follows:

1st pair (S1, S3):

Q1. What was the most important thing you learned in the seminar today?

Q2. What question (if any) remains unanswered?

2nd pair (S2, S4):

Q1. Here is one thing I don't understand well, and I am hesitant to ask about it.

Q2. If you had to offer a summary for today's seminar using a couple phrases, what would it be?

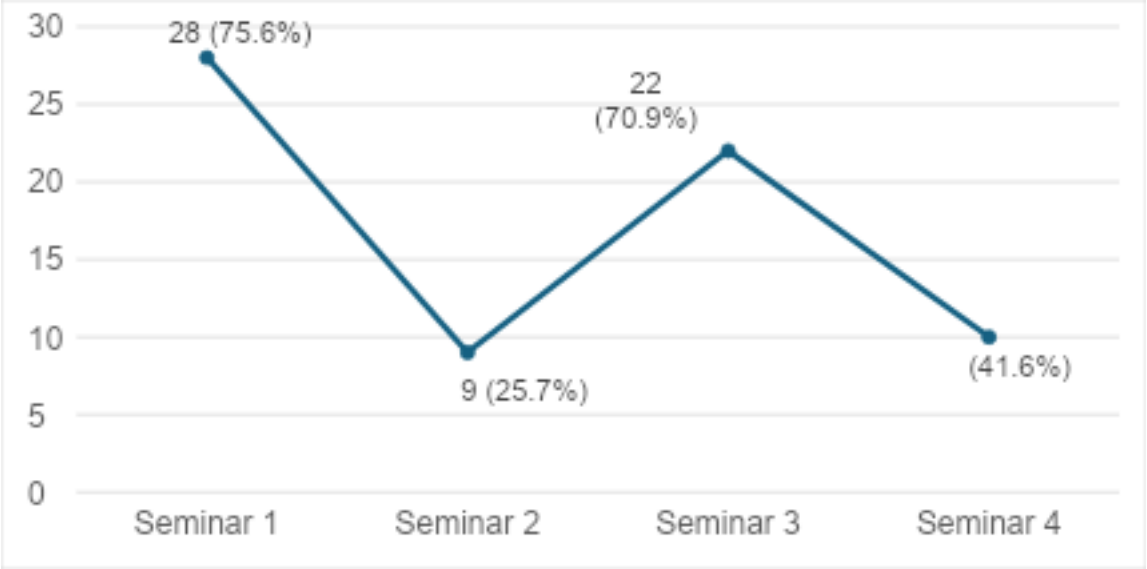
First, we examine the answers on the questions on comprehension (Q2 and Q1 respectively in the two sets).

The numbers (percentages) of the students who answer "None" or "N/A" are:

S1: 28(75.6%), S2: 9(25.7%), S3: 22(70.9%), S4: 10(41.6%), see Fig.1 below.

Note the similarities in answers between seminars 1 & 3 on one hand and Seminars 2 & 4 on the other hand (each seminar asks the same question). However, when the question explicitly asks about things that students are hesitant to ask about the numbers of "None" declines. This means that the framing of the questions can matter, this can be important especially for students who engage less in the classroom and may be more hesitant to ask questions like foreign students.

Fig. 1: "None/NA" answers in comprehension questions



Then, I examine the role of the status of the students (if a student is from the EU/UK or from overseas). The OLS regressions of the exam scores on the students' status reveal no impact of the latter (β_1 is statistically insignificant). Also, there are no gender effects (β_2 is insignificant), below is the OLS regression setup.

$$Exam\_score = \alpha + \beta_1 * status + \beta_2 * gender$$

Another question is about the connection between students' status and answering "None" in their questions about comprehension. We examine this by using a probit regression framework, "None" is a categorical variable, 0/1.

$$None = \alpha + \beta * status$$

For all seminars, the coefficients are statistically insignificant, the only exception is seminar 2 (S2) where it is shown that being an overseas student increases the probability of answering "None" in the questions on comprehension.

Finally, I examine how exam scores are associated with answering "None" in the questions on understanding for each seminar, by using a simple t-test. The hypothesis here is that students who report better comprehension during the seminars are more likely to score higher marks in the exams.

Although the results are not statistically significant, still, across all seminars, students have higher exam scores when they answer "None" (this implies high level of comprehension), this difference can be 4.2 marks for S2.

However, if I consider the final marks of each student (including the two group assessments, policy brief and presentation), the p-value for S2 is 0.05 and the mark difference increases by 4.5 marks. So, reporting better comprehension during seminars could be reflected in the final mark.

The main limitation of the findings I discussed so far is the lack of data, the module had 50 students, so the data is not very extensive, nonetheless, I continue collecting more data to examine the robustness of these findings. In the future, I intend to employ more small teaching interventions and extensions of OMP.

References

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Whittard, D., Green, E., Shaffau Shareef, M., and Ismail, I. (2022). The multidimensional model of the one-minute paper: Advancing theory through theoretical elaboration. *International Review of Economics Education*, 41, 100248.

Using adaptive reading to improve student engagement and attainment

Justine Wood, Ahmad Hassan Ahmad & Ali Choudhary (Loughborough University)

This research explores effective ways to enhance students' learning styles and support their transition to university through the use of 'adaptive reading'. We focus on this innovative approach in an attempt to increase students' attainment and comprehension, while fostering a sense of independence. Partnering with a leading publisher, we have embedded adaptive weekly reading, questions, and quizzes into introductory-level economics modules. Students reported that this system of learning was highly supportive and engaging; moreover, it enabled them to better prepare to participate in timetabled sessions (lectures/tutorials/seminars) while also focusing their revision. Student semester-long participation in the pilot exceeded 95% of the cohort and there was also a marked increase in attainment compared to previous cohorts. Providing this structure of reading and questions for students has also enabled them to engage more with independent learning, which has enhanced their attainment as evidenced by their second-year performance. Student feedback was universally positive from the first-year cohort, and the pilot has thus been expanded to other introductory economics modules for the 24/25 academic year; initial results are equally promising.

Student Absenteeism in Undergraduate Economics Education: Comparative Evidence from Lectures and Tutorials

Hiren Nisar, Carlos Cortinhas, Olha Matviiets, & Samuel Odewunmi (University of Exeter)

Introduction

Student attendance in higher education is widely recognised as a cornerstone of academic success, with decades of empirical evidence linking regular class participation to improved learning outcomes and stronger academic performance (Romer, 1993; Rodgers, 2001; Stanca, 2006). Yet across universities, attendance has steadily declined. In economics education, this trend has become particularly acute, where lecture-based delivery models increasingly compete with digital technologies, alternative study strategies, and shifting student preferences. The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these changes, with many institutions reporting enduring challenges in encouraging students back into classrooms even after the return to face-to-face teaching (Williams, 2022).

Against this backdrop, absenteeism reflects a complex interplay of **technological, pedagogical, health-related, and socioeconomic factors**. Understanding how and why students choose to attend or miss different class formats is therefore critical for shaping inclusive and effective teaching strategies in economics education.

Our research draws on survey data from 199 undergraduate economics students at a UK Russell Group university. We address three research questions:

1. **What are the primary determinants of absenteeism in economics education, and how do these differ between lectures and tutorials?**
2. **How do demographic and socioeconomic characteristics influence attendance?**
3. **What distinct value propositions do lectures and tutorials offer, and how can these insights inform curriculum design and resource allocation?**

Our contribution include:

- We provide the first comparative analysis of lecture and tutorial absenteeism in economics education.
- We uncover the role of technology—particularly recorded materials—in shaping attendance decisions.
- We highlight important demographic patterns, showing how factors such as gender, ethnicity, year of study, and employment influence attendance behaviours.

Key Findings

1.Overall Attendance Patterns

Our results reveal systematic differences between the two formats. **Most students demonstrate strong attendance habits, although tutorials consistently exhibited higher attendance rates than lectures**. For example, **66% of students** reported missing less than **25% of tutorials**, compared to **56% for lectures**. **The higher tutorial attendance is consistent with prior research highlighting their perceived interactivity and practical relevance.** This

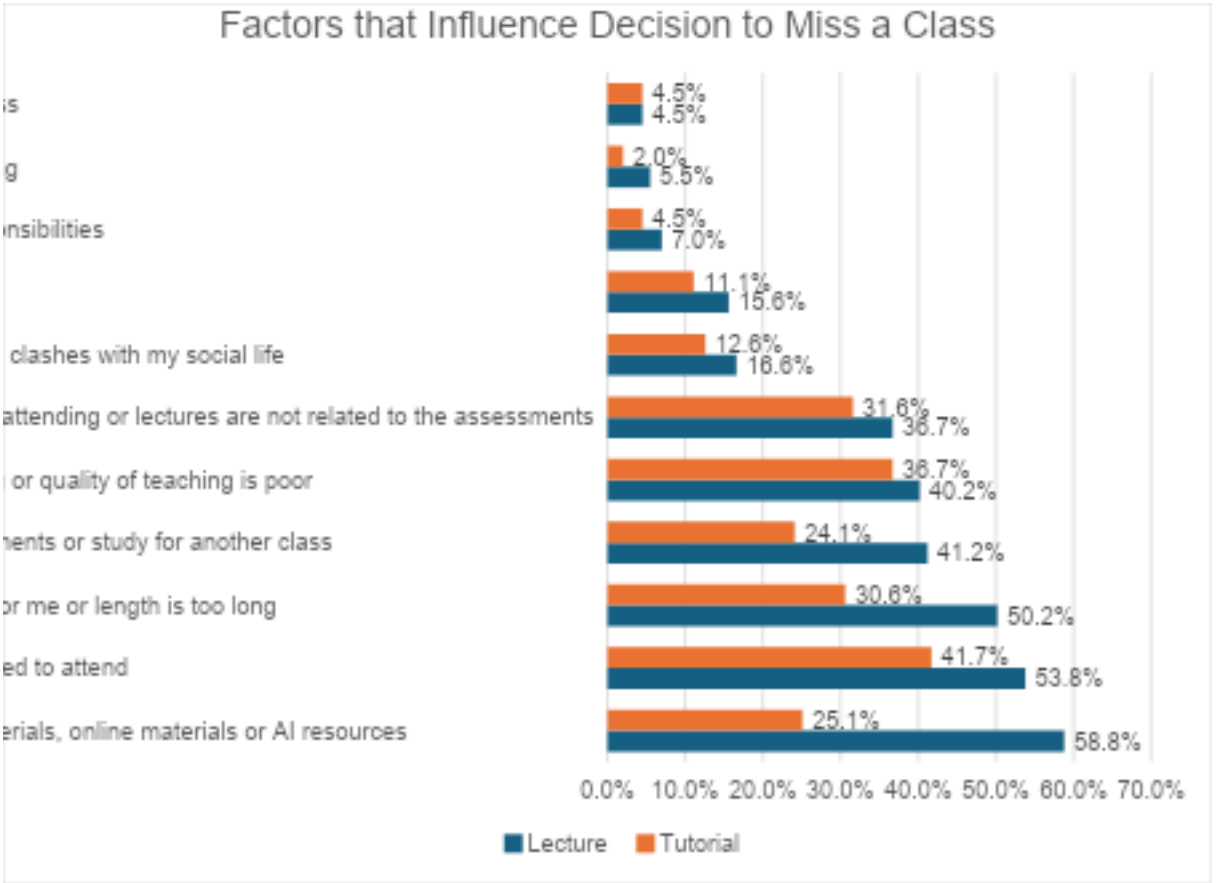
finding suggests that students make format-specific decisions, prioritising tutorials when faced with time constraints or competing pressures.

2.Drivers of Absenteeism

Analysis of reasons for missing class reveals several dominant factors.

- **Technology-Mediated Substitution:** The single strongest driver of lecture absenteeism was the **availability of recorded materials** (58.8% of respondents), compared to 25.1% for tutorials. This highlights students' perception of lectures as substitutable, whereas tutorials are seen as offering unique, interactive value.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Illness, stress, and tiredness were cited by **53.8% of students for lectures** and **41.7% for tutorials**, making wellbeing the second most influential factor. Students appear to still prioritise tutorials when facing health barriers.
- **Timetabling Constraints:** Scheduling and timing conflicts deterred **50.2% of students from lectures** and **30.6% from tutorials**. Tutorials often provide flexibility through multiple sessions, whereas lectures are fixed, limiting student choice.
- **Academic Pressures:** Competing deadlines led **41.2% to skip lectures** versus **24.1% for tutorials**, suggesting students strategically attend to meet assessment demands.

