



Guidance Notes on Economics University Applications

Advice and information on building a strong platform for
applications to the UK and overseas universities

Geoff Riley FRSA

Co-Founder of tutor2u

Spring 2016 Edition

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Section 1: UCAS – Building Blocks to Choosing a Degree

Data on university courses including student feedback can be accessed here: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

Selection of Economics Faculties: *Click on the links to access the economics faculty web sites*

Bath	www.bath.ac.uk/economics/study/ug/
Birmingham	www.economics.bham.ac.uk/index.shtml
Bristol	www.bristol.ac.uk/efm/courses/undergraduate/
Cambridge	www.econ.cam.ac.uk/ and www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/economics
Durham	www.dur.ac.uk/economics.finance/
Edinburgh	www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/economics/
Exeter	www.sobe.ex.ac.uk/undergraduate/
Lancaster	www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/departments/economics/
Leeds	http://lubswww.leeds.ac.uk/undergraduate/index.php?id=55
Leicester:	www2.le.ac.uk/departments/economics
Liverpool	www.liv.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/economics-bsc-hons/overview/
London School of Economics	http://econ.lse.ac.uk/ and http://econ.lse.ac.uk/study/ugpr.html
Manchester	www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/economics/
Newcastle	www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/l100/#courseoverview
Nottingham	www.nottingham.ac.uk/economics/index.aspx
Oxford	www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/index.html
Queen’s University (Belfast)	www.qub.ac.uk/home/StudyatQueens/UndergraduateStudents/
Royal Holloway (London)	www.rhul.ac.uk/economics/prospectivestudents/home.aspx
Sheffield	www.shef.ac.uk/economics
SOAS	www.soas.ac.uk/economics/
Southampton	www.southampton.ac.uk/economics
St Andrews	www.st-andrews.ac.uk/economics/
Surrey	www.surrey.ac.uk/economics/
Sussex	www.sussex.ac.uk/economics/
UCL	www.ucl.ac.uk/economics/undergraduate/prospective
Warwick	www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/Economics/
York	www.york.ac.uk/depts/econ/

Selection of Overseas Universities / Faculties

Columbia (New York)	http://econ.columbia.edu/
Harvard (Economics)	http://economics.harvard.edu/
Princeton (Economics)	www.econ.princeton.edu/
Stanford (Economics)	https://economics.stanford.edu/undergraduate
Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)	www.tcd.ie/Economics/
Wharton (Economics)	www.wharton.upenn.edu/
Yale (Economics)	www.econ.yale.edu/

More Useful Links

- Guardian University Guide (2016) www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide
- Open Days: www.opendays.com/
- Thinking Skills Assessment: www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/
- Times University Guide (2014) – www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/gug/

Choosing Deferred Entry (Gap Year)

- If you are considering deferred entry (i.e. 2017) you **MUST** contact the university to check they accept deferred applications BEFORE submitting your application – clearly the vast majority do!
- You might be a stronger candidate with your final A2/Pre-U results known since universities are often reluctant to ‘block’ too many places with deferred offers.
- Whether you go for a deferred or post A2 application, you should have **clear plans** on what you are going to do and how you will be keeping up your **academic skills**. Most universities will expect to see something concrete and positive about Gap year plans on your personal statement.

Selection Methods used by Universities:

1. UCAS form
2. Additional Questionnaire (Cambridge)
3. Additional or replacement Personal Statement (e.g. Durham)
4. Aptitude tests (e.g. BMAT, HAT, PAT, MSAT, ELAT – scheduled for early November 2015)
5. Interview – many Oxbridge students are allocated to a different college to the original application

Some of the Key Selection Criteria

- GCSE record including the number of grade A*s and As
- AS results and module marks from individual units
- Predicted grades for A2 & Pre-U
- School reference / including individual teacher references for US universities
- Personal statement (including an extra statement for some universities e.g. at Durham)

Conditional Offers

- Usually based on **3 A level/pre-U subjects**
- Occasionally based on UCAS Tariff: http://ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/
- Might require **particular grades** in specified subjects i.e. BBB is not equivalent to ABC

UCAS Offers - Your Response

- You can accept **up to 2 offers**
- **Firm:** The one you are committed to going to if you make the grades
- **Insurance:** The back-up in case you don't make the grades for the firm choice (this should ideally have a lower grade requirement but this is not always possible)
- **Decline:** Offers you don't want to accept
- You cannot select between firm & insurance – you commit to going to the firm one if you make the grades!

Section 2: Studying Economics – Courses and Conditional Offers

- **Contact the university department concerned for precise information before applying**
- Further details are likely to be given out at the official university / faculty open days
- Many universities prefer traditional A levels such as Further Maths, Physics, History and Chemistry

For competitive courses, single honours economics will require at least one A at A2 – probably Maths. You are strongly advised to take Further Maths for Cambridge, UCL, Warwick, LSE and Oxford Econ & Management*

