TeachECONference2021 Session: Helping Students Succeed in Economics – Q&A

In this document we summarise the discussion around the topics that arose in the Zoom Q&A chat. The presenters have jointly contributed to this write-up which we hope is useful to those who attended and those who are picking up the ideas at a later date.

Panel

Chair: Cloda Jenkins (UCL)

Speakers:

- Andrew Mearman (University of Leeds), Juliane Scheffel (University of Leeds)
- Eric Chiang (Florida Atlantic University)
- Martin Jones (Dundee University), Yin Zhang (Dundee University)

1. Welcoming New Students into Economics, 2020-style

Speaker: Andrew Mearman (University of Leeds), Juliane Scheffel (University of Leeds)

Q1) How much latitude did students have in terms of choosing a topic/ any other parameters of the brief?

Juliane: The brief gave students the general topic for the group challenge and specified that students can address this question from various angles such as productivity, the impact on small businesses, the labour market, the environment etc. Students were however free to decide what aspects they want to cover in their videos/posters as long as they showed how economics can help to address real world issues. All posters and videos should be aimed at a non-specialist audience.
3. Teaching and Pre-degree Mathematics Training on Results and Module Choices in Economics Degrees

Speaker: Martin Jones (Dundee University), Yin Zhang (Dundee University)

Q1) How math-heavy is the A level syllabus and the Highers?

Yin Zhang: A levels are qualifications taken by students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland while Highers are taken by students in Scotland. Both qualifications can be studied in different subjects, e.g. Mathematics, Business Studies, Geography, Latin, etc. Students normally complete 3-4 A levels or 5-6 Highers in preparation for their study at university.

Both A-level and Highers mathematics papers cover calculus and other advanced pure mathematics, but the A-level paper also has some applied mathematics.

Q2) Are students following the same course of study over the four years or can they have different paths like in the American system, making up for math shortcomings along the way?

Yin Zhang: Economics students have the same common core modules in the first two years but can choose different pathways/specialisms over the third and fourth years. Some pathways are more quantitatively demanding than others. Hence, it is possible for students to opt for a pathway that plays to their particular strength.