Exhibit 1. Factors Influencing Students' Decisions to Miss Lectures and Tutorials



3.Motivations to Attend

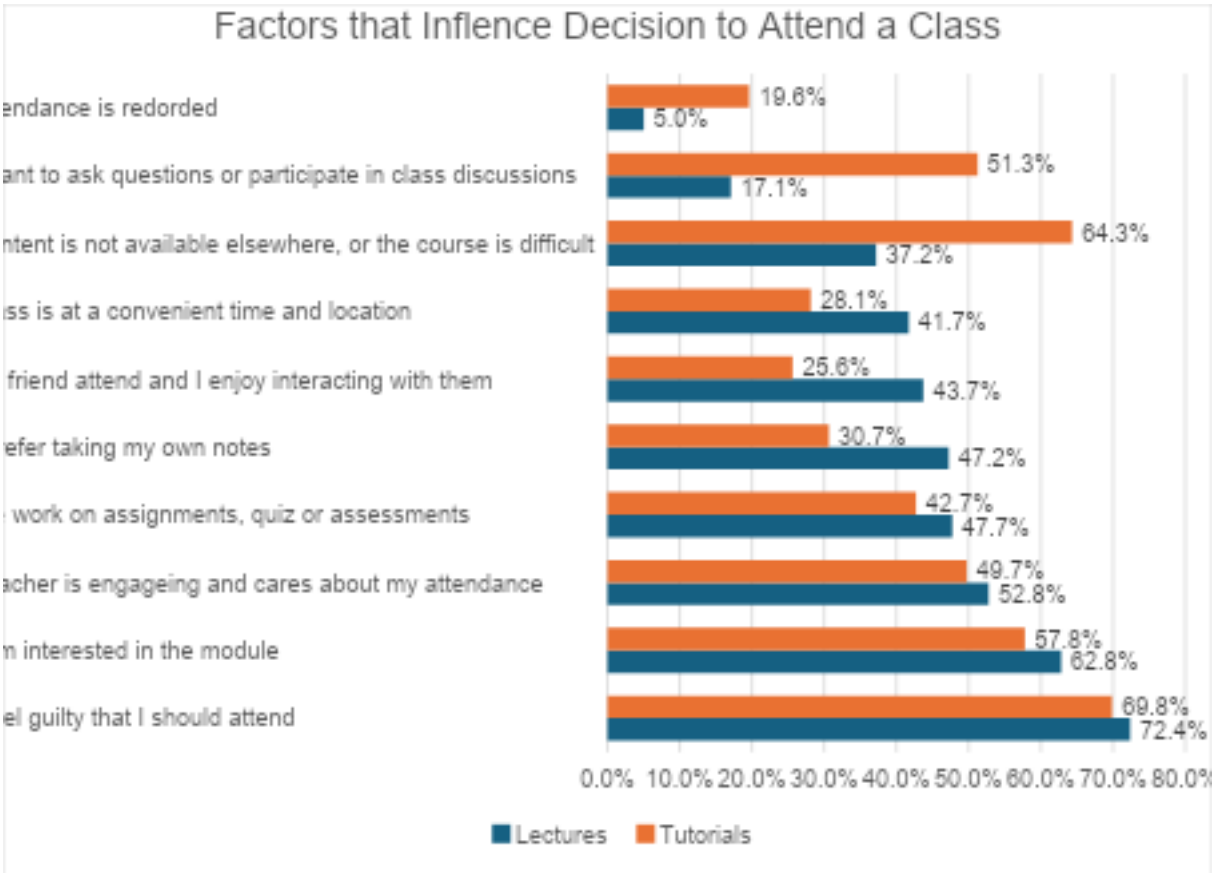
Students articulated strong positive motivations with a **sense of obligation or guilt as most widely reported driver**, reported by 72.4% for lectures and 69.8% for tutorials.

Distinct format-specific value propositions also emerged:

- **Lectures** are valued for personal learning strategies (e.g., note-taking, 47.2%) and social interactions (43.7%).
- **Tutorials** are valued for **content exclusivity** (64.3%) and interactive opportunities to ask questions (51.3%).

These findings suggest lectures and tutorials serve **complementary pedagogical functions**—lectures supporting structured knowledge delivery, and tutorials offering deeper, interactive engagement.

Exhibit 2. Factors that Students Value and Influence Their Decision to Attend Class



4.Demographic Patterns

Our subgroup analysis reveals significant variation across student populations:

- **Gender:** Female students reported higher stress-related barriers but also greater social engagement and participation.
- **Ethnicity:** Non-white students more frequently reported a reduced sense of belonging.

- **Year of Study:** Final-year students reported higher absenteeism linked to competing commitments (e.g., work, assignment deadlines).
- **Employment:** Working students reported attendance difficulties linked to commuting, time pressures, and the need to earn income.

These patterns underline the importance of **inclusive attendance policies**.

Conclusion

This study shows absenteeism is not a uniform behaviour but a **strategic, context-dependent decision**. Lectures and tutorials should not be seen as substitutes, but as complementary components of an integrated learning ecosystem. The findings have important implications for economics education. First, attendance interventions must be **format-sensitive**: lectures require strategies to counter substitution effects (e.g., blended models, active learning), while tutorials require policies to maintain small-group interactivity and flexibility. Second, institutions should **prioritise wellbeing support and timetabling reforms**, recognising that health, stress, and rigid scheduling are key barriers. Finally, demographic disparities suggest **targeted support for underrepresented groups**, ensuring a more equitable learning environment.

Through Student Eyes: Graduate Attributes in the Economics and Finance Curriculum

Kulnicha Meechaiyo, Ian Smith, & Gosia Mitka (University of St Andrews)

We use self-reported student data on graduate attributes from more than 80 modules across three semesters in the School of Economics & Finance at [institution]. The data are generated within the end of semester module evaluation questionnaires which ask students to identify the five graduate attributes which they have enhanced the most within each of their modules. Students select from a list of 20 attributes introduced by the University in 2021.

Overall, across the programmes, the results show the most frequently reported attributes are research skills and problem solving, numeracy, technical and specialist academic skills and disciplinary knowledge, organisation and written communication. However, there are variations in this pattern across levels of study and programmes both in terms of the mix of attributes and the dispersion of student responses. In particular, our results show significant differences in the attribute profile for specific modules. These departures can be accounted for chiefly in terms of (i) syllabus content (ii) learning tools (iii) forms of assessment and (iv) pedagogy.

This categorisation is used to explain the selection of otherwise rarely chosen attributes such as diversity awareness, social responsibility, digital literacy, creativity, effective team contribution, oral communication and confidence. We provide case studies to illuminate these instances.

Finally, we explore why resilience features prominently in some modules and the extent to which this is correlated with persevering after a grade setback. We also investigate those modules which experienced significant teaching and assessment innovations across two years and the impact on student reports of their graduate attributes.

Support and skills development: Key factors shaping the quality of work placement experience

Panagiotis Arsenis (University of Surrey) & Miguel Flores (National College of Ireland)

This study investigates the quality of work placement experiences by focusing on the underlying factors that influence students' satisfaction with work placements as well as their professional and academic development. While the literature has explored to a significant extent the link between work placements and academic achievement and graduate employment outcomes, there is little research on the quality of work placement experiences and how such experiences mediate the observed benefits. This study attempts to address this gap by exploring three aspects of the work placement experience: (a) the factors that drive its quality as perceived by students; (b) the differences in perceived quality with regards to gender, nationality and subject area; and (c) the mechanisms that underpin these experiences. The study's sample consists of five cohorts of undergraduate students from a wide range of disciplines who completed work placements between 2020 and 2024. These placements were optional and part of the students' courses. All students were studying at the University of Surrey, UK, and were asked to complete a survey after the end of their work placement. All the University's subject areas were covered by the survey. In particular, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) captured 34% of respondents, Social Sciences 31%, Medical Sciences 29%, and Arts and Humanities 6%. Factor analysis and structural equation modelling were employed to explore links between placement characteristics (e.g. salary and duration), support from university and employers, skills development (e.g. problem solving, communication, resilience and initiative), placement-related challenges (e.g. work adaptation and mental health issues) and the quality of work placements. The latter was captured by three outcome variables, namely, students' satisfaction with the work placement experience, the contribution of the work placement to their degree, and the contribution to their professional development. The analysis revealed that support from both university and employers plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of work placement experiences and matters for all three outcome variables. Also, skills development emerged as a key predictor of the work placement quality. Results did not show any statistically significant differences in terms of gender and nationality. However, results showed that STEM students were less satisfied with the quality of their work placements. Further analysis showed that employer support functions as a mediator for the relationship between skills development and the quality of work placements, and that this relationship is moderated by the STEM subject area in different ways. Other noteworthy results are that placement pay and offer of graduate job do not matter for the work placement quality, while mental health challenges are negatively associated with work placement satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of structured and supportive learning environments and targeted skill-building opportunities for enhancing the impact of work placements on students' academic and professional progression. The study discusses implications for the design of work placements and the programmes they are part of and the establishment of quality assurance standards to improve student learning and career readiness.

Thursday 14.55-15.40

Panel: Teaching the History of Economics (Room 1)

Jeff Powell (University of Greenwich), Mary Morgan (London School of Economics), Danielle Guizzo (University of Bristol) & Daniela Tavasci (Queen Mary University of London)

While the need to include the history of economics (HE) in the UK economics curriculum has been repeatedly called for by students, and formally recognised by the QAA subject benchmark statement on economics (2023), we have little idea about the state of its provision. This panel will discuss:

- The current state of HE: The historical trajectory of the teaching of HE; its place within the curriculum across different institutions, programmes and levels of study; and the variety of approaches currently used in HE teaching and assessment.
- The future of HE: What changes are needed in how HE is taught to ensure that we are meeting current QAA guidelines, and that HE is compelling and relevant for young economists?

Workshop: Social Media as a Pedagogical Tool: Engaging Students and Promoting Research-Led Teaching (Room 2)

Sofia Izquierdo Sanchez (University of Manchester) & William Tayler (Lancaster University)

Our workshop will introduce an innovative teaching methodology that uses social media to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. We will showcase how integrating Instagram into research-led teaching improves motivation, connects theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios, and promotes student involvement beyond traditional classroom settings.

This approach, implemented at [institution] and [institution], has shown measurable improvements in student performance, particularly among students with specific learning difficulties (SLDs). Workshop participants will explore best practices for implementing social media in their teaching and discuss the broader implications for economics education.

Practical details:

The workshop will consist of an interactive presentation, case studies, and discussion. We will need a computer and an internet connection. The workshop will cover the following topics.

1. The challenge of integrating research into undergraduate teaching and how social media offers an opportunity to bridge this gap.
2. Using social media to connect academic concepts to real-life situations through interactive content (we also have a website attached to the platform where students and educators can access case studies and a glossary of economic concepts)
3. Practical demonstration of how to create social media content and apply it to your teaching.
4. Addressing concerns about social media use in academic settings and encouraging collaborative approaches and resource-sharing.

Why is this workshop relevant? Traditional economics education often struggles with student engagement, especially in research-led teaching, this has been particularly relevant after the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings highlight that adapting teaching methods to include digital tools, such as Instagram, can significantly improve learning experiences. Our research demonstrates that social networks not only make economics more accessible but also improve academic outcomes, particularly for students requiring additional support. By participating in this workshop, educators will gain practical strategies to incorporate social media into their teaching, creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

We invite educators and researchers to join us in exploring a transformative approach to teaching economics and related disciplines. Let's reshape how we connect research with student learning!

Workshop: Beyond the Passive Chatbot: AI as Classmate, Tutor, Mentor, Simulator, and Socratic Guide in Higher Education (Room 3)

Gabriella Cagliesi (University of Sussex)

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into higher education is transforming how we teach, learn, and assess. When used purposefully, AI can go beyond simply providing answers—augmenting human teaching by stimulating discussion, encouraging critical thinking, and guiding advanced academic inquiry. In my postgraduate *Macroeconomic Analysis 2* course, I implemented a structured framework in which AI takes on distinct pedagogical roles—Classmate, Tutor, Mentor, Simulator, and Socratic Guide—each aligned to specific stages of the learning process.

In practice, this meant embedding AI into a Team-Based Learning (TBL) structure. As a *Classmate*, AI engaged students in debates, surfacing misconceptions through counterarguments. In the *Tutor* role, it explained complex concepts using analogies and diagrams, for example, simplifying the Phillips Curve into a "spring" that can stretch but resists snapping back. As a *Socratic Guide*, it asked probing questions such as, "If inflation expectations are perfectly anchored, can menu costs still create a nonlinear Phillips Curve?" Students reported that these roles clarified difficult material and deepened engagement. The external examiner commended the approach, particularly the *Simulator* role for modelling macroeconomic policy scenarios in real time and the use of AI-generated synthetic data.

This workshop builds on that practice but moves into a new applied setting by integrating AI roles with the Trade Intelligence and Negotiation Adviser (TINA) platform, a trade policy simulation tool that models the effects of tariffs, non-tariff measures, and trade facilitation changes—including knock-on effects via global value chains. Recently, TINA has been used to analyse the April–May 2025 US tariff announcements, which suggest substantial export losses for Cambodia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, and up to a 13% fall in Cambodian output from the April 2 tariffs. These results provide an authentic dataset for exploring elasticity, trade diversion, trade distortion, and nonlinear policy impacts—making them ideal for a collaborative AI-supported tutorial design exercise.

The 45-minute workshop will follow a two-stage interactive format. In the first stage, I will present the *Macroeconomic Analysis 2* case study, showing anonymised examples of

student–AI exchanges, my feedback, and reflections from students and the external examiner. This will illustrate how role-based AI integration supports engagement, scaffolds reasoning, and stimulates active learning.