- **Bath:** Typical offer: **A*AA** Mathematics **and** Economics A2 is required at grade A or above – 2016 offer A*AA excluding both business and economics (one or the other), with an A in Maths
- **Birmingham:** Typical offer: **AAA**, GCSE Mathematics grade A if not offered at AS or A2 level; **AAB** for Business Management, **AAB** for Politics and Economics
- **Bristol:** Typical offer: **A*AA** including AAAA in C1, C2, C3 and C4 (including Maths and Economics)
 - Econ and Finance **AAA** offer (AA in Maths C3/C4), Econ with Study in Continental Europe (4 years) **AAA**. Econ and Politics **AAA** incl: A in C3/C4 Maths. Econ and Econometrics: AAA with AA in C3 & C4
 - Bristol is *more likely to make you an offer* if you are studying Further Mathematics within the context of four recognized A-level subjects. Some pure mathematics (mainly calculus) is needed for econ theory which is compulsory in the first year (1/6th of the first year course).
 - 1480 applications in 2015 for around 190 places
- **City University:** Typical offer: Economics: **AAB**
- **Cambridge:** A-level Maths is essential for those applying for entry. Vast majority of offers for economics at Cambridge require A2 grades of **A*AA** (may require in Further Maths), Human, Social and Political Sciences **A*AA**
 - Cambridge is moving towards subject entry exams from 2017 using the Thinking Skills Assessment tests. For economics this will involve a two-hour pre-interview written assessment
 - Their Tripos system is flexible – e.g. you might study Law or Management Studies in 3rd year
- **Durham:** Typical L100 Economics offer: **A*AA**. Or 38 IB points. Economics BA (Honours) and for Business Economics; For Combined Social Sciences (Econ + Geography) typical offer is **A*AA**, Business & Management: AAM2 or D3AB; **A*AA** for Economics with French; **A*AA** for PPE (2015)
 - You will need an A* in Maths for Economics but don't apply for PPE if you are doing Double Maths as they think this shows too narrow a focus. Durham's PPE advisor wants you to **take 4 A2 subjects**
 - If you are taking 3 subjects to A2, consider applying for the Combined Social Sciences degree that has more places. You can study the same modules as the PPE!
- **Edinburgh:** Typical offer: **AAA or BBB**: Single Honours Economics: Maths: Maths AS or A-level desirable. IB: 37 points overall and grades 666 at HL.
- **Exeter:** Typical offer: Economics **A*AA**. Selectors prefer applicants to offer grade A Mathematics. Econ and Politics offer: **AAB**; Business and Management: **AAA**; Econ & Finance: **AAA**, Econ & Econometrics, **AAA**
- **Lancaster:** BSc Economics, typical conditional offer is **AAB**, conditional offer may accept General Studies. 35 points overall with 16 points from the best 3 Higher Level subjects
- **Leeds:** Typical offer is **AAA** for most Econ options including Management. You must have A/A* in GCSE Maths; **AAB** for Econ and Maths. Econ and German offer: AAA Econ and Business **ABB**, Econ & Politics **AAB**
- **Leicester:** Typical offer: BA Economics: **ABB**
- **Liverpool:** Economics – **AAA** for entry in 2016. IB: 36 points including 6 in Higher Level Mathematics.

- **London School of Economics:** Further Maths is a **must** for Economics L100, not necessary to have studied even single Maths to apply for Economics and Government. LSE put **HUGE** emphasis on the UCAS statement. Recent offers: Government and Econ **AAA**, Economics **A*AA** Philosophy & Economics: **AAA**
- **Loughborough:** AAB/ABB (General Studies, Critical Thinking and Communication and Culture are not normally accepted). IB – 34 points minimum.
- **Manchester:** Typical offer: Economics **AAB**, Development Economics **AAB**; Economics and Finance **AAB**, Management AAB, History with Economics: **ABB** Economics and Business **ABB** IB 35 points.
- **Newcastle:** Typical offer: **AAB**: Econ and Business **ABB**, Econ & Politics **AAB**
- **Nottingham:**
 - Economics: Typical offer is **A*AA** and for those taking four full A2 subjects **A*ABB**
 - Economics & Hispanic Studies (4 years) **A*AA**; Management Studies: **AAA**
 - Industrial economics **AAB** offer in 2015
- **Oxford (Economics and Management):**
 - Typical offer: **A*AA or D3**. Candidates required to have Mathematics to A-level
 - Work experience & "extended projects" irrelevant - they read the UCAS Statement very carefully
 - The Oxford **TSA exam** is crucially important. They look at your public exam grades and your TSA score and your school reference, and by using "regression analysis" they produce an "algorithm", from which they give each candidate a score. They rank all candidates. TSA is **the** major component
- **Oxford (PPE):** Typical offer: **AAA** (including Maths) (Maths and History seen as helpful but not essential)
- **Queen Mary London:** Typical offer: Economics L100: **AAA**
- **Royal Holloway:** Typical offer: Economics: **AAB**; Economics with Politics: **ABB**
- **Sheffield:** Typical offer: BSc economics (L101) **AAB** or 35 IB points
- **School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS):** BSc Economics, typical offer is **AAA**
- **Southampton:** Typical offer: **AAB** including A level Mathematics, 4 A level subjects: **AABB** including Maths
- **St Andrew's:** Typical offer for single honours Economics is **AAAB**
- **Surrey:** Typical offer: AAB University of Surrey Economics (with a year in industry)
- **UCL:** Economics: **A*AA** *in the first sitting*, to include **grade A* in Mathematics** (and **A in Economics** if taking this subject) Taking Further Maths at A Level (A2) neither advantages nor disadvantages students
- **Warwick:** Typical offer: **A*AAB** – For L100 Economics or L112 Economics and Industrial Organization' you must obtain grade A in A2 Maths. **A*AAa** when taking 3 A2 subjects. AAA offer given for PPE in 2015.
- **York:** BSc Economics, typical offer is **AAB**

Land Economy (usually available at Cambridge, University of Reading)

- Two primary disciplines are **law and economics**. Students with interests in economic geography, environmental economics, the economics of real estate and in environmental and property law will be attracted to Land Economy. www.landecon.cam.ac.uk/courses/undergradstudy/introduction.htm
- University of Cambridge Land Economy faculty admits around 60 undergraduates per year. Normal offer is **A*AA** at A level. There is no requirement for applicants to have taken any particular subjects.

Section 3: Advice on Strengthening your University Application

- For most admissions tutors, their main focus is your **intellectual and academic potential, commitment, curiosity and passion** for your chosen subject disciplines compared with the other student applicants in a given year
- One tutor said: “**we look for intellectual curiosity and a wