

Participant Information Sheet

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number: **14263/001**

Title of Study: Employability Skills in Undergraduate Economics Degrees

Department: Economics

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Name and Contact Details for Economics Network: Ashley Lait, Centre Manager, The Economics Network, University of Bristol (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk)

1. Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to contribute to an Economics Network research project on how economics departments are helping undergraduate students to develop employability skills. Before you decide whether you want to contribute to the research, by completing our survey, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take the time to read the following information and discuss it with your colleagues. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us before you decide whether or not to participate.

2. What is the project's purpose?

Economics degrees have been criticised for not preparing graduates adequately for work (see for example the Rethinking Economics (2018) [Employers Report](#)). However, many universities are reforming how they teach economics and others have had teaching and learning strategies that support the development of employability skills for some time. These activities are not often widely discussed and have not been documented.

The purpose of this project is to do a stock take of what is going on in UK economics degrees in relation to the development of employability skills. We aim to highlight best practice and to identify what gaps are evident and explore how they might be filled. The research builds on the discussion at the session, *Is our assessment up to the job?* at the September 2017 Developments in Economics Education conference.

The research is made up of three components: (a) review of employer expectations from the Economics Network Employer Surveys; (b) survey of programme leaders to identify how skills are developed in economics undergraduate degrees (February to March 2019); and (c) deeper discussion of the survey results in focus groups with lecturers, students and employers (June/July 2019). The results of the research will be discussed at the 2019 [Developments in Economics Education conference](#). The final report will be shared with all those who participate in the survey and will be made public on the Economics Network website. Findings from the research may also be published, at a later date, in academic journals.

3. Why have I been chosen?

We contacted the Economics Network Key Contacts and Heads of Economics Departments and asked them to provide us with the best contact in your department to ask to complete this survey. They provided us with your name and contact details. We have contacted your equivalent

in all UK economics departments and hope to get a high response rate to allow us to effectively capture the breath and depth of activities going on across economics undergraduate degrees.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will sign a consent form that will include an option for choosing how you want the information you provide to be used and shared in the research. You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you do withdraw, we will ask you what you would like to happen to the data you have provided up to that point. We will also ask you if there is another member of staff in your department who may wish to be involved.

5. What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you are asked to complete the online survey by **Monday March 25th 2019**. The survey itself should take no more than 45 minutes to complete but we anticipate it will take more time than this to collate the information required, including potentially discussing the details with colleagues. We recognise that this is a commitment and appreciate you giving up your time.

In the survey there is an option of saying whether you would also like to participate in focus group discussions on the issues that come out of the survey. If you do not want to attend focus group discussions your contribution finishes when you submit the survey. If you do wish to engage further through the focus group discussions, then these will take place in June/July 2019 and we will contact you with a separate invitation.

6. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The survey results will provide the basis for deeper discussions with lecturers, students and employers in focus groups. We will use the focus groups to understand what types of teaching and learning strategies work well from a lecturer and student perspective and what the challenges are with developing and assessing employability skills within an economics degree.

The survey results and focus group discussions will be used to produce a report about how economics degrees are developing employability skills. The report will identify what is being done and discuss gaps between what employers are looking for and what universities are focusing on. The results will be presented in aggregate format so that individual institutions are not identifiable. The results may be disaggregated into Russell Group and others if sample size allows.

The report will be shared with all those who participate in the survey initially and with attendees at the Developments in Economics Education conference in September 2019. The final report will be made public on the Economics Network website. Findings from the research may also be published, at a later date, in academic journals on higher education teaching initiatives.

The survey includes a request for case study examples that provide more detail on teaching strategies and assessment methods used in your degree. The case studies will inform the research report. They will also be shared on the Economics Network website as part of their Guide for Lecturers if you provide permission for this.

The data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research depending on what we find.

7. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

We will use the survey results to present aggregate findings on economics degrees in the UK. For example, we will make statements like 'Economics students in the UK mainly get the opportunity to develop presentation skills in their final year and 25% of these opportunities are summatively assessed'. We do not intend to make comparisons between institutions.