In the second stage, participants will design their own AI-supported tutorial based on the TINA tariff scenario. After a short demonstration of TINA's interface and example uses of AI in Tutor and Simulator roles (e.g., explaining trade diversion vs. distortion or generating alternative tariff scenarios), participants will work in small groups on the following task:

Scenario: You are the teacher planning a tutorial in which students will use TINA to explore the April–May 2025 US tariffs. Choose two AI roles from Classmate, Tutor, Mentor, Simulator, and Socratic Guide. For each role, design a prompt that clearly states the role and context, defines the teaching objective, and specifies the desired output format.

Groups will design prompts that help students interrogate TINA's outputs, test elasticity assumptions, and explore whether tariff effects are linear or nonlinear. Selected prompts will be tested live on my custom GPT, with results compared to pre-prepared examples. This comparison will prompt discussion on prompt effectiveness, AI adaptability, and alignment with teaching goals.

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Understand how role-based AI integration can promote active, reflective learning.
- Gain familiarity with TINA as a tool for applied trade policy analysis.
- Develop and test prompts that align AI behaviour with specific teaching objectives.
- Compare their prompt designs with pre-tested examples and reflect on transferability to their own disciplines.

The workshop's design ensures sustained engagement: live demonstrations ground the activity in practice; group work requires active participation; and real-time testing makes the impact of prompt design visible. The reflection phase will address broader considerations, including equity of access, AI accuracy, and strategies to avoid over-reliance on AI-generated content.

This contribution supports the Economics Network's mission to disseminate good practice by offering a replicable framework for integrating AI into tutorials and assessments. It shows how AI can be paired with a discipline-specific simulation tool to create active, inquiry-led learning experiences that bridge theory and policy application.

Participant Preparation

To maximise the hands-on element of the workshop, participants are encouraged to:

- Bring an internet-connected laptop, tablet, or smartphone.
- Create a free ChatGPT account in advance at https://chat.openai.com (sign in with email, Google, or Microsoft).
- Ensure their device can connect to the conference Wi-Fi.
- Test that they can open a Custom GPT link (link will be provided in-session).

Those without a device will still be able to participate in group prompt-design activities and observe live demonstrations.

Embedding careers in the curriculum: evaluation of a programme level approach for Economics undergraduates

Mathilde Peron & Yaprak Tavman (University of York)

Integrating career development into academic curricula is gaining traction as a way to better prepare students for the labour market (Bridgstock et al., 2019) and reduce disparities in graduate outcomes (Flynn et al., 2022).

At the University of York, the Department of Economics, in collaboration with the Careers service and external partners, has implemented a set of initiatives aimed at embedding career-focused learning throughout the undergraduate programme. These initiatives are structured around three key themes: (1) self-awareness, discovery, and career planning; (2) work-related learning and professional skills development; (3) reflective practice and applying learning to real-world contexts.

In Year 1, students participate in York Strengths, a Careers-led programme delivered within a core module. This activity is designed to build self-awareness and increase confidence in career decision-making. In Year 2, students engage with two work-based projects: a Macroeconomics problem-based learning (PBL) task, developed in collaboration with HM Treasury; and the Econometrics “Employer Challenge”, a real-world case study designed by York Health Economics Consortium (YHEC). These activities aim to help students connect their academic learning to practical and professional contexts.

We evaluated the impact of these embedded activities to assess whether they: (1) help students connect academic concepts with future career goals; (2) support authentic and reflective assessment practices; (3) promote equity by ensuring all students, regardless of background, have access to meaningful career development and feel confident about their graduate prospects.

An anonymous online survey was distributed to all undergraduate Economics students between March and May 2025. We received 126 responses. The survey asked students about their experiences with the initiatives, their confidence in linking learning to careers, and perceptions of inclusivity in the curriculum. The evaluation took advantage of varying levels of exposure across year groups: Year 1 students had not yet participated in any initiatives; Year 2 students had completed all three activities; Year 3 students had only taken part in the Employer Challenge.

A notable finding is what we call the "employability paradox." According to national Graduate Outcomes Surveys, 94% of our students are in work or further study 15 months after graduation, and 84% report that their path aligns with their future plans. However, only 23% of our final-year students agree that the Economics curriculum prepares them well for graduate-level skills (see Figure 1). We also uncovered confidence gaps by gender and ethnicity, particularly at the start of the programme. Only 50% of non-male and non-white students reported feeling confident about their career prospects, compared to 68% of male and 64% of white students.

Despite these disparities, our evaluation suggests a positive overall impact from the embedded initiative, especially among students exposed to all three activities. Among Year 2

students, 61% said the activities helped them see how Economics connects to career options and 64% reported using these experiences in job applications and interviews (Figure 2). In contrast, only 40% of Year 3 students (who experienced just one activity) said the same, and only 33% used the activity in job applications - indicating the added value of a more comprehensive, embedded approach. However, early data suggests that non-white students may benefit less from these initiatives compared to their peers, an area requiring further investigation.

Embedding career development across multiple stages of the Economics curriculum shows promising benefits in helping students relate academic learning to their future careers, improving their confidence, and supporting more inclusive outcomes. While early results are encouraging, further data collection and qualitative insights are essential to refine and expand this work, particularly to ensure that all students benefit equally from these initiatives.

Figure 1: Students' perceptions on skills and career prospects

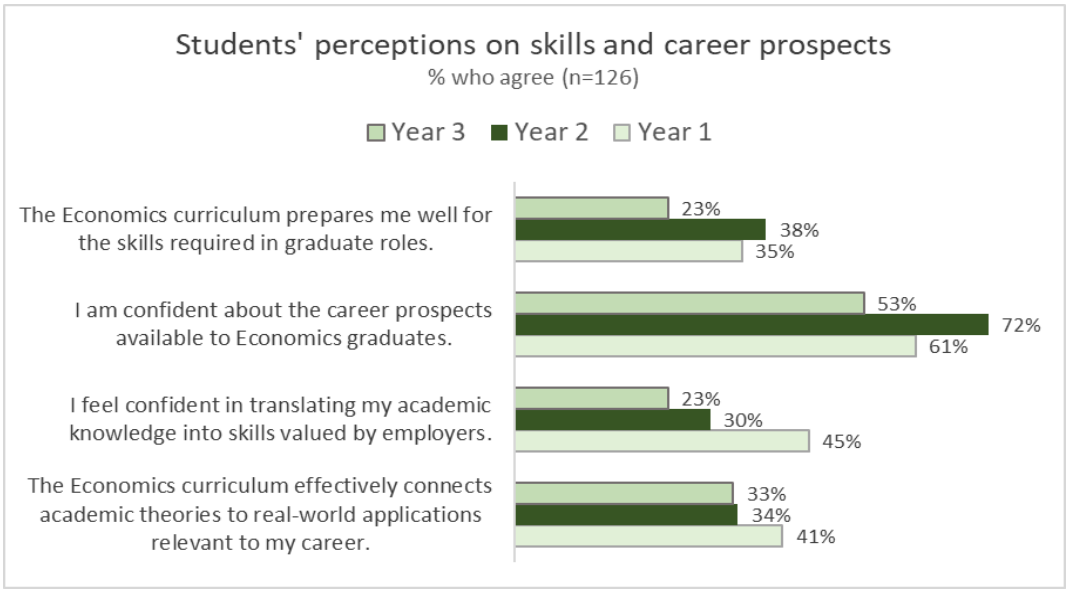
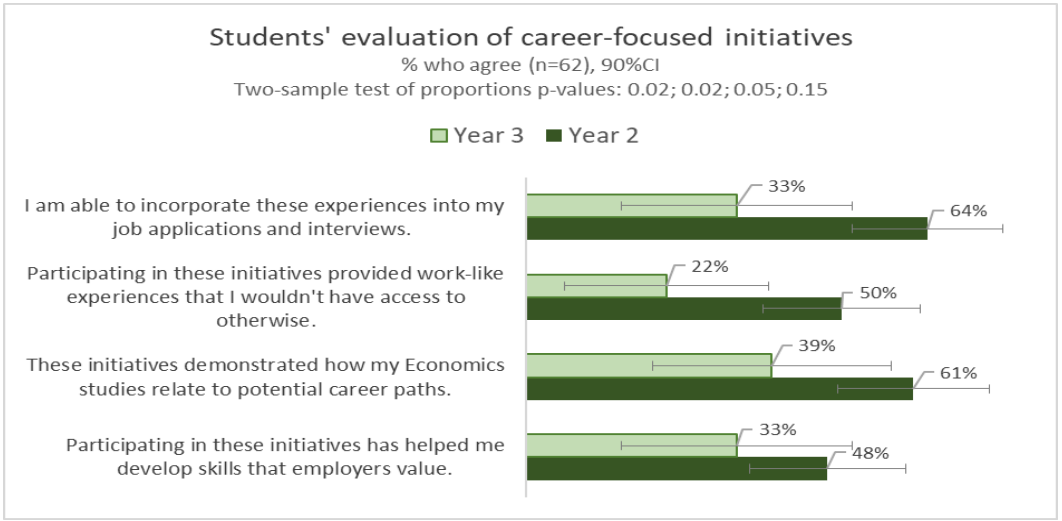


Figure 2: Students' evaluation of career-focused initiatives embedded in the curriculum



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Academic Mindset in Economics Degrees: An International Comparison

Carlos Cortinhas (University of Exeter), Jana Sadeh (University of Southampton), Douglas McKee (Cornell University), Brandon Sheridan (Elon University) & Emily Marshall (Cornell University)

Economics continues to face persistent challenges with unequal access and representation, though the specific under-represented groups vary significantly across countries. While gender and socio-economic disparities characterize the UK context, New Zealand struggles with indigenous Māori under-representation, and Pakistan faces rural-urban educational divides. Recent evidence suggests that differences in academic mindset—encompassing beliefs about relevance, belonging, and growth (RBG)—may contribute to these persistent gaps in economics education.

International studies indicate substantial cross-national variation in mindset levels, with western countries typically showing higher growth mindset beliefs than many other regions. However, most existing research draws heavily on U.S.-based samples, potentially limiting our understanding of how academic mindset operates in diverse educational and cultural contexts. This study addresses this gap by providing the first large-scale international comparison of academic mindset in economics education using harmonized measures across diverse institutional settings.

This study leveraged the international network of the Economic Education Network for Experiments (EENE) to collect data during the 2023/2024 academic year. The final dataset comprises 1,188 students and 14 instructors across 18 modules at 11 universities in eight countries: Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Both students and instructors completed pre- and post-course surveys, with students responding to nine academic mindset statements covering four key dimensions: belonging, growth mindset, self-efficacy, and relevance.

Following established methodologies, we constructed three standardized mindset indices: an overall academic mindset index combining all nine statements, a general academic mindset index based on broad academic beliefs, and an economics-specific mindset index focusing on discipline-related attitudes. Our analytical approach employed both ordinary least squares regression for aggregate measures and logistic regression for individual mindset components, controlling for demographic, pedagogical, and institutional factors while clustering standard errors at the instructor-program level.

Our longitudinal analysis revealed nuanced patterns of mindset evolution during the academic term. Students showed significant improvements in their belief that economics is accessible to everyone and marginal gains in general self-efficacy and perceived relevance of economics. However, these positive changes were counterbalanced by significant declines in economics-specific belonging, general growth mindset beliefs, and perceptions of economics' everyday relevance. These mixed results suggest that course experiences may simultaneously enhance subject-specific confidence while introducing greater realism about disciplinary challenges.

Perhaps our most concerning finding relates to systematic gender differences in academic mindset. Non-male students consistently reported lower scores across multiple dimensions, including significantly weaker economics-specific self-efficacy, reduced perceptions of economics as interesting and applicable, and lower growth mindset beliefs. Critically, these gaps not only persisted but often widened by the end of the term, with particularly pronounced effects observed in Germany and New Zealand. While belonging measures were relatively gender-neutral, the broader pattern suggests that female and non-binary students may experience economics classrooms in ways that systematically undermine their confidence and engagement.

Our international comparison revealed substantial cross-national differences in mindset patterns. German students consistently reported the lowest mindset scores across nearly all measures, while students in Finland showed marginally higher overall mindset scores. Spanish students demonstrated higher economics belonging and self-efficacy, and Finnish students reported stronger economics-specific growth mindset and perceived future relevance. These patterns suggest important contextual influences on student attitudes that extend beyond individual characteristics.

Our analysis identified several modifiable factors associated with mindset outcomes. Active learning environments showed strong positive associations with general academic mindset and overall mindset measures, supporting the effectiveness of student-centered pedagogical approaches. Intermediate-level courses were associated with more positive mindset outcomes compared to introductory courses, suggesting benefits of academic progression within the discipline. However, students at larger institutions and in later years of study tended to report lower mindset scores, pointing to potential challenges in maintaining engagement in more impersonal or advanced educational contexts.

These findings carry important implications for equity and inclusion in economics education globally. The persistence and widening of gender gaps in self-efficacy and perceived relevance represents a critical challenge for supporting diverse participation in the discipline. The positive association between active learning and mindset outcomes suggests that pedagogical interventions may help mitigate these disparities, while the substantial cross-national variation highlights the importance of contextual factors in shaping student experiences.

For policymakers and educators, our results underscore the need for targeted interventions that address both classroom practices and broader institutional cultures. The international scope of our findings suggests that challenges in economics education extend beyond any single national context, requiring coordinated efforts to develop more inclusive and effective learning environments that support all students' academic success and disciplinary engagement.

Determinants of students' engagement with programming tools in economics education and their usefulness

Ahmed Pirzada & Sophie Lythreatis (University of Bristol)

When asked, at the start of the term, 85% of students (N=70+) in a second-year economics unit at [institution] expressed interest in learning Python.

Three weeks later, 70% had engaged with at least part of the Python-based course materials. To sustain this engagement, we integrated Python in lectures and embedded coding exercises in problem sets which students were expected to cover in their small group classes. However, while embedding programming skills in curriculum is desirable for employability, it requires considerable effort both from the instructor (developing and delivering the material) and from the students (spending time engaging with it). The challenge is particularly daunting since most students have no prior experience with programming and, moreover, programming skills on their own are not a part of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) on a typical unit. It is therefore important to understand the intensity with which students engage with the relevant material and whether they find it useful in the context of meeting the ILOs for the unit.

We take a mixed-methods approach to answer these questions. First, we design a survey to assess students' engagement with Python materials and its perceived usefulness. The survey also collects data on student characteristics, academic performance, and academic ambitions to better understand differences in engagement. Later, we plan to match survey responses to students' actual academic performance on the unit and assess if differences in engagement and perceived usefulness also reflect in actual grades. Second, we conduct focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, the effectiveness of pedagogical choices, and the broader value of these activities beyond the course. The findings from this project will help refine our approach and inform best practices for integrating programming into economics education.

Leveraging Large Language Models to learn research skills in an Intermediate Macroeconomic course

Marion Prat (University of Bristol)

This study analyses the integration of easily accessible LLMs within the teaching delivery of a large Intermediate Macroeconomics course. It seeks to understand i) how the use of LLMs in the design of learning materials can be leveraged to promote learning and ii) through which mechanisms this technology can improve the learning process using the cognitive challenges framework (Chew and Cerbin, 2021).

This course is assessed through coursework assessments requiring students to analyse real world macroeconomic events by selecting and performing appropriate data analysis and model simulations.

Students are introduced to techniques leveraging the usefulness of large language models in two different interventions. First, exercises complementing standard learning material (Excel

and Macro) explicitly require students to use a chatbot to generate illustrative examples of key concepts and create MCQs to test their understanding. Second, students are shown how to use LLMs (using specific scripts or prompts) as a guide during the completion of a research project, an exercise which is relatively new to them, requires them to ask questions rather than answer them, apply their knowledge and develop new critical research skills.

A mixed method approach (Bosshardt et al., 2014) is employed to address the research questions. The effectiveness of the intervention will be analysed using questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the course as well as in focus groups.

The UK Economics Degree in 2025 and its Future

Annika Johnson (University of Bristol) & Ashley Lait (The Economics Network)

University economics teaching has undergone a number of significant changes in recent decades: Global financial crises, Covid-19, artificial intelligence, the rise of data science, increasing resource pressures and changing regulatory environments have required new curricula, delivery modes and assessment practices. To understand how these changes have affected the UK economics degree landscape, this project provides a comprehensive overview of UK economics degrees and teaching in 2025.

This project will consist of two stages. Firstly, we conduct a review of all the information made publicly available by universities. We go beyond past studies (for example Kozvik & Johnson (2017), Jatteau & Egerer (2023) and Monteiro and Lopez (2007)) to not only compare course modules or texts, but also the variety of programmes, entry requirements, assessments methods and industry placements across all UK universities. Secondly, we will conduct a national survey of academics involved in the teaching of economics degrees to understand reasons behind current provision and how they expect degrees to change over coming decades (for example, choice of programming languages, the role of external examiners, class sizes and the importance of dissertations).

In combination, these sections will enable us to provide an informative snapshot of current UK economics degrees and how our students are being taught, which can be used to contextualise future economics education.

How is the role of teaching-focused academics evolving in UK Economics Departments?

Cloda Jenkins (Imperial College), Christian Spielmann (University of Bristol), Fabio Aricò (University of East Anglia), Alvin Birdi (University of Bristol), Caroline Elliott (University of Warwick) & Ashley Lait (The Economics Network)

Research conducted in 2023 (Arico et al, 2024) found that teaching-focused academics made up a substantial proportion of academics in UK economics departments, contributing significantly to teaching and administrative duties whilst also spending time on scholarship. The mixed methods approach, using a large scale survey and interviews, provided insight into who the UK teaching-track economists are, what they do and how they perceived their contribution was valued. This paper provides an update to this research, using data from a 2025 Pulse Survey conducted in Spring 2025. The aim is to track the positioning and perceptions of teaching-focused academics in economics. Using data from 2023 and 2025 we consider three questions:

1. How do teaching-focused academics contribute to economics departments and how has this changed, if at all?
2. How do role holders perceive their jobs and how they are valued? Has there been any change in these perceptions?
3. What do teaching-focused economists see are the particular benefits and challenges which come with the role description and have these changed?

For all questions we will consider whether the answers vary by type of university, by gender and by seniority.

The 2025 Pulse Survey will be open from mid-March to mid-April. Analysis on the survey results, including comparisons with the previous research, will be conducted in the summer. The DEE conference provides the perfect opportunity to share the findings and get feedback from participants.

Changes in Economics Assessment Design: Responses to AI and the Pandemic

Caroline Elliott (University of Warwick) & Fabio Aricò (University of East Anglia)

The migration to online teaching and assessment during the pandemic instigated a movement away from in-person examinations. Previous research highlighted the use of more authentic economics assessments, Arico et al. (2022); Birdi et al. (2023). However, Birdi et al. (2023) raise the concern of increased opportunities for student cheating when in-person examinations are not used. Concerns relating to academic integrity have only increased since generative AI tools became widely accessible.

Our paper reports on the results of a recent survey of academics across UK economics departments, encompassing departmental assessment design responses that address (i) the pandemic period, (ii) the post-pandemic return to in-person teaching, and then (iii) the widespread availability of generative AI tools. A representative sample of responses were received from departments across the UK, including departments in Post-92, Pre-92 Russell Group and non-Russell Group institutions.

Survey evidence will be presented, indicating a movement away from in-person examinations in response to the global pandemic. However, in light of the availability of generative AI tools, the evidence also shows that some departments have begun to return to in-person examinations. Results pertaining to departmental and institutional development of AI in assessment policies will also be reported, portraying a complex picture of different practices.

The research highlights the timeliness of consideration of economics assessment design, and the importance of ensuring a mix of assessment types, including more consideration to authentic assessment tasks, so that we can be confident of economics graduates' subject knowledge and transferrable skills.

How are students using GenAI and how can we support them?

Cloda Jenkins, Nai Li, Mahammad Ahmadli, Ethan Hsieh, Ece Goktan, Annabelle Osborne Simpson, Dhruv Syam & Iris Yalcin (Imperial College London)

The integration of GenAI tools in higher education is reshaping how students learn and how academics teach, bringing both opportunities and challenges. Despite growing adoption, there are still gaps in our understanding of how students perceive and use these technologies in practice. While sector-wide surveys (e.g., Jisc, HEPI) provide broad insights into usage patterns, few studies explore how practices and attitudes change over time within a single institution across programme levels.

This paper presents preliminary findings from two consecutive Student Shapers projects (2023/24 and 2024/25) at Imperial Business School. Student Shapers is part of Imperial's Learning and Teaching Strategy and supports student–staff partnerships to enhance curricula, develop innovative teaching methods, and improve the student experience. In this project, undergraduate and postgraduate students worked in partnership with staff to explore

how GenAI is being used in learning and teaching, the challenges students face, and the support they find most helpful. The student-led approach of the project created space for honest and open responses, especially on sensitive topics such as academic integrity.

A mixed-methods approach was used. An online survey was distributed to all students in the Business School. 170 responses received in 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively, covering undergraduate, MSc, MBA, and doctoral programmes. The survey core questions remained consistent across both years to track changes and enable comparisons. Four focus groups were also conducted each year to complement the survey.

Over the two years, there has been a significant increase in both the frequency and depth of GenAI use. In 2024/25, over 40% of respondents reported using it daily, compared with around 25% the previous year. ChatGPT remains the most popular tool, but students are increasingly turning to alternatives such as DeepSeek and Perplexity for specific tasks. Use has become more selective and pragmatic, with common applications including clarifying complex concepts, summarising readings, generating ideas, and seeking feedback on draft work. A growing number of students also reported using GenAI for coding, data analysis, and image creation. Students emphasise that GenAI is now embedded not only in their academic studies but also in wider aspects of their day-to-day lives.

Self-reported confidence in using GenAI tools has grown significantly. Barriers reported in the previous year such as uncertainty around access or which tools to use, have been replaced by more specific usage concerns. These include writing effective prompts, referencing AI-generated content accurately, assessing its accuracy, and managing hallucinations. Plagiarism concerns have also declined. However, the proportion of non-users describing GenAI as “not useful” has risen sharply from 17% to 68%. Some students also reported concerns about ethics and sustainability. This suggests that there is growing confidence but students are developing a more informed understanding of the capabilities and limitations of GenAI.

Students reported that they typically develop their GenAI skills informally, through trial and error, peer conversations, and online resources. Across both years, students consistently expressed a preference for embedding AI-related skill development within their discipline-specific modules rather than through standalone provision. While many continue to see value in integrating GenAI into teaching and learning, overall enthusiasm has declined since last year. More students now adopt a neutral position, highlighting that while GenAI can support their learning, it cannot replace human engagement, particularly the personalised feedback they receive from academic staff.

Overall, the findings suggest that GenAI has reached a point of “critical mass” in students’ academic practice. Its use has become routine and more strategic, but confidence does not necessarily lead to deeper learning. Staff observations suggest that AI-assisted coursework can appear polished, but this sometimes masks weaker independent understanding and could lead to poor exam results or in-class performance. It also appears that students are transitioning beyond the initial excitement of experimentation towards a more thoughtful and selective use based on a clearer understanding of both the benefits and the risks associated with GenAI.

The implications for educators are considerable. There is a clear need to go beyond generic messages about academic integrity and instead offer practical, discipline-specific guidance

on responsible and effective use of GenAI and maintaining academic integrity. Students should be provided opportunities to practise using GenAI in authentic learning contexts, supported by equitable access to key GenAI platforms. Staff also need professional development to ensure a consistent and well-informed approach across programmes. In economics and related disciplines, the challenge lies in embracing the potential of GenAI while continuing to support students in developing critical, ethical, and independent thinking skills that are critical for academic success and future employment.

A CTaLE-Stone Centre-Royal Economics Society Report: Rethinking Economics Assessments in the Age of Generative AI

Ramin Nassehi, Silvia Dal Bianco, and Parama Chaudhury (University College London), Carlos Cortinhas (University of Exeter), Denise Hawkes (Kings College London), Cloda Jenkins (Imperial College), Antonio Mele (London School of Economics), Stefania Paredes Fuentes (University of Southampton)

Generative AI (Gen AL) has fundamentally disrupted higher education. For economics educators and students, this shift presents urgent challenges and new opportunities. Universities must now rethink how they teach and assess to ensure graduates remain employable and economics degrees retain their value in an GenAI-transformed world. This research project provides a snapshot of how UK economics degrees are responding to this transformation and outlines next steps. Our work addresses a pressing need: ensuring economics graduates are prepared for evolving labour market demands and that degree programmes remain credible and relevant.

The GenAI-skills needed and educational responses

Professional economists: Our pulse survey of professional economists reveals that GenAI is now embedded across all levels of knowledge work. Economists use AI tools for tasks ranging from routine (e.g. coding and summarising) to high-level (e.g. data analysis and idea generation). This points to a shift in the skillset required of graduates: in addition to existing expectations, they now need to collaborate effectively with AI, integrating it across the entire workflow.

Academics: Our pulse survey of economics lecturers and a national workshop provide a bottom-up view of how assessment practices are evolving. While UK institutions show more structured efforts toward GenAI integration than their international counterparts, concerns persist across all contexts—particularly regarding academic integrity, inclusivity, and institutional support. We observe a range of innovations at module level, often led by individual lecturers, but rarely embedded at the programme level.

Universities: Our top-down analysis of the institutional context shows that policy vagueness leaves staff and students in a vacuum. Uncertainty about what counts as enforceable rules versus general guidance limits experimentation. Academics are unsure how far they can adapt assessments without clear institutional direction. There is a growing need for both

university-wide and discipline-specific guidance, along with examples of good practice to support change.

Three Objectives for Economics Education in a GenAI World

Drawing together these perspectives, we identify three core objectives for adapting economics education in the age of GenAI:

1. **Protect Academic Value** – Degree classifications must continue to credibly signal knowledge and skills to employers.
2. **Develop Essential Skills** – Curricula must equip students with the capabilities needed to work alongside AI, including collaboration and critical engagement.
3. **Support Adaptation** – Both staff and students need structured support to engage with GenAI responsibly and effectively.

Assessment is central to all three objectives. It links curriculum design to learning outcomes and signals what we value in student achievement.

