

Tips for Applying to Economics/Economics Related Courses at University

Firstly, it is worth deciding what you want to study. Economics is a very popular subject at University and as a result there are a wide variety of courses that include studying Economics.

Here are a few that you might want to consider:

Economics
Economics and Management
Economics and Geography
Economics and History
Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Economics and Business
Maths, Operational Research, Statistics & Economics (MORSE)
Financial Economics

Unless you have your heart set on one specific course, it is worth researching a few courses by looking on university websites or websites such as <http://university.which.co.uk/> to find out the structures of different courses e.g. how much maths is in the course or whether the course is examined on coursework or exams or a mixture.

Importantly, it is worth checking to see whether the course requires A Level Maths - most do.

Application

Whilst you are deciding where you want to apply, there are a number of things you can be doing to strengthen your application.

It is important to keep on top of your A Level subjects, after all, even if someone has a brilliant personal statement a university will not offer them a place unless their grades are of a good standard. This is especially important for those who want to apply to the most competitive universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, LSE, UCL etc.

Researching and reading around the subject will provide you with useful knowledge for when you come to write your personal statement (and for those of you who will be interviewed). It will also help you decide whether you want to study economics for three years of your life.

Undertaking an EPQ will give you a good grounding in a particular field of economics and shows that you are genuinely interested in studying it. Think carefully about your subject. Most people will do an Economics EPQ on something

to do with macroeconomic, e.g. 2008 financial crisis. Whilst this is good, it might be worth considering doing a EPQ on microeconomic as this will help you stand out from the crowd - I certainly would have done had I applied again. But do not fret over this, especially if you want to do a macroeconomic EPQ.

Personal Statement

My advice would be start early - don't let yourself have to rush and write this in a hurry. It is essential that you provide evidence of your further reading and interest in economics. They only really want to find out that you are genuinely interested in the subject and would therefore be a good student.

Your first draft will likely be poor and painful to read but don't let this discourage you. Leave it for a few days and come back to it or get a parent to read it and to suggest improvements. Once you have improved it to the best standard you think you can reach by yourself, give a copy to whichever teacher you would like to write your reference. Be patient as these teachers will have lots of other people's statements to check. Equally, it might be useful to ask more than one teacher to look over it. Those of you who are **applying to Oxbridge** will also work with Ms Affleck on your personal statement. Miss Biggs is also happy to give some feedback but, as with all requests for help with your application, ensure you ask politely and are patient with staff as they are giving up their own time to help you.

Here are some ideas for further reading/researching that you could include in your personal statement:

Books

- Nudge by Thaler and Sunstein
- Undercover Economist by Harford
- Other People's Money by Kay
- 23 Things they Don't Tell You About Capitalism by Chang
- The Price of Inequality by Stiglitz

Try to avoid the 'run of the mill' books such as Freakonomics as most people will include these. Ask your teacher for recommendations.

Websites

- <http://www.core-econ.org/>
- <http://timharford.com/>
- <http://www.economist.com/>
- <https://www.ft.com/>
- <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/>
- <https://www.ted.com/talks?sort=newest&topics%5B%5D=Business&q=economics>

Other

- Analysis by BBC Radio 4 (e.g. the Benefits of Quantitative Easing)
- <http://www.npr.org/sections/money/> (very good podcasts)

Oxbridge Advice

For those of you who want to apply to Oxford or Cambridge here are a few tips to help you along the way.

Decide whether you would want to go apply to Oxford or Cambridge. Both are very competitive and so you need to prepare yourself in the best way possible.

Cambridge offers an Economics course whilst Oxford offers Economics **and Management** so think carefully as to which of these you would like to study.

Other courses at Oxford include Economics and History as well as PPE.

Application

All of the general advice still applies however the personal statement will need to be more focused on the academic side of economics and very little space is dedicated to your extra-curricula achievements (Ms Affleck will give you guidance on this).

Cambridge applicants will be required to fill out a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ).

It is very important that you are reading intellectual economics books rather than those which are aimed at non economists e.g “A beginner’s guide to...”.

It is essential that you read publications such as The Economist and where possible newspapers such as the Financial Times. This will not only improve your knowledge of current affairs, it will help improve your understanding of economics. It would be worth looking at the Economist’s Six Big Ideas Series which includes topics such as the Mundell-Fleming Trillema and Akerloff’s Market for Lemons.

Admissions Tests

Oxford - Thinking Skills Assessment

Cambridge - Economics Admissions Test

Both Frank May and myself found the most effective way to prepare for these tests was to work through all available past paper resources online. This is easier for the TSA than the Cambridge Economics test.

You need to be very proactive in your preparation - talk to the relevant teachers to seek help but it should be you that does most of the work.

The TSA is a mixture of critical thinking, verbal reasoning and problem solving questions. Getting used to the type of questions is key and will help you a lot. There is also an essay section which requires you to write a 30 minute essay on a given question - again, practise makes this easier.

The Cambridge test has a maths section so you need to be very competent with all of the A Level Core modules. Mr McCrink will be able to give you some resources to help you with this.

Interview

The best way to prepare for interviews is to be interviewed. Organise as many mock interviews as you can with Mr Hunter, Mr Walton, Mrs Mahony and others. This will help you get used to the experience and the types of questions that you may get asked.

It goes without saying that you should know your personal statement inside out so don't write anything you do not think you would be able to hold a detailed conversation about.

Finally, enjoy the experience. Getting into Oxford or Cambridge is far from the be all and end all - don't make any assumptions. As long as you do everything to the best of your ability there is no shame in not getting offered a place - remember you are applying for one of the most competitive courses in the whole country.