Dr Cloda Jenkins and Economics Network staff will be able to see your survey response in full. When you complete the consent form you have the opportunity to say which information you want to remain confidential, so that you and your institution are not identifiable outside the project team including in ensuing reports or presentations. If you, or a colleague, submits a case study you have the opportunity to say how you want the information about the individual and institution to be presented on the form.

The project team will restrict who has access to the information and will keep it strictly confidential where you have requested this. All information will be stored on UCL and University of Bristol servers in password-protected folders that can only be accessed by the researchers. The survey responses will be retained for up to three years and then deleted. More formal information about data protection can be found in Section 11.

8. Limits to confidentiality

Please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed; for example, if the participant sample is small or your degree has characteristics which make it stand out relative to others. If you have asked for your degree to not be identifiable but it looks like it is in the survey results, we will discuss the best course of action to take with you before anything is shared in the public domain.

9. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The results of the survey will be presented in aggregate format and it is envisaged that it will not be possible to identify individual programmes in the data. We do not intend to rank individual programmes in any way. Our aim is to look at skill development in the discipline as a whole. However, if you have something very different from other universities in your degree it may be evident in the data. Similarly, if the response rate to the survey is low it may be easier to identify programmes in the information presented. There is a reputational risk that your programme will come out looking less good than others in some areas. All results will be shared in a draft report with survey participants and any concerns about your programme being identifiable, and mitigation for this, can be discussed.

If you or a colleague provides case studies, you have the option of saying whether you're your programme or institution to be mentioned when they are published. If you do, there is a risk that others will comment and discuss your case study in a negative way.

You will not be providing any personal data, other than your contact details. If you have agreed for information about your programme to be in the public domain, it may be linked to you individually in your role.

10. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main benefit to you taking part is that you will make a contribution to research on the value of UK economics degrees and allow us to create a comprehensive stock take of what is happening on the ground in economics degrees. As a discipline we will be able to show what we are doing to counter criticism of what we are not doing.

You will get access to the research report and have the opportunity to learn lessons from other programmes, particularly where case studies are shared. Where you allow case study information about your programme to be in the public domain this may have beneficial impact on the reputation of your Department. If you agree to also contribute to focus group discussions, you will get the opportunity to share ideas further.

11. Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

Your personal data will be used for the purposes outlined in this notice. The categories of personal data used will be as follows:

Name, Job Title, Department and University name and email address

The legal basis that would be used to process your *personal data* will be performance of a task in the public interest.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

You have certain rights under data protection legislation in relation to the personal information that we hold about you. These rights apply only in particular circumstances and are subject to certain exemptions such as public interest (for example the prevention of crime). They include:

- The right to access your personal information;
- The right to rectification of your personal information;
- The right to erasure of your personal data;
- The right to restrict or object to the processing of your personal data;
- The right to object to the use of your data for direct marketing purposes;
- The right to data portability;
- Where the justification for processing is based on your consent, the right to withdraw such consent at any time; and
- The right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) about the use of your personal data.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the ICO. Contact details, and further details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by The Economics Network and will be undertaken by Dr Cloda Jenkins, Department of Economics, University College London. The research is co-funded by the Economics Network and the UCL Economics Department. We are currently seeking external sources of funding to pay for focus group workshops and will inform participants of any additional organisations involved when these are confirmed.

13. What if something goes wrong?

If you have any concerns about your participation in the survey or the resulting research report, please in the first instance contact Ashley Lait, Centre Manager, Economics Network (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk). She will endeavour to work with you to resolve your concerns. If you feel that that your complaint has not been handled satisfactorily, you can contact the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee at ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

14. Contact for further information

If you have any queries about the research project and your participation in the survey please contact Dr Cloda Jenkins at cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet via email. You are asked to complete and return a consent form via email and to confirm that you have provided consent in the survey.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering contributing to this research study.