Recommendations

- **Sector-Level Leadership**: The Committee of Heads of University Departments of Economics (CHUDE) should endorse the need for change to ensure we retain the value of our degrees, helping departments influence institutional discussions. Proactive leadership from CHUDE—representing one of the largest subject areas in UK higher education—could help coordinate a unified and credible sector-wide response that underscores the continuing value of university degrees.
- **Discipline-Specific Guidance**: When institutional policies are unclear and leave decisions to individual departments or faculties, sector-wide guidance tailored to the discipline of economics is needed. This support could be coordinated by the Royal Economic Society.
- **Practice Sharing and Co-Creation**: Focus should shift from problem-spotting to solution-building. Academics would benefit from shared case studies and co-created assessment strategies.
- **Programme-Level Approaches:** Heads of Department and Programme Directors must recognise the value of mixed assessment methods within an Economics degree to meet different objectives and learning outcomes. This includes both GenAI-free assessments and GenAI-enabled assessments.
- **Balanced Assessment Approaches:** While mixed methods will include exams as part of GenAI-free assessments, we must ensure that 100% exams do not become the default option, or we will lose significant progress made in diversifying assessment for skill development and inclusivity.
- **Ethical Integration:** Ethical use of AI should become a central topic in economics curricula. Students must learn not only how to use AI tools but also how to decide when not to use them.

- **Staff and Student Support:** Successful GenAI integration requires staff training on ethical use, teaching practice, and assessment design. With proper funding, networks like the Economics Network, CTaLE, and regional bodies can deliver this. Students also need structured support to study effectively with GenAI, supported by resources co-created with initiatives such as Discover Economics.

We're writing what? A review of published evaluations of interventions in economics classrooms

Jana Sadeh (University of Southampton) & Annika Johnson (University of Bristol)

What we publish in economics education journals matters. Economics educators invest significant time and effort into developing classroom innovations to enhance student outcomes and experience. When these interventions are documented and shared through journal publications, the entire community benefits and so economics education journals play a crucial role in disseminating best practice. In addition, publishing can have important career implications. especially in the UK (Arico et al, 2024). This paper summarises what scholarly research is produced, categorises several dimensions of research design, and identifies key barriers to improving the quality and diversity of economics scholarship research.

Starting with recent scholarship work published in IREE, JEE and JET, we examine how our disciplinary norms are influencing our scholarship output by considering the choice of dependent variables education interventions target, the experimental methodology applied to test interventions and the statistical methodology applied to evaluate impact. Our preliminary findings indicate that journal articles focus on grades as the primary outcome variable, there is a dominance of research based on US programmes, there is a variable approach to reporting standards (sample size, incentives provided) and, worryingly, a frequent omission of discussions on research ethics. This is interesting from a UK perspective where other metrics such as NSS outcomes, TEF metrics and completion rates may be equally, if not more, important for economics departments. This is the first stage in a wider project aiming to make the practice of publishing in economics journals more accessible to academics in early career stages.

Women into Studying Economics (WiSE): Understanding Gender Imbalances in Economics Education

Peter Hughes, Bianca Orsi, Juliane Scheffel & Lucy Munro (University of Leeds)

Despite ongoing efforts to increase diversity in economics, significant gender imbalances persist in student uptake. The Women into Studying Economics (WiSE) project explores the underlying perceptions and barriers that shape these trends. Based on survey and focus group data from Year 9 and 10 students from various schools around North England, our findings suggest that while maths self-efficacy plays an important role in shaping students' confidence and interest in economics, it does not fully explain the gender gap. Both girls and boys tend to associate economics with finance, wealth accumulation, and self-interest—seeing it as a subject dominated by "alpha males" who are confident, ambitious, and driven by financial success. These perceptions reinforce the idea that economics is a field suited for powerful, business-oriented individuals rather than those with diverse career aspirations. For many girls, this image does not align with their life goals, making them less likely to see economics as a relevant or appealing choice. These insights highlight the need for reframing how economics is presented in schools, challenging

stereotypes, and showcasing its broader societal impact to encourage more diverse participation.

What determines the sense of belonging of economics students to their university?

Karishma Patel & Robert Riegler (Aston University)

There is a wealth of evidence that demonstrates that fostering belonging can boost students' academic confidence, well-being and overall student success (e.g. Nash et al., 2020). Additionally, while the National Student Survey (NSS) no longer includes direct questions on belonging, WonkHE (2023) suggests belonging may influence aspects of the student experience captured in the NSS, that are seemingly unrelated to belonging including, for example, perceptions of assessment and fairness of marking. It has therefore been widely recognised that cultivating a sense of belonging and community is a ‘strategic necessity’ (AdvanceHE, 2024), and thus our project seeks to address this topic.

Understanding the determinants of belonging is crucial for assessing its impact and shaping initiatives to enhance the student experience. Therefore, our study explores (i) the current state of feelings of belonging among economics students at a Midlands University and (ii) how it is affected by students’ demographics and perceptions of their relationships with peers and staff. To measure students’ sense of belonging and variables that contribute to it, we collected data from a sample of 205 students across first, second and final year, using a survey distributed during the first week of the academic year. The questionnaire design and variables selection followed the well-established Imperial College London ‘sense of belonging scale’.

Our results suggest that while around 50% of students feel a strong sense of belonging, the other 50% have a sense of belonging that is relatively low. Undertaking descriptive and regression analysis, we found that demographic variables, such as ethnicity, gender and year of study have relatively small and statistically insignificant impacts on students’ sense of belonging. Instead, the main drivers found were students’ feelings of connectedness to staff and the level of respect shown by other students. This is in-line with existing evidence from Pearson and WonkHE (2022) and AdvanceHE’s (2023) ‘Student Needs Framework’, which highlight the importance of peer relationships and meaningful staff connections, respectively.

One way to foster these connections and strengthen peer relationships is through extracurricular activities. Engagement in such activities has been linked to students reporting a stronger sense of belonging (WonkHE, 2024). Thus, we were also interested in student’s intentions to participate in various types of extracurricular activities and events. While it might be intuitive that students would be inclined to attend academic events, we were equally interested in exploring whether there was an appetite for engagement in staff/student social events as well. Our analysis of the survey results indicates that the proportion of students who expressed interest in attending staff/ student social events declined as students progress through their studies – 73.5% in the first year, 68.5% in the second year and 58.3% in the final year. Notably, for second and final year students, a larger proportion expressed a preference for attending staff/ student academic events over staff/ student social events. When students across all year groups were asked to explain their reasons, several key themes emerged within and across the different year groups. While

‘networking’ was a common theme of motivation across students from all cohorts, first-year students frequently mentioned ‘student experience’ and ‘getting to know more people’, but these priorities did not seem to appear as frequently for second and final year students.

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Using an Interactive Class Experiment to Improve the Teaching of Mixed Strategies

Chris Wilson (Loughborough University) & Matthew Olczak (Aston University)

A fundamental concept in game theory is a mixed strategy equilibrium (MSE) in which players randomize over their actions. This can be used to analyse a wide range of issues such as R+D, crime, lobbying, marketing, auditing, and tendering. However, students often find the concept obscure and struggle with its intuition. As such, typical teaching approaches and the associated pedagogic literature simplify to a discrete 2x2 setting, and often focus on sporting contexts. These restrictions constrain students' understanding of MSE and limit its application across richer economic contexts.

To help, we present a novel interactive approach to teach MSE. Our approach involves a fun class experiment based around an all-pay auction that we developed using the online platform, ClassEx. It offers several benefits. First, it allows students to gain an intuitive, first-hand experience of MSE before they study the concept more formally. Second, it helps extend students' understanding by introducing the more complex setting of a continuous strategy space. Third, by doing so, it opens up a wider range of economic applications with richer insights, such as sales pricing. Fourth, by using different treatments, the experiment also demonstrates the nuanced impact of increases in the number of players within MSE.

In the session, we will detail the design of our approach and demonstrate the benefits of delivering it through an online platform. We will allow the audience to participate in the class experiment and show how students typically behave within the game. We will also provide survey evidence suggesting that the approach enhances students' understanding and makes the topic more interesting. Finally, we will briefly offer some practical tips for instructors to create and run their own experiments in ClassEx.

Lucas Islands Game in Intermediate Macroeconomics

Tatiana Kirsanova (University of Glasgow), Nigar Hashimzade (Brunel University London) & Oleg Kirsanov (University of Glasgow)

This paper demonstrates how Hazlett's (1996) adaptation of the Lucas Islands model can be integrated into an intermediate macroeconomics course to enhance students' learning. In the classroom game, students act as workers making labour supply decisions under imperfect information about the aggregate price level, thus generating real-time data on their forecasts and labour choices. Our main innovation is a structured post-game lecture that uses these data to illustrate how individual price-expectation errors give rise to a short-run supply relationship, mirroring the Lucas supply curve.

The instructor can use the data analysis results to show students how theoretical predictions can be tested empirically, bridging abstract concepts and real-world data. Our pre- and post-game surveys of the students indicate that this interactive approach increases their confidence in macroeconomic modelling and deepens their understanding of theory. We argue that combining a classroom game with a data-driven follow-up discussion offers

educators an effective way to enhance students' engagement with theoretical and empirical aspects of macroeconomics.

Punish or perish? Strategic thinking in a commons game

Maria Psyllou (Imperial College London) & Atisha Ghosh (University of Warwick)

Classroom games have become increasingly popular due to their ability to create a cohesive and enjoyable learning environment in diverse classrooms enhancing student's participation and comprehension. They also help to enhance student understanding through experiential learning, allowing participants to engage with abstract concepts in a dynamic and memorable way. In this study, we explore strategic decision-making in a Tragedy of the Commons game with punishment, implemented via ClassEx across four cohorts in two universities. The objective is to examine how students with different prior economic knowledge approach a resource allocation problem, while also analysing the balance between cooperation and private incentives.

The game was played over six rounds, with students acting as resource users managing a shared pool. Punishment mechanisms allowed participants to penalise defectors at a personal cost. In each timed round, participants decided how much resources to extract and whether to punish others who extracted more. Additionally, to complement the behavioural data generated during the classroom experiment and to better understand students' motivations, strategic thinking, and emotional responses, we designed and administered a short post-game questionnaire. For reasons of practicality and timing, we limited the questionnaire to two modules with smaller cohort sizes. This approach aligns with pedagogical literature emphasising the importance of structured debriefing to consolidate learning (Guest, 2015). The open-ended nature of the questionnaire enabled us to explore students' reflections on fairness, reciprocity, punishment, and the social dynamics of decision-making, offering a richer interpretation of the observed behavioural outcomes.

Our results indicate that participants with prior economics knowledge demonstrated more strategic behaviour, leading to higher cooperation, compared to those without. These students were more likely to anticipate others' behaviour, consider the consequences of their own actions in future rounds, and use punishment in a calculated, rather than reactive, way. Consistent with experimental literature on finitely repeated games, we observe cooperation in intermediate rounds in the decision making of two of the cohorts, but such cooperation declined in the final rounds. This is primarily because in the penultimate round, a player knows that the final period is the end of the world, and hence depleting the entire resource of the pond will have no negative consequences for their private payoff.

In general, decision times to extract resources and punish showed a decreasing trend over successive rounds, suggesting learning effects under time pressure. However, we observe quite a bit of variability when comparing across cohorts, despite such decision making, in general, being quite quick.

Questionnaire feedback suggests that students found the game engaging and valuable for understanding strategic decision-making under time constraints. Further, the responses provided rich insights into students' strategic thinking, emotional engagement, and reflections on decision-making within the game. Fairness, reciprocity, strategic decision making, self-awareness was some of the broader themes derived from answers to the questions.

These findings reinforce the value of experiential learning, strengthening students' ability to engage with economic concepts through real-life examples, that may either support or contradict established theories. By combining behavioural data with student reflections, we gained a fuller picture of the learning process. When supported by structured reflection, games like this can help students understand economic theory more deeply and think in more critical and ethical ways. This highlights their value in economics education as tools for inclusive and meaningful learning.

Student Attitudes and Behavioural Responses to Online versus In-Person Examinations: Evidence from a UK University in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Era

Carlos Cortinhas, Martha Omolo & Olayinka Oyekola (University of Exeter)

This paper investigates how students perceive and respond to online versus in-person examinations in the context of post-pandemic higher education and the growing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Drawing on primary survey data from 763 students at the University of Exeter, we explore how exam-related attitudes, preferences, and behaviours vary across demographic, socioeconomic, and academic lines. The findings offer timely insights into student experiences and concerns around examination modalities, at a time when universities are under pressure to adopt flexible, inclusive, and academically rigorous exam practices.

Although some literature suggests broad support for online exams due to their convenience and accessibility, our results challenge the idea of a universal student preference. We find substantial heterogeneity in attitudes, with significant variation by gender, academic discipline, level of study, performance, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Female students and those in non-STEM fields express stronger support for online examinations, highlighting perceived benefits such as reduced test anxiety and greater accessibility. In contrast, male students, those in STEM or economics, and students with first-class degrees tend to be more sceptical of online exams, citing concerns about fairness, integrity, and preparation quality.

Multivariate regression analysis reinforces these findings. Gender is one of the most consistent predictors across outcomes: male students are significantly more likely to perceive online exams as less fair, prepare less for them, and believe in-person exams better reflect their performance. Ethnic minority students and international students are more likely to view online exams as beneficial for their respective groups, while white British students express greater concerns about misconduct and fairness. Students with more highly educated parents are also more sceptical about the fairness and inclusivity of online assessments, and less likely to report witnessing misconduct, suggesting differences in exposure to or perceptions of academic integrity.

