

ANNUAL WORKSHOP
13th May 2025
University of Bristol
Life Sciences Building G13/14

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

- 10.30 – 11.00 Registration
- 11.00 – 12.30 **Panel: The Future of the Economics Degree: Who? What? How?**
Carlos Cortinhas (Exeter), Sumit Dey-Chowdhury (ONS) and Sarah Smith (Bristol)
Chair: Danielle Guizzo (Bristol)
- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 – 14.30 Presentation Session 1
Chair: Daniel Cernin (Southampton)
- More Seats at the Table: Diversifying the Economics Degree**
Maria Psyllou (Imperial)
- Having silent international students? Knowing them and engaging them**
Yunzi He (Bristol)
- Enhancing Student Experience through Structured Academic Advising**
Debbie Du Preez, Arpita Ghosh, and Shaun Grimshaw (Exeter)
- Determinants of students' engagement with programming tools in economics education and their usefulness**
Ahmed Pirzada (Bristol)
- 14.30 – 14.50 Break
- 14.50 – 15.50 Presentation Session 2
Chair: Jana Sadeh (Southampton)
- Sources of confusion in introductory macroeconomics**
Jo Michell (UWE)
- Enhancing the Integration of UN Sustainable Development Goals into economics programmes through student led curriculum mapping**
Andrew Hunt (Plymouth)
- The Education Pathway: Administrative Roles and Scholarship**
A Case Study – The Undergraduate Dissertation
Emanuela Lotti (Southampton)
- Teaching-Track Economists in the United Kingdom**
Alvin Birdi and Christian Spielmann (Bristol)
- 15.50 – 16.00 Final Remarks and Close

ABSTRACTS

Presentation Session 1

More Seats at the Table: Diversifying the Economics Degree

Maria Psyllou (Imperial)

The future of the economics degree depends on who studies it, what they learn, and how we teach it. Despite the discipline's profound impact on policymaking and society, women, ethnic minorities, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds remain underrepresented. This lack of diversity limits perspectives within the field and affects economic policymaking and research, leading to solutions that may not fully reflect the needs of diverse populations. This presentation explores the key barriers to diversity in economics education and presents practical, easily implementable solutions to create a more inclusive learning environment.

Who studies economics? One of the biggest barriers is the perception that economics is abstract, overly mathematical, and disconnected from real-world issues. Many students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, do not see themselves in the field. Addressing this requires showcasing diverse role models and expanding outreach efforts to schools and colleges. Universities can take simple steps such as diversifying guest speakers in lectures and career events, ensuring that students see economists they can relate to.

What should students learn? A more inclusive curriculum should integrate case studies and data that reflect diverse economic experiences, such as gender pay gaps, global inequality, and economic policies affecting different communities. This does not require large-scale curriculum reform; small adjustments to reading lists and classroom examples can make a significant impact.

How should we teach it? Traditional teaching and assessment methods can unintentionally create barriers. Universities can rethink assessment methods by incorporating more group projects, policy briefs, and presentations, catering to different learning styles. Additionally, small, informal mentoring schemes, pairing students with faculty or alumni, can offer guidance and career support without requiring extensive resources.

By making these small but meaningful changes, universities can immediately start breaking barriers and work towards a more diverse, accessible, and representative economics degree.

Having silent international students? Knowing them and engaging them

Yunzi He (Bristol)

International students, particularly those from China, play a significant role in the UK higher education system, yet their classroom engagement often varies. This paper explores the participation of Chinese undergraduate and postgraduate students studying Economics at UK universities, addressing the common perception of their silence in classroom discussions. Understanding the root causes of this silence is essential for developing inclusive teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning backgrounds, thereby enhancing overall student engagement.

The paper first examines the Chinese educational system, which traditionally emphasizes teacher-centered approaches and exam-driven assessments. This system, with its focus on passive learning and lecture-style teaching, shapes students' expectations and behaviours in international classrooms that prioritize active participation. The paper also investigates the language barriers faced by Chinese students that often limit their classroom participation. It explores how high-stakes exams, such as the Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination), the College English Test (CET), and the IELTS, influence Chinese students' English language skills, particularly in speaking and listening, which can hinder their classroom participation.

Drawing on a case study from the University of Bristol, the paper demonstrates how structured group discussions, multilingual support, and scaffolded participation opportunities can promote greater engagement among Chinese students. By incorporating low-stakes activities and providing clear expectations, students gradually gain confidence and

contribute more actively to discussions. The case study highlights how tailored pedagogical interventions can effectively improve participation and contribute to a more inclusive learning environment.

