

ISSUE 30
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NEWSLETTER

Working with the
Royal Economic Society and
Scottish Economic Society to
support economics education
in the UK and internationally

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The Economics Network is generously supported by the Royal Economic Society, the Scottish Economic Society and over 50 UK higher education economics departments. More information on our supporters and joining the Network is available on our website at:

www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/about/supporters

Benefits for supporting departments include:

- Priority access and free or reduced fees for Economics Network training such as graduate teaching assistant and early career workshops which are held at selected member institutions.
- Advice, support and consultancy for internal departmental workshops and away days.
- Publicity on the Network's website.
- Reduced or waived fees and priority booking for events and conferences.
- Invitations to participate in the Network's pedagogical research activities.

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Economics Network Newsletter

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Editorial

As always the academic year started with our training workshops for graduate teaching assistants. These events, which focus on small-group teaching, have traditionally all been run in the autumn term, but for the past two years we have also added one workshop in January. The additional workshops in the second term have been well-attended and we will endeavour to provide one every year. As always, the feedback from the

workshops was very positive, with 99% of attendees agreeing or strongly agreeing that the presenters were of a high standard, and 93% reporting that the training met their objectives as a GTA. Many thanks to our Associates who ran these events!

We also have our workshop for early careers lecturers coming up in April. The registration link is now live on our website (see page 5 for details). We expect that this will be a popular event so please encourage any colleagues to sign up as soon as possible.

In September, we look forward to welcoming many of you to the tenth biennial Developments in Economics Education conference, which will take place at the University of Warwick (page 7). The call for papers is open until 22nd February and this year's conference themes are 'graduate employability' and 'online learning and assessment'. This second theme also links to a special issue of the *International Review of Economics Education* which will be published in 2020 (see page 8 for the call for papers).

This year we are also running an employability skills project, led by Dr Cloda Jenkins from UCL (page 11). Its aim is to evaluate

the teaching and assessment of employability skills within economics programmes. We also plan to share best practice for helping students to develop these skills. We will shortly be writing to departments about this project and hope that as many as possible will contribute.

Within this edition of the newsletter you will also find articles on new economics texts (pages 9 and 13) and methods of delivery (page 14). If you have a case study or innovation from one of your courses to share, please consider adding it to our teaching and learning Ideas Bank (page 4).

Lastly, Martin Poulter's article (page 6) discusses the importance of data and information literacy in a world of 'fake news' - both in economics courses and for the Network. Martin has created a page on our website that's designed to give more contextual details about information sources. We also hope to address this theme at the DEE conference so would encourage submissions on this issue and how it is being addressed within economics courses.

Ashley Lait
(Economics Network Centre Manager)

New Logo



You may have noticed that we have a new, simpler logo on our website and this newsletter. We hope you like it!

We have also created new templates for PowerPoint presentations, event programmes and Word documents that can be used by our Associates when running workshops and/or producing resources. These, plus downloadable logo files, are available on the team area of our website.

All Associates should have access to this but if you need the link, please contact Ashley (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk).



Ideas Bank

We have over 180 teaching and learning case studies in the Ideas Bank on the Economics Network website (economicsnetwork.ac.uk/showcase). These focus on many different areas of economics pedagogy including student engagement, assessment, experiments and games, course content and curricula, e-learning and employability.

Visit the Ideas Bank to find new approaches and inspiration

To submit a case study, contact Martin (m.l.poulter@bristol.ac.uk)

Early Careers Workshop



Dates: **11 & 12 April 2019**

Venue: **University of Newcastle**

This workshop is an interactive two-day event for early careers staff focused on effective and innovative economics teaching. The workshop is endorsed by both the Royal Economic Society and Scottish Economic Society, and sessions are mapped against the UK Professional Standards Framework.