Students' level of study further shapes their views: first- and second-year undergraduates are more likely to perceive online exams as unfair and integrity-compromising, and less likely to view them as beneficial for minority or high-achieving peers. Interestingly, postgraduate and final-year students show more neutral or mixed responses, suggesting greater experience with varied assessment formats may temper strong preferences. Moreover, students in STEM and economics fields, particularly those with strong academic records, express significant reservations about online exams, reinforcing concerns raised by professional bodies like the Royal Economic Society about the impact of online assessments on core disciplinary training.

Our study also examines perceptions of integrity and academic misconduct, a central issue in the debate over online examinations. While many students express concern about cheating and the role of resource access in undermining fairness, reports of personally

witnessing misconduct vary significantly across groups. For example, male students and non-native English speakers report higher rates of observed cheating, while students from lower-income backgrounds and those receiving additional financial support report less exposure to misconduct. These patterns suggest that both structural inequalities and subjective experiences shape students' perceptions of the legitimacy and effectiveness of different examination modalities.

Importantly, this research is situated in the context of a rapidly changing technological landscape, where tools like ChatGPT have blurred the boundaries of academic support and misconduct. While generative AI offers potential benefits for learning, it also heightens concerns about non-invigilated assessments. However, few students in our sample explicitly attribute their views to AI, suggesting that institutional responses may still be catching up to student realities. Our findings therefore highlight a need for further investigation into how generative AI is influencing student preparation, confidence, and engagement across different examination modalities.

This study contributes to a growing but fragmented literature on student preferences, performance, and integrity in online versus in-person assessments. Unlike many prior studies, it uses institution-wide data across all disciplines, offering a more comprehensive view of student diversity and attitudes in a UK context. While the survey is limited to a single institution, the demographic and disciplinary breadth of the sample enhances its relevance to broader debates about examination policy in higher education.

We conclude that no single examination modality will suit all students equally. Rather than defaulting to one mode or another, universities must design flexible, inclusive, and context-sensitive assessment strategies. This means addressing structural inequalities, building academic integrity into course design, and acknowledging the diverse needs and experiences of students. As generative AI reshapes higher education, institutions must strike a balance between technological innovation, pedagogical robustness, and fairness. Our findings offer empirical evidence to support that balancing act and underscore the value of student-centred assessment reform.

Assessing Assessment: The Role of Institutional Data in Understanding Awarding Gaps

Gabriella Cagliesi & Valeria Terrones Rodriguez (University of Sussex)

This study forms part of the QAA-funded Collaborative Enhancement Project "*Using Institutional Data to Address the Causes of Awarding Gaps*" (2024–25) and focuses on the Department of Economics. It investigates how assessment formats and changes, and student characteristics shaped awarding gaps across pre-pandemic (2018/19), pandemic emergency online (2020/21), and post-pandemic mature online (2022/23) contexts. Using granular module-level institutional data on UK domiciled students , we employ advanced modelling to identify both persistent and newly emerging forms of disadvantage.

We adopt a stepwise analytical framework, beginning from year-by-year analysis to a pooled approach, which forms the basis of the results presented here. We use a multilevel mixed-effects model with student fixed effects to capture overarching structural drivers of inequality, controlling for unobserved, time-invariant individual differences. This isolates the effects of assessment format, timing, and subject area, distinguishing between "in-term" and

"out-of-term" high-stakes assessments. Additional analyses (distributional quantile regressions, progression-level breakdowns, assessment-specific models) examine inequalities across the performance spectrum and within subcategories of coursework and final examinations. The dataset covers all Economics Department undergraduate modules, core and optional, with detailed information on student demographics, institutional factors, and assessment characteristics.

The pooled analysis reveals three clear findings. First, ethnic awarding gaps remain deeply embedded, despite the temporary narrowing observed during the emergency online period of 2020/21. Several minority ethnic groups experience stable penalties relative to White British students (–4.6 to –6.0 points), but the pattern varies substantially by group and over time. Table 1 summarises these changes, highlighting the elimination of gaps for Asian students during the pandemic, the emergence of a new disadvantage for Mixed Heritage students post-pandemic, and a particularly severe and statistically significant post-pandemic gap for students in the "Other Ethnicity" category.

Table 1. Ethnic Achievement Gaps Across Time Periods

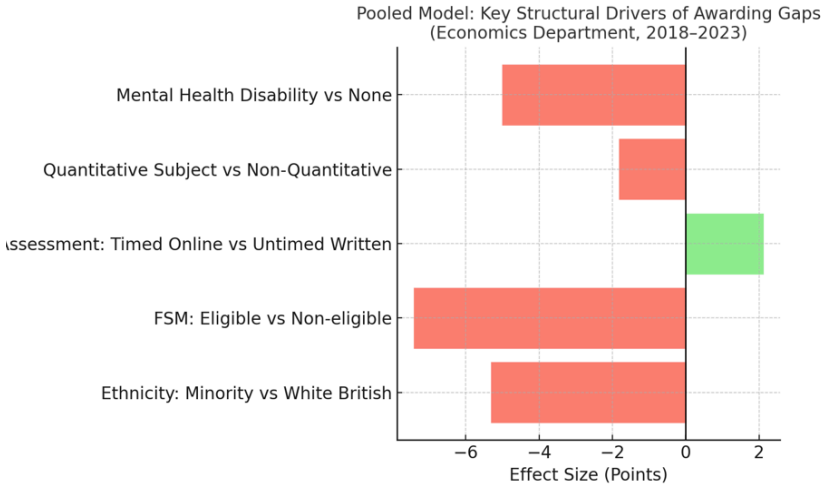
Ethnic Group (White reference group)	Pre-COVID Gap	COVID Gap	Post-COVID Gap	Pre→Post Change	COVID Achievement	Post-COVID Status
Black Students	–4.61** (p=0.014)	–2.04 (p=0.364)	–4.56* (p=0.076)	+0.05 (p=0.988)	Gap Reduced	Gap Persists
Asian Students	–6.01*** (p=0.002)	+1.85 (p=0.244)	–1.75 (p=0.403)	+4.26 (p=0.133)	Gap Eliminated	Major Improvement
Mixed Heritage	–1.03 (p=0.561)	–0.13 (p=0.946)	–5.04* (p=0.064)	–4.01 (p=0.208)	No Baseline Gap	New Gap Emerged
Other Ethnicity	–5.16 (p=0.189)	–0.10 (p=0.974)	–9.99** (p=0.050)	–4.83 (p=0.453)	No Baseline Gap	Significant Gap

Second, socioeconomic inequality has intensified in the post-pandemic period. In 2022, students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) experienced a penalty of –7.41 points, one of the largest class-based disadvantages observed across the time series. While female FSM students retained a modest protective advantage, working-class males emerged as the single most vulnerable group in the post-pandemic landscape.

Third, the analysis identifies structural disadvantages linked to assessment type. High-stakes out-of-term assessments are consistently associated with significant penalties, particularly in quantitative subjects, which disadvantage students across all groups. Students with mental health conditions face a persistent penalty that became more severe in 2022, suggesting that pandemic-era challenges have evolved into structural support gaps.

Assessment format interacts strongly with equity outcomes. For both "in-term" and "out-of-term" contexts, online timed assessments during the pandemic consistently reduced or eliminated ethnic gaps, whereas untimed written assessments (e.g., essays, take-home reports) were associated with larger disparities. However, these equity gains obtained via unproctored online timed assessment raise concerns about academic integrity, while the untimed online assessment gap is likely to be affected in the future in the era of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT.

Figure 1



As summarised by figure 1, taken together, the findings confirm that awarding gaps in Economics are both dynamic and format-sensitive. The temporary narrowing of some inequalities in 2020 was not sustained; instead, the post-pandemic period has seen the re-emergence of pre-existing disparities and the creation of new intersectional disadvantages. The implications for policy and practice are clear: equity-oriented assessment reform must address the structural role of format and delivery mode, balance inclusivity with integrity in an era of AI-assisted work, and target interventions toward groups facing compounded disadvantages. Retaining and adapting accessibility innovations introduced during the pandemic will be essential to support physically disabled students, while more robust and specialised interventions are needed to address the needs of students with mental health conditions. By combining highly granular departmental data with advanced statistical techniques, this study provides a robust evidence base for redesigning Economics assessments to be fairer, more inclusive, and more resilient to future disruptions.

Curating Knowledge: Portfolio-Based Assessment in International Economics

Ramin Nassehi (University College London), Ahmed Saade (Bayes Business School & Cranfield School of Management)

This paper presents a novel portfolio-based assessment approach for first-year international economics students. Students begin by formulating a research question related to a module topic. They then curate a portfolio around this question, selecting three distinct types of sources: a news video (case study evidence), a newspaper article (descriptive quantitative and qualitative evidence), and an academic journal paper (rigorous evidence).

Next, they synthesise these sources to provide a well-rounded answer to their question. Finally, students reflect on how constructing the portfolio has complemented their understanding of the module's concepts.

This portfolio-based assessment shifts the focus from traditional, rigid essay formats to a more dynamic and flexible model and, in doing so, it offers several pedagogical benefits. It provides students with autonomy to select research questions that align with their personal interests, fostering a deeper, more motivated engagement with the course material. Students also gain exposure to diverse types of evidence, helping them appreciate the strengths of each in developing a nuanced understanding of economic issues.

Through the synthesis process, students learn to integrate varied evidence into a coherent narrative. Finally, a reflective component encourages students to think about their learning process (metacognition) and how creating the portfolio has enriched their understanding of course concepts.

Student Perspectives on Engaging with Economics Content Support Schemes

Melisa Williams Higgins (University of Bristol)

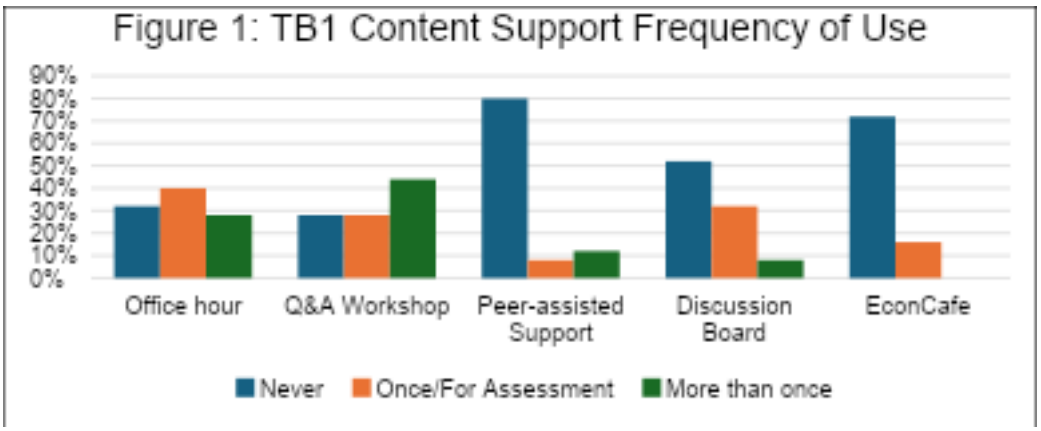
Introduction

Universities generally provide various methods of support for students to navigate both university life and to assist with their course content, yet there is often low student engagement with these resources. At the studied Russell Group institution, all Economics students have office hours and discussion boards as methods of content support. First year students, however, have more options available to them through an online Q&A session built into their introductory economics unit, and a peer-assisted learning and support scheme for economics and statistics units. Despite these various methods, educators have generally indicated that only some students engage with the support being offered while much of the resources such as office hours are at times largely underutilized.

In this paper I examine how first-year students engage with these various methods of content support. I focus on first year students for two reasons, first we understand that the transition to university may be difficult for them and therefore provide several modes of support. Second, as they are new to the environment, they are uniquely able to identify what works and how they experience the support. This work is funded by the Bristol School of Economics Teaching Excellence Fund. The data was collected in March 2025 utilising student survey and focus groups discussion.

Results

The survey results show that in the first teaching block (TB1) of 2024/25 usage varies by content support but generally, the resources are underutilised (Figure 1). Peer-assisted Support has the highest proportion of students who never used it (80%), suggesting it may be underutilised. EconCafé and Discussion Boards also show high "never" usage rates (72% and 52% respectively), indicating potential areas for engagement improvement. Q&A Workshops show a relatively balanced distribution, with a notable portion of students using them more than once (44%), this may be because these are timetabled as a part of the students' economics unit. Office Hours are used once or for assessment only by the largest group (40%). however, also have a significant number who never use them (0.32).



The focus group discussions showed that office hours were widely recognised as useful for clarifying complex concepts, receiving assignment feedback, and accessing personalised guidance, yet their uptake was constrained by structural barriers such as restrictive booking systems, timetable clashes, short session lengths, and student confidence gaps. From the discussions, it was clear that there is a lot of variation in how the Q&A workshops were conducted even within a single unit. Some evolved from student-driven forums into supplementary teaching sessions. Students noted that the effectiveness of the Q&A workshops strongly tied to structure, timing, and tutor communication. The peer-assisted support was viewed as uniquely valuable for insider perspectives and informal guidance, though concerns about tutor expertise, scheduling, and overlap with other services limited engagement. Discussion boards demonstrated potential for flexible, inclusive support, but underuse stemmed from low lecturer engagement, competing communication channels, and student reluctance to post. Econ Café was valued primarily during the transition into university but suffered from duplication, low visibility, and email fatigue.