Ultimately, this study provides valuable insights for educators on bridging cultural gaps and creating more supportive and engaging learning environments for international students. By addressing both linguistic and cultural challenges, instructors can implement strategies that enhance engagement, benefiting not only Chinese students but the broader academic community as a whole.

Enhancing Student Experience through Structured Academic Advising

Debbie Du Preez, Arpita Ghosh, and Shaun Grimshaw (Exeter)

As economics degrees evolve to incorporate new approaches to teaching and learning, academic personal advising (or tutoring) must also adapt to meet the changing needs of our students. We restructured academic advising at Exeter by modernizing academic support through structured guidance, digital resources, and proactive student engagement.

To support our students from different cultural and academic backgrounds, we developed a SharePoint repository to, inter alia, provide resources on academic writing skills, mental health well-being, and information on our Maths and Statistics Help Desk. This resource ensures that students, regardless of their prior knowledge, have access to essential tools for academic success, especially when their academic personal advisors are not readily available to answer questions. For example, to ensure our students follow a research-led and choice-driven curriculum, every year, we update the SharePoint site with videos from module leads, offering insights into optional modules. These videos help students make informed choices and engage effectively with their coursework.

To enhance how staff members provide well-structured and consistent academic guidance, we have developed and subsequently improved upon an Academic Personal Tutoring handbook. This resource was well received by staff - it has reduced inefficiencies in workload and streamlined the process of student support around academic issues. By providing clear guidance, an extensive FAQ section, and structured meeting points and email templates, the handbook ensures consistency in tutoring practices while allowing staff members to focus more on providing tailored academic advice to students.

Our third focus is around proactively tracking academically 'at-risk' students. This takes place twice a year i.e., after winter and summer examinations and focuses on the compulsory (non-condonable) modules they must pass for degree level progression. This process enables timely intervention for the student, encouraging them to seek academic and/or well-being support. This way, they are also 'nudged' to seek advice from their tutors before any academic difficulties arise that could restrict them from progressing to the next stage.

By combining these different resources and interventions, we are ensuring academic personal tutoring practices at Exeter keeps pace with the continuously evolving higher education experience of students. This ensures they get the guidance and support they need to thrive in an increasingly dynamic academic and professional world. We believe that further discussions in these areas have the potential to enhance student experiences across all universities.

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

Ahmed Pirzada (Bristol)

When asked, at the start of the term, 85% of students (N=70+) in a second-year economics unit at Bristol 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.

Presentation Session 2

Sources of confusion in introductory macroeconomics

Jo Michell (UWE)

Learning macroeconomics is difficult. Introductory macroeconomics textbooks are littered with potential sources of confusion. Language is used imprecisely and ambiguously. Concepts are often incompletely or incorrectly explained. I consider five concepts or models from introductory macroeconomics teaching that cause confusion for students. These are: - Equilibrium - Saving, Investment, Capital - IS-LM - AS-AD - The national accounting identity: $Y = C + I + G + X - M$ Having considered these examples, I propose some brief principles for teaching macroeconomics in a way that reduces the potential for confusion.

Enhancing the Integration of UN Sustainable Development Goals into economics programmes through student led curriculum mapping

Andrew Hunt (Plymouth)

Many universities are, rightly, aiming to enhance their commitment to sustainability and responsible management education. This case study outlines a structured methodology for embedding, broadly defined, 'sustainability' in economics education. This methodology aims to support curricula transformation, including subject content, delivery and assessment, to deepen the alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) agenda. It also adds innovative mapping criteria to include what we have referred to as the "Responsible Management Education Criteria". The approach aims to have positive outcomes for Student Voice through the involvement of student auditors. It also incorporates partnership working as the mapping was conducted in collaboration with Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK).

The Education Pathway: Administrative Roles and Scholarship

A Case Study – The Undergraduate Dissertation

Emanuela Lotti (Southampton)

In this project, still in the preliminary phase, we aim to explore similarities and differences in education-focused careers across various academic disciplines. We look at the University of Southampton. Our focus is on a Faculty encompassing Economics and other Social Sciences, including Business and Mathematics. Is there a shared interdisciplinary understanding of the education-focused career pathway? What does the literature say about the education focused career, the role of scholarships of teaching and learning as well as the use of administrative roles and scholarships to enhance career opportunities in leadership & engagement?

As a practical example of leadership and scholarship, we examine the role of dissertation coordinators to reflect on the future of the undergraduate independent research project. In collaboration with students and academic colleagues, we are re-evaluating the structure and support provided for dissertations in Economics, with particular attention to the literature review component. This involves integrating general academic guidance with discipline-specific advice, while also adapting to emerging challenges—particularly the implications of generative AI tools. Our goal is to develop strategies that not only safeguard academic integrity but also enhance students' research skills and employability.