Sessions at the workshop include:

- Making large group teaching more engaging
- Using games and the media in teaching
- Voice and presence in the classroom (with a RSC-trained actor)
- Teaching interpretative sessions
- Teaching analytical sessions

As in previous years, attendees from subscribing departments will be offered reduced registration fees for this workshop.

Further information and booking is available on our website at: www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/events/earlycareers

"I have come away with lots of new ideas for my teaching!"

"Really enjoyed the workshop, all presenters were very enthusiastic and engaging!"

"This is a hugely informative workshop!"

Click to book your place

Information Quality and Literacy in Economics

Martin Poulter, Economics Network

A decade ago, I was a co-author of an online tutorial for students, *The Internet for Economics*, which has since been transferred to a commercial company. We warned students that junk information they find online could mislead them and harm their work.

The advice we gave looks naive in retrospect. The perennial problems of spin and bias have escalated in the age of social media troll-farms and clickbait fake news. Advice on information quality is needed now more than ever, but it needs to reflect the modern environment.

There is a confusing mass of agencies claiming to inform and educate the public about economics, and names are not always helpful. Anyone following current events will have heard about IEA (International Energy Agency), IEA (Institute of Economic Affairs) and IFS (Institute for Fiscal Studies). It is easy for lay people, or people new to the subject, to confuse these organisations and their different status with respect to mainstream research.



Political advocacy from non-academic sources is often presented in a way that can be mistaken for educational content from mainstream academia, such as the hugely successful YouTube channel "Prager University", which is not actually a university. Information-quality problems, from subtle mislabelling to outright propaganda, manifest across the political spectrum.



There are services such as WhoFundsYou and Transparify that monitor think tanks, pressure groups, and media outlets for

transparency and bias. There has been a recent growth in sites that fact-check specific claims. These sites are sometimes unclear about their own agenda and funding, risking a regress. Still, contextual information can help learners and the public make better judgements about the information they find online or see quoted in traditional media.

I hope the Economics Network site can take a more active role in fighting spin and bias, not as an arbiter of truth but as a provider of context. Our resource database has long included links to interest groups to help with the creation of reading lists on economic topics. In the future we will give more contextual information about information sources. While we avoid linking to sources of outright junk, we will point to services that identify disinformation.

As a first step, we are listing fact-checking organisations that cover economic topics, with example articles from each: www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/internet/fact-checking

I'm interested to hear suggestions of what would be most useful to learners and teachers of economics. I can be contacted at m.l.poulter@bris.ac.uk.

[Link to our new fact check page](#)

Call for Papers

Developments in Economics Education Conference

Our tenth DEE conference will take place on Wednesday 11th to Friday 13th September 2019 at the University of Warwick.

Call for papers

The call for papers for the 2019 conference is now open and will close on 22nd February 2019.

Session types

DEE 2019 session proposals should focus on research or practice in economics education and can be one of the following:

- Papers - Paper sessions will last 30 minutes (to include 5 or 10 minutes for questions).
- Interactive workshops - The interactive workshop sessions will be 45 minutes long and place an emphasis on discussion and group activities over presentation.

Conference focus

We will have streams within the conference on two main themes:

- Graduate employability skills (linked to our employability project)
- Online learning and assessment (linked to a special issue of IREE)

We also welcome submissions on any other topic relating to advancements and innovation in economics education.

Visit the conference website for further information and to submit a proposal.

www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/dee2019

IREE: Call for Papers

Special issue on online teaching, learning and assessment in economics

Innovation in teaching, learning and assessment continues and typically occurs in the blended and online learning space. It is facilitated by new technology that increasingly allows the blending of online and classroom learning that is both active and student-centred. New platforms and software are also allowing innovation in the online assessment of learning that can be highly authentic and also address concerns about academic integrity.



The International Review of Economics Education will publish a special issue on the theme of online teaching, learning and assessment in economics. The issue will be published in 2020, which provides an opportunity for papers on this theme to be submitted to the Developments in Economics Education conference in 2019.