The main theme coming from the students' recommendations is the need to improve communication and clarity. The students suggest including regular reinforcement of office hour and other support services purposes, centralized communication hubs, concise messaging via Blackboard or weekly digests, provision of a clear support map. Some of the recommendations showed a clear understanding of the purpose of these support options such as office hours, and discussion boards. The students' recommendations include providing guidance on how to prepare for office hours, especially for students who feel "too behind", prioritising additional office hour provision during peak demand periods (e.g., assessments), and staff integrate boards into weekly teaching (e.g., Q&A threads, recap posts), and that departments review discussion board activity per module to ensure consistency. As the focus groups conducted close to the end of the teaching year highlighted where there were still knowledge gaps, reinforcing the need to improve communication and visibility of the schemes.

Conclusion

The first round of the project provides tangible data on student perspectives on the content support for economics. It shows that universities need to provide clear and accessible information about the support available while making these options accessible, removing structural barriers. The recommendations provided by the students shows the importance of the student voice in co-creating their educational experience.

The 'forum effect': how does participation in online forums affect student retention and academic performance at a distance learning university?

Emilie Rutledge, Julia Chukwuma, & Roberto Simonetti (The Open University), Michael Ng (University of Roehampton)

This research uses a mixed methods approach to investigate the impact of online asynchronous forum participation on student retention and academic performance on an under-graduate economics course at a distance learning Higher Education institution in the

UK. The forum activities related to discussions on contemporary economic topics and allowed them to draw on their own authentic experiences to encourage participation. We used binary and multinomial logit regression models incorporating existing determinants of retention drawn from the literature (demographic, academic and institutional) along with five dimensions of student forum participation. In terms of academic performance, there was a positive impact of forum activity on the pass/distinction boundary but not on the pass/fail-resit boundary. More importantly however, the results found evidence of a significant positive effect of student forum participation on retention. Prompting and encouraging students to post was important because there was a positive 'forum effect' regardless of whether or not the student initiated the post. This study also found that the marginal benefit of forum posting is diminishing, therefore prompting a student to post even a few times can have a positive impact, with the first post being most critical to student retention.

Qualitative evidence from interviews with students suggests that the nature and time aspects of the forum activities is important and that forum participation encourages student engagement and peer interaction which builds a stronger student community and in turn, positively influences student retention.

The PSI pedagogy in a Level 5 Microeconomics course

Thanos Athanasopoulos (University College London) ⋆

⋆ This work was conducted when the author's affiliation was at De Montfort University, Leicester. I would like to thank Swati Virmani for early discussions and the participants of the Teaching and Learning Conference and the Accounting, Finance and Economics Pedagogy SIG held at De Montfort University in February and May 2024, respectively, and the 7th International Conference on Innovative Research in Education in Nice, France, in July 2024 for useful comments.

This paper relates to a heated recent debate as regards how to best introduce new theoretical concepts to students: is Traditional Instruction followed by Problem-Solving—I-PS—or Problem-Solving followed by Instruction—PS-I—preferable for student learning? Proponents of the traditional I-PS pedagogy point out that it both reduces the possibility of students' making errors with less floundering in the classroom and also contributes to increased student attention to critical aspects of the domain material (Kirschner et al. (2006)). On the other hand, arguments in favour of the PS-I approach relate to students' preparation for future learning (Schwartz and Martin (2004)) by giving them opportunities to notice and encode critical domain features on their own (Loibl et al. (2017)).

Within the general PS-I pedagogy, although students usually get it wrong–and seemingly fail–when aiming to solve problems related to a new concept, the pedagogy is likely to benefit their learning. In fact, the literature has mainly focussed on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) School and University classrooms to test the efficacy of the PS-I and has challenged the traditional view that Direct Instruction followed by Problem-Solving is preferable when introducing a mathematical concept (see, i.e., Kapur (2008); Kapur (2012); Kapur (2014); Loibl and Rummel (2014a); Loibl and Rummel (2014b)). Loibl et al. (2017) surveyed related works to highlight that PS-I contributes to student learning via the following mechanisms: prior knowledge activation, awareness of knowledge gaps, and recognition of deep features. Sinha and Kapur (2019) doubled the surveyed article base compared to Loibl et al. (2017) and shifted the focus from why PS-I works to when the pedagogy does not work. They concluded that the lack of (a) follow-up instruction built on suboptimal learner-generated solutions, (b) inclusion of group work as the participation structure, and (c) explicit feedback regarding what problem-solving actions need rethinking constitute primary reasons for the pedagogy to fail.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first work investigating the correlation between the PS-I pedagogy and student learning and achievement in an economics classroom–I did this exercise within a year-2 undergraduate (micro)economics module. Students participated in three fifty-minute lectures via either Traditional Instruction followed by Problem Solving or with the aid of the PS-I approach. Within the latter mode of instruction, students were given an affective problem with several potential Representation and Solution methods related to the new theoretical concept and worked in groups to solve it (see, e.g., Sinha and Kapur (2021)). The instructor then synthesised student views and solutions and built upon those when discussing the canonical solution with the aid of student reflection.

Within the traditional Teaching method, there was problem-solving after instruction of the new concept took place. An end-of-session test/quiz was designed to measure students' (a) procedural fluency, (b) conceptual understanding, and (c) ability to build on the new terms. I also investigated the potential correlation between the PS-I pedagogy and deep learning with the end-of-term summative assessments: an individual student report, where students build their simple models and discussed the literature on pressing real-world issues with the lens of microeconomics and an in-class exam.

The results of this work support the use of the PSI pedagogy in a (micro)economics classroom. More precisely, students in the "PS-I" classroom did–on average–considerably better than their traditional classroom counterparts both in the end-of-session and the end-of-term assessments. In addition, I find evidence of deep learning in the PS-I classroom compared to the traditional classroom counterpart. These results call for a potentially broader use of the PS-I pedagogy in Economics, Marketing, and related disciplines.

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Co-development of a Problem-based Learning (PBL) Module in Economics in partnership with Students

Ning Xue, Adrian Gonzalez, Eleanor K.K. Jew, Judith E. Krauss & Yaprak Tavman (University of York)

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a method of active student-led learning that encourages students to explore an authentic, real-world problem through group work and self-directed learning. The University of York (UK) implements PBL in various degree programmes, and the Department of Economics introduced a new PBL module in the academic year 2024-25. To inform the development of this new module, this project sought to obtain feedback from students on existing PBL modules to inform its design and delivery through interviews and focus groups. Economics students discussed their views following PBL taster sessions. Discussions centred around the following aspects: Expectations of a new module; transition from passive learning and preparation for PBL, delivery, and assessment of PBL.

Through thematic analysis the following key lessons were identified:

1) Clear communication between facilitators and students to explain the philosophy behind PBL and to set expectations is crucial;

2) Module learning outcomes need to illustrate links to both subject content learned and transferable skills gained through self-directed learning and group work in PBL;

3) Scaffolding throughout the transitional process builds students' confidence;

4) Students value and enjoy learning through PBL, despite its challenges;

5) Contribution is of utmost importance to students when learning through PBL and being assessed on group work.

The insights gained from this analysis can assist in the development of PBL modules across a range of topics and help avoid the pitfalls associated with introducing innovative teaching methods within higher education.

The Budding Economists' Symposium: A Student-Staff Collaborative Experiential Learning Initiative

Ravshonbek Otojanov (Queen Mary University of London)

The Budding Economists' Symposium is a student-staff collaborative experiential learning initiative designed to foster intellectual curiosity, promote ability to think like an economist, and engage in intellectual discussion of economic and business issues. Organised by students for students, the symposium provides opportunities for students to enhance learning experience and develop essential academic and professional skills. The symposium brings together peers, staff, and industry experts, and offers a platform for students to engage with real-world economic issues, collaborate across disciplines, and connect with industry professionals. This presentation evaluates the challenges faced by the project team and highlights the outcomes, offering insights into the value of this student-staff collaborative initiative.

A project team is formed of up to five first-year students selected competitively, and two students take on the role of the project leads. At the start of academic year, course leader invites students to submit proposals for economics games, interactive activities and names of guest speakers they would like to invite to the symposium along with their CVs. Candidates with innovative ideas and potential to contribute to and lead the project are shortlisted and are invited to one-hour MS Teams meeting to complete the selection process. In the meeting, candidates give a short talk (presentation) to the audience (other shortlisted candidates) about their idea(s) for the symposium. The candidates form the project team by voting for 4 candidates with whom they would like to work in the project. Once the project team of five is formed, candidates nominate two co-leads for the project.

Under the mentorship and supervision of the faculty advisor, the team develops project plan, designs symposium's agenda, sets timeline and divides labour among the members to leverage each members' strengths and skills. Depending on the amount of work required for each task, members take on responsibilities for operations, marketing and outreach. The team holds weekly meetings to review progress, address challenges and adjust plans as needed. The final meeting involves a mock run of the selected interactive economics games to address issues and challenges of hosting them, and to ensure that the games are educational and enjoyable for the participants.

Involvement in every aspect of the project helps student enhance learning experience and develop skills highly valued by graduate employers. The selection process is rich in skills-fostering activities that are essential for academic success and highly transferable to professional settings. Students develop a wide range of skills including communication and presentation skills, a sense of responsibility, and improve their confidence and self-awareness. Project planning and execution equips students with problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, leadership and decision making, digital literacy and networking skills.

The project promotes:

- *interdisciplinary learning*: the project team is diverse, and students are from different academic backgrounds majoring in humanities and social science. Team members have opportunities to share insights from their disciplines and apply them to the symposium's planning and execution. This interdisciplinary approach enables students to develop holistic solutions to project's multifaceted challenges and problems.
- *partner-engaged learning*: the project team collaborates with professionals from the industry including regulators, banks, consultancies and other public and private sector organisations, to provide symposium attendees with real-world insights in guest speaker and Q&A sessions as well as panel discussions.
- *student–staff collaboration*: faculty advisor mentors and guides the project team throughout the process, supporting students in planning, decision-making, and execution. This collaborative partnership fosters co-creation of knowledge, strengthens the sense of academic community, and ensures that students feel supported while taking ownership of the project.

Panel: How can institutional GenAI policies be designed to strike a balance between encouraging ethical use of AI in learning and teaching and ensuring academic integrity? (Room 1)

Cloda Jenkins (Imperial College), Fabio Aricò (University of East Anglia), Parama Chaudhury (University College London) & Denise Hawkes (Kings College London)

In this panel senior leaders from three universities will discuss the approaches taken by their institutions to develop a policy on the use of GenAI in education and comment on how academics, including economists, are responding. The panel will start as a series of interview questions from the host to the panellists, with the audience encouraged to bring in their comments and questions through the discussion. Panellists will be asked to explain the thinking that has gone behind the design of policies at their institutions. They will be expected to explore how they navigate the challenges of GenAI for academic integrity whilst wishing to ensure that academics, and students, are moving forward with the new technologies. This will include consideration of the context of their universities, including the mix of subjects taught, the student base and the resources available to academics. There will also be questions around how academics are responding to the policies and any adaptations that are being made as the tools evolve at pace. The host will take a steer from the audience and what has been shared by panellists on what avenues to explore further. This might include, for example, discussion on what changes are needed to help students develop skills for using AI in their careers, how concepts like ‘ethical’ or ‘responsible’ use of GenAI are being considered, reflection on the potential value and potential risk of GenAI for narrowing gaps between different student groups and/or examination of the practical constraints on innovation in this area. All panel members, and the host, are economics educators and hold university leadership roles so are able to bring a mix of perspectives to the discussion. The breath of ideas will also be expanded through the conversational format including the audience in the discussion.

Workshop: You’re (not just) having a laugh: What standup and improv comedians can teach economics (Room 2)

Andrew Mearman (University of Leeds), Prab Riat (Think Fast Collective) & Martin Poulter (The Economics Network)

We are an Economics professor who regularly performs improv comedy; and a professional improv workshop facilitator and performer.

This interactive workshop will explore potential links between stand-up and applied improvised comedy, and teaching economics.

According to Morris (2024), the objective of comedy is to invite an audience to see the world differently, which aligns with multiple philosophies of education. This invitation can be extended via presenting alternatives and discussing paradoxes, which is common matter in economics.

Crowd work – learning about an audience and working out its norms – plays a role in building an inclusive classroom. Applied improvisation in particular builds soft skills that include active listening, bringing the audience along on your journey, and responding to the unexpected (Poynton 2013). The same improvisation game can hit many such skills simultaneously.

The workshop will present some basic ideas of stand-up and applied improvised comedy, without asking participants to perform. After demonstrating the techniques, we will invite them to try these out in pairs or small groups.

The session will then invite participants to work collectively to identify ways in principles of comedy already are evident in their teaching, and how they might be introduced. They will then share their discoveries.

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Workshop: Programming resources that provide real-life challenges (Room 3)

Yichen Zhu (Aston University) & Ralf Becker (University of Manchester)

Over the last decade econometric education has become significantly more practical with students being taught software skills alongside theoretical econometric skills. The programming languages R and Python have largely replaced more menu driven programmes.