We are inviting topics that broadly fit the above theme such as, but not exclusively:

- new digital tools and platforms to improve online learning and teaching
- promoting student engagement in online mode
- active learning in online mode
- online assessment methods
- proctoring and similar tools to promote academic integrity with online exams
- evaluating online learning and teaching
- the student experience in online learning
- expertise of academics in teaching online

Guest editors: Steve Cook (Swansea University) and Alvin Birdi (University of Bristol)



When submitting through the online system authors will be asked to nominate the 'Special Issue' for their article.

Guide for authors: <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/international-review-of-economics-education/1477-3880/guide-for-authors#>

 @IREE_Journal

Announcing the Publication of a New Teaching and Learning Resource in Economic History

Chris Colvin and Matthias Blum, Queen's University Belfast

Lessons from economic history provide invaluable insights into the big global challenges of today's world—whether it is trade wars, financial crises, migration pressures, climate change or extreme political uncertainty.

Our new book **An Economist's Guide to Economic History** brings together some of the world's top economic historians to explain what economists need to know about the past—whether they are working as academic researchers, journalistic commentators or government policy advisers. The book contains 50 chapters on a selection of the most important areas in economic history and is written by experts across the fields of economic, financial and business history.

We were motivated to start our pedagogical project by the failure of economics as a discipline to foresee and adequately respond to the various global economic and financial crises since 2008. We argue that this failure was precipitated partly by a lack of awareness about our economic past among academic and professional economists.

The gap in the education of economics educators in particular has severe consequences. It means that economics students graduate with very limited knowledge and understanding of the real-world economy.

Typically, economics students spend practically no time at all studying the important historical events and developments which shape the modern world. We are convinced that studying the past would help them to become better economists.

The study of economic history was virtually eliminated from economics programmes in most UK universities. We advocate for its re-insertion across the curriculum in various different ways, and our book provides readers with a how-to guide.

Our central point is that many of the most pressing issues facing contemporary society, such as immigration and climate change, could be better understood and addressed by economists if economic history was taught as a core part of their training. This training can be delivered as a stand-alone economic history module in a student's final year of study, or alternatively embedded across diverse field courses such as labour, development, finance or macro.

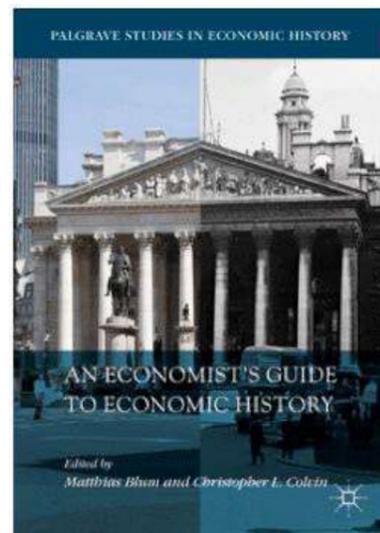
For example, if you want to learn about challenges in modern-day China, south Asia or any resource-dependent developing economy, then a good starting point would be Britain or parts of historical Germany, France or Belgium in the early industrial period.

Likewise, the social and political issues with migration which we are experiencing today are nothing new. There are many phases of world economic history when large populations migrated across international boundaries. Economic history allows us to look at the consequences of immigration and emigration, to see how long the assimilation of migrants takes and measure their overall economic impact on society.

We designed our book to help non-experts. Policy advisers can use the book as a desk reference when preparing briefing notes to government ministers and designing new policy initiatives. University lecturers can use the book as a teaching resource by integrating relevant chapters into their syllabi. And economics students without access to economic history teaching in their own universities can take inspiration from the book when looking for research ideas.

All our current crises have historical parallels and precedents. Although the past can never be mapped perfectly onto the present, the lessons from economic history are nevertheless loud and clear.

An Economist's Guide to Economic History, published by Palgrave Macmillan in December 2018, is available in paperback and eBook formats. It can be purchased online and in all good bookshops. Check whether your university library may already have a subscription to the eBook version through SpringerLink (link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-96568-0).



Further information about the book and its contributors is available on our website (www.blumandcolvin.org). We have big plans for this website; we hope to host additional teaching and learning resources that can be freely downloaded, including lesson plans, assessment ideas and datasets. We will keep you informed about our progress through the Economic Network.



SPE Courses & Events

Course: The Financial and Economic Crisis of 2008
Speaker: John Llewellyn
Date: 22 February 2019 (10am-5pm)
Venue: Birkbeck University, Malet Street, Bloomsbury, London, WC1E 7HX

Event: SPE Annual Dinner 2019
Date: 11 March 2019 (6.30pm)
Venue: Institute of Directors, 116 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5ED



To book and find out more, visit the SPE website at:
<https://spe.org.uk/whats-on/events/>

Teaching and Assessing Employability Skills in Economics

About the project

This collaborative project led by the Economics Network and Cloda Jenkins (University College London) is designed to explore what skills students need to develop in their economics degree and how best to teach and assess these skills. It aims to evaluate how employability skills are currently being fostered, to identify potential areas where further development and research may be warranted, and to share best practice within the HE economics community.

This is an important area of discussion for the discipline in general but particularly in the context of subject-level TEF and its focus on graduate outcomes. "There has been much criticism of the extent to which a university economics degree prepares its graduates for work and yet we know, for example from discussions at DEE 2017, that many economics lecturers are doing a lot to help students develop skills for employment. This project provides an opportunity to bring the discussion forward with a stock-take of what is actually being done in relation to employability skills; allowing us to identify actual and perceived differences between what economics departments are trying to do and what skills graduates need to have in the labour market" (Cloda Jenkins, Project Lead).

The project will begin with a survey, which will be sent to degree programme leads in all UK universities (in early February). Respondents will also have the opportunity to share case studies of good practice. The second phase will consist of a series of focus groups, which will bring together programme leads, employers, alumni and students to discuss the survey results and the development of students' employability skills more broadly.

Find out more

If you would like further information about the project, please either email Ashley Lait (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk) or visit the project website at <https://www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/research/employability>.



Employers' Survey

We have relaunched our employers' survey!

We have relaunched our employers' survey in order to collect more responses from employers of economics graduates. We hope that this will give us some more data to accompany our new employability project (see page 11).

Our employers' survey aims to improve understanding of the skills economics graduates need in the workplace, to establish whether employers think these graduates generally possess the required skills and knowledge, and to reveal any clear shortfalls in order to inform the UK economics academic community.

If you are an employer of economics graduates we would appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes to complete this form. Otherwise, we would be grateful if you could circulate the link to the survey with any relevant contacts you have.

For further information, contact Ashley (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk). The survey can be accessed at: <https://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/surveys/employers2018>.

Access the survey

Measuring the Economy

Fiona Dawe, ONS



The Office for National Statistics is creating an online book "Measuring the Economy" for use by universities to support undergraduate and postgraduate economic statistics teaching. The book aims to convey the importance of best-practice, real-world economic measurement, and as such to support academics and students in understanding the issues surrounding the measurement of the modern economy.

Chapters are being written by leading experts in their subject area, with the aim being to bring their knowledge and expertise together in a single output. Our aim is for the chapters to be standalone, so that they can be used a la carte while, also maintaining a common and coherent approach. We are looking to develop teaching resources for each chapter – case studies, exercises and test questions for example, once the chapter has been published in Beta. As soon as these additional resources have been produced we will make them available, alongside the chapter, for use and comment.

Our aim is to publish the chapters, in Beta, between April and September 2019 and we would value feedback and comments from teaching staff and members of the Economics Network. Thoughts or help with the teaching materials would also be gratefully received.

Publication of the online book, in Alpha, is anticipated to be September 2020. The

intention is also to publish a regularly updated hard copy version thereafter.

Chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Prices and Inflation
3. National Income and Expenditure
3. Sectoral Accounts
4. Supply-Use Framework
5. The Labour Market
6. Productivity and Growth
7. Inequality
8. Sub-National Statistics
9. Trade and Balance of Payments
10. The Financial Sector
11. The Environment- including National Capital
12. Hard to measure sectors
13. Innovation Statistics

Provisional timeline:

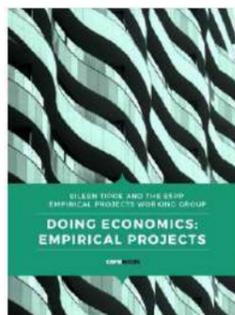
- April 2019: Introduction and first chapters published in Beta
- September 2019: All chapters published in Beta
- March 2020: Beta version comments collected
- September 2020: Alpha version published; Hard copy version published

Please contact me if you would like further information or would like to be involved in the testing of this new online resource: fiona.dawe@ons.gov.uk.

Teaching with webinars

Alvin Birdi, Economics Network & University of Bristol

At Bristol, we run a university-wide course on data literacy and basic statistics using the datasets and empirical problems contained in the CORE text, *Doing Economics*. The main lecture-style delivery is through webinars. The choice to use webinars in our course was partly a solution to a practical problem, namely, to ease timetabling pressures. In a course such as this, where the students come from a wide variety of programmes across the university it becomes nearly impossible to find a time where they are all jointly available and a suitable room is free.



Webinars allow us to replace lectures with interactive live sessions that could be easily moved from week to week because they impose no demands on the physical teaching estate and there is virtually no overhead involved in re-scheduling. For those students who cannot make any particular webinar, a recording is provided.

Our new course, which explores data analysis through the themes of inequality, climate crisis and innovation, was intended to be pedagogically innovative in a number of ways. But it initially seemed to us that webinars would be the least innovative aspect of the course because they would simply replicate the traditional experience of lectures in a virtual setting. We had envisaged that the innovative elements of the course we had put together resided in other aspects, namely the hands-on interactive workshops, problem-based assessments, assessment choice, video production by students, the multidisciplinary approach, audio podcasts and online office hours.

To our surprise, webinars proved to be among the most innovative pedagogical aspects of the new course because they changed the interpersonal dynamic of teaching and learning in ways that we did not envisage. They encouraged team teaching

with two or more tutors routinely involved in running a session simply because this could be done at very low cost and from remote locations. The informality of the webinar setting makes it natural for a tutor to “drop-in” to the webinar for a short time. Such a casual approach would not only seem rude in a traditional lecture, but the overhead of physically attending a lecture hall across campus for ten minutes or so is highly impractical.

From a students’ point of view, team-teaching appears to effect a significant change in the nature of engagement. Team-teaching in a relaxed webinar environment models for students a dialogic approach to the subject where discussion, disagreements and alternative points of view held by lecturers are played out in a live arena. Debate and discussion as a mode of learning becomes normalised and expected. This is in distinction to a single lecturer in a room in which the mode of delivery can sometimes lend an air of unquestionable authority to the material being presented. Discussion in this setting can seem to students to rub against the grain of the session.



It seems to us that webinars offer much more pedagogically than the use of new technology to present an old format of teaching.

Alvin Birdi runs the Inequality, Crisis and Prosperity course at the University of Bristol with Christian Spielmann.



THE SCOTTISH ECONOMIC SOCIETY
SCOTTISH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

Scottish Economic Society 2019 Annual Conference

Sunday 7th - Tuesday 9th April
Perth Concert Hall, Perth, Scotland

[Call for papers and proposals for organised sessions](#)

The Society invites submissions of papers and proposals for organised sessions from all areas of Economics, Economic Policy, and Econometrics. The Society emphasises application of economics to policy.

Deadline for submissions:
7th January 2019

[President’s Lecture](#)

“Brexit through the ages”
Professor Barry Eichengreen
University of California, Berkeley

[Sir Alec Cairncross Prize](#)

The Society awards a prize of £1000 for the best paper presented at its Annual Conference by an economist currently registered for a PhD who has successfully completed within the last five years.

Full details can be found on the conference website:

www.economics.scot

Royal Economic Society 2019 Annual Conference

University of Warwick
15 -17 April 2019

Keynote speakers

Anne Case (Princeton), Hahn Lecture

James J. Heckman (Chicago), Sargan Lecture

Eliana La Ferrara (Bocconi), Economic Journal Lecture

Peter Neary (Oxford), Past President's Address

Call for papers

Submissions of papers are invited for the General Sessions from academic, government and business economists in any field of economics and econometrics.

- Deadline for submissions: midnight GMT on Sunday 7 October 2018
- Notification of acceptance: by end of December 2018
- Online registration opens: 14 January 2019

Proposals for Special Sessions should be emailed to the Programme Chair at: programme@res.org.uk by 25 October 2018

Further information and a link to submit papers can be found on the conference website: www.resconference.org



Special events

Mentoring Retreat • 14-15 April

Run by the RES women's committee for female junior economists. Includes accommodation and financial support for travel and childcare.

RES Presents • 15-17 April

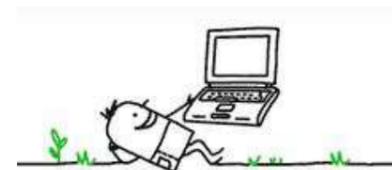
Our series of early evening events on topical issues open to the public.

Symposium of Junior Researchers • 18 April

Organised by research students for research students to foster discussion in all areas of economics.

For further information visit: www.resconference.org

Opportunities for students



Studying Economics website

Our Studying Economics website is a resource for undergraduate economics students and provides guidance on choosing modules, study skills and careers.

The website also features a student-led blog, which gives undergraduates the opportunity to read and write about news stories through an economics lens.

We are looking for students to contribute articles to the blog so please feel free to share this information and ask any students who might be interested to contact Ashley (ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk) or Martin (m.l.poulter@bristol.ac.uk).

[Visit the Studying Economics website](#)

Careers in the Government Economic Service

Join the GES as an Assistant Economist! To help us deliver analysis we are looking for economists to join us and influence the day-to-day lives of every person in the UK.



The Government Economic Service is at the heart of everything government does with high quality economic analysis essential to decision making in everything from negotiating new trade deals to building HS2, from supporting regional growth to managing the UK's debt. This is an exciting time to be joining the civil service, and with continuous support you'll prepare vital briefings for ministers or the public, provide advice on policy options, and ensure the quality and appropriate use of economic statistics.

Applicants will need to possess or expected to have a first or upper second class honours degree with at least 50% of the modules in economics, or have a Masters in economics.

Closing date: 28 February 2019

Grade: HEO (Economics)

Working pattern: Full-time, Part-time

Salary: £27,000+

Hours: 37 hours

For further details and to apply now please visit our website (ges.gov.uk).

Photo: The Needle of Knowledge Obelisk by Stefan Knapp

Events 'round-up'

Apr 2019

7-9

Scottish Economic Society Annual Conference

Perth, UK

www.economics.scot



Apr 2019

11-12

Economics Network Early Careers Workshop

Newcastle University, UK

economicsnetwork.ac.uk/events/earlycareers



Apr 2019

15-17

Royal Economic Society Annual Conference

University of Warwick, UK

res.org.uk/event-listing/annual-conference.html



May 2019

29-31

American Economic Association Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education

St Louis, Missouri, USA

aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/economic-education



Aug 2019

26-30

European Economic Association & European Economic Society Conference

University of Manchester, UK

eea-esem-congresses.org/



Jan 2020

3-5

American Economic Association Annual Meeting

San Diego, California, USA

aeaweb.org/conference/future-annual-meetings