The emergence of large language models (LLM) may make educators reflect to what extend coding skills are still needed and if they are it is likely to change how we help students develop these skills.

The above background means that the goal of students' learning in this sphere is to shift the focus from the more traditional role of memorization relevant coding syntax to developing problem-solving skills and fostering independent learning.

In this workshop we present our ideas of offering learning opportunities to students which reflect the most relevant elements of coding practice. In order to tackle new problems users will often have to identify and download data sources, clean data, install and load packages, use help functions and documentation, debug code, understand error messages, search for solutions on the internet or using a LLM.

We believe that coding instruction has to incorporate the practice of these skills and in the workshop, we will present approaches to building these challenges into the instructional material. An important element in this is to provide enough scaffolding for students who may be new to coding.

In the workshop we will present the main ideas and then give participants the opportunity to implement these (in Python or R) by adapting example worksheets we will share with participants.

Practical details:

For this workshop, participants may need a laptop with Python and R installed, as these programming languages will be used throughout the session. The workshop will focus on practical coding skills, including downloading and cleaning data, using help functions, debugging code, and searching for solutions. Participants will work with example worksheets, adapting them in either Python or R, so having these software tools ready will be essential.

The effects of socioeconomic deprivation on academic outcomes

Yin Zhang & Martin Jones (University of Dundee)

This study investigates the impact of class attendance and other forms of engagement on academic performance among undergraduate students in the School of Business at a Scottish university. Using administrative data from the 2023–2024 academic year, we examine the relationships between attendance, engagement with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), library usage, prior academic achievement, and module grades.

Our results show that attendance has a positive and statistically significant effect on grades, although its impact diminishes as students advance through their degree programmes. The relationship is also nonlinear, with greater marginal benefits at higher attendance levels. Engagement with the VLE has a significant positive effect, underscoring the importance of online learning resources. Prior academic performance is a strong predictor of current outcomes, indicating persistence in academic achievement.

The unwritten path: Mid-career transitions and challenges for economics educators

Stefania Paredes Fuentes (University of Southampton and National Bank of Slovakia) & Tim Burnett (Aston University)

Recent years have seen a marked expansion in the number of academic economists employed on education-focussed contracts. This expansion has been accompanied at many institutions by a formalisation of roles and the establishment of a formal teaching career pathway with defined criteria for promotion. Though, as many education-focussed economists reach more advanced stages in their careers, it is becoming evident that the education career pathway is less clear than expected.

In April 2025 Aston University hosted a workshop, jointly organised by the Birmingham Economic Education Seminars (BEES) and the Economics Network, designed to support mid-career educational economists. The event attracted 41 eligible applicants, with 30 ultimately attending.

The paper begins with an analysis of the experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by applicants to the mid-career workshop. Thematic analysis of responses revealed that, while at a high-level, most attendees sought career support, there was a remarkable variety of individual experiences, challenges, and motives including skill development, applications for fellowship or promotion, or community building. This heterogeneity of needs signalled that negotiating the opaque education career pathway is not just difficult, but also that its specific challenges and obstacles vary dramatically from person to person.

The second part of the paper seeks to contextualise these experiences of education-focussed staff in economics through an initial data-driven analysis of the education pathway in economics, contrasted with other types of economics job roles, and other subjects. This is followed by a critical interrogation of the literature which details the

more general experiences of staff in education roles and the barriers they face to belonging, recognition, and career development.

The final part of the paper begins the task of ‘writing the path’ for education-focussed economists. Based on the findings of the previous sections, we propose a three-domain conceptual model which a) identifies and taxonomises the constraints over which an individual’s career pathway is determined, and b) provides constructive and actionable points to help individuals write their own path, given the constraints they face.

Props and Role-play to engage Economics students

Geethanjali Selvaretnam & Vladimir Maltsev (University of Glasgow)

Keeping students in large and diverse economics classes engaged can be challenging, especially for those whose main degree programme is not economics. There is the concern whether these students would seriously engage with the Economics course due to their inability to connect with some abstract concepts and mathematical symbolism. In this presentation we will share what was done in two large economics classes [2nd year microeconomics (ECON 2A) and a 1st year introductory economics (ECON 1010, taken mainly be accounting students)] to make student learning more enjoyable, allowing the students to better engage and have fun with various economic concepts. Our objective was to bring abstract economic concepts to life through relatable applications, use memorable props and have activities which get students physically involved.

Visually seeing how the theories come to life, and being physically involved in enacting, results in better memorization and fosters deeper understanding. Numerous studies support these positive aspects (Cornock, 2015; Corner & Cornock, 2018; Kaçauni, 2023; Krontiris-Litowitz, 2003; Pan, 2013; Tamari et al., 2015). Making the classes more fun does not necessarily equate distraction from the main lecture. “Props and metaphors should be used to augment the classroom experience and to provide a physical image that helps students construct a mental model,” says Astrachan (1998, p. 23). Using props and role play addresses the three domains of the revised Bloom’s taxonomy – cognitive, affective and psychomotor – to enhance students’ learning (Rao and Stupons, 2012; Winardy and Septiana, 2023).

Following the literature, in our two economics classes, several props and role plays were used to explain various economics concepts. The activities were as follows: 1) A simulation of a pirate ship duel which by a stroke of bad luck and a shot aimed at the gunpowder brig affects everyone on the ship negatively, thus highlighting the concept of an externality and its negative dimension; 2) Distribution of candy to students varying in number and types to demonstrate different market structures and their pricing strategies; 3) Inflating and popping balloons to demonstrate the concept of nominal and real GDP and the obscuring effects of inflation on actual economic growth; 4) The median voter theorem using students to represent voters and politicians (in our case, Donald Trump, Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders).

This study explores how and why students enjoyed these activities, and what economics-based knowledge they retained as a result. To that end, a written survey with a few Likert questions and open-ended questions was used to gather this information from students (necessary ethics clearance has been obtained from the institution where the study took place). When invited, 24 students from ECON1010 and 20 from ECON 2A consented to participate in the survey. concepts and make the lecturer more approachable. Only one student from ECON 2A disagreed and another was neutral that they helped understand concepts better and remember what was learnt. Two students from ECON1010 were neutral about better understanding, while one student was neutral to making lecturer more approachable. We think this could be because this lecturer did not need props to be engaging, approachable and explain concepts clearly.

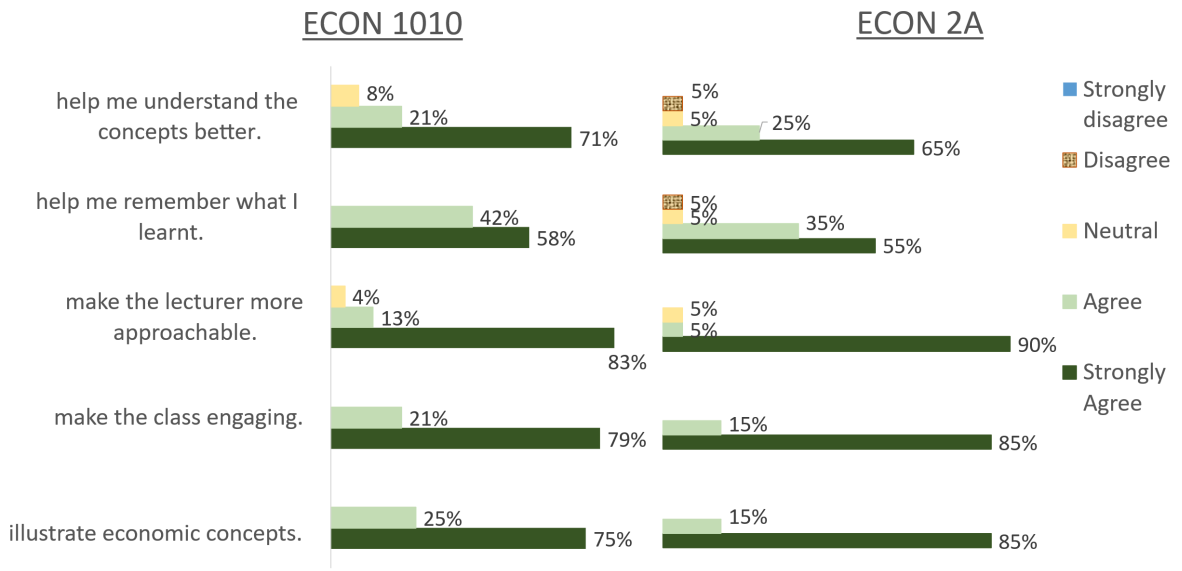

Figure 1: Likert questions and results

No open comments were negative, but there were many positive ones highlighting the increased engagement via props and their assistance in fostering economic understanding. From what the teacher observed, students were excited, keen to come forward and even film some activities. Large economics classrooms became filled with fun learning. However, in response to what they learnt from these activities, most students did not say anything. This does not mean these were not effective. So, how helpful these are should be explored further. Should the survey be taken earlier, use different questions or change the methodology?

Nevertheless, since students have strongly supported the benefits of props and roleplay-based teaching, and the lecturer has observed the engagement and enthusiasm, it seems evident that props and role play will remain as part of our teaching practice.

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Exploring Team Formation Among Students in the UK: A Theory of Planned Behaviour

Yidi Sun, Chenyang Wang & Ralf Becker (University of Manchester)

Our research was inspired by observations from a second-year undergraduate economics module, where students were required to form their own groups voluntarily. Among the 20 self-selected groups, 50% consisted exclusively of Chinese students, while nine were composed solely of non-Chinese students, and only one group was mixed. These patterns indicate a strong preference for homogeneous group formation, especially among Chinese students. Given their substantial presence in UK universities, understanding the factors that influence their team formation choices can provide valuable insights into cross-cultural student interactions.

To investigate the underlying reasons, we applied Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a framework. A survey was designed to assess key determinants of students' decision-making: attitudes toward group work (e.g., communication preferences, cultural differences, academic performance considerations), subjective norms (e.g., family influence, national identity, social acceptance), and perceived behavioural control (e.g., confidence in teamwork skills). Preliminary results indicate that students slightly agree that cultural differences may introduce communication or collaboration challenges in group work.

To deepen our understanding, we also conduct follow-up interviews with students to explore their concerns and decision-making processes further. The interview participants represented a diverse range of nationalities, including Ghana, India, China, Belize, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. Overall, students exhibited a positive disposition toward teamwork, particularly when team environments were collaborative and well-structured. Many participants highlighted the value of shared responsibilities, the exchange of ideas, and opportunities for peer learning. Nonetheless, challenges were identified, including language barriers, unequal contributions, and mismatches in commitment and working styles. Preferences for team composition varied: some students favored culturally homogeneous teams due to ease of communication and mutual understanding, whereas others valued multicultural teams for the diverse perspectives and enriched learning experiences they

offered. Several students appreciate the value of groupworks for learning and skill-building but advocate for a balanced amount. Others prefer more individual tasks when group coordination is inefficient. Most agree that well-structured, purposeful groupwork enhances both learning and employability.

Team formation practices were primarily influenced by peer norms and cultural factors, rather than formal institutional policies. Although lecturers rarely imposed specific guidelines for group formation, peer influence played a significant role. Students commonly selected teammates based on existing friendships, perceived academic competence, or shared cultural backgrounds. While a minority of participants expressed a preference for culturally diverse groups, the majority reported feeling more comfortable in culturally homogeneous teams. Participants' preferences for teammates were guided by key criteria such as skills, attitude, and academic goals, which were consistently ranked as more important than friendship. However, this stated preference conflicted with participants' actual experiences when given the opportunity to choose their own team members, as social familiarity and cultural comfort often took precedence in practice.

Students' perceived ease or difficulty in forming groups varies by familiarity, confidence, and language skills. While extroverted students and those with friends find team formation easy, others, especially introverts, struggle to initiate contact. Language and communication skills are frequently cited as barriers, especially in diverse settings. Many students prefer to choose their own teammates, guided by observed attitude, skills, and academic compatibility. Assignment weight influences selection seriousness. Several students report that postgraduate studies shifted their strategy toward more purposeful team selection. Experience with free riders or poor coordination have made students more cautious. Most agree that teamwork enhances employability by developing leadership, collaboration, and communication skills.

Students have mixed views on assigning a portion (10%) of the group grade to diversity. Supporters thought it can encourage multicultural collaboration, while others caution that diversity doesn't guarantee quality. Many prefer self-selection but are open to lecturer-assisted grouping based on profiles outlining skills, interests, and personalities. Students suggest structured tools like mini-CVs or introductory sessions to ease group formation and increase compatibility. Cultural awareness and strong English communication are widely recognized as essential for effective teamwork.

Advice to Chinese students often emphasizes improving communication, particularly in English, and being more proactive in discussions. Peers encourage Chinese students to speak up, share opinions confidently, and engage beyond their cultural circle. Some mention that over-reliance on Mandarin or sticking to familiar peers can lead to miscommunication or exclusion.

This research has important implications for universities seeking to promote diverse and inclusive learning environments. By implementing targeted support mechanisms, such as intercultural activities and inclusive teaching strategies, institutions can foster cross-cultural collaboration and enhance students' employability skills in an increasingly globalized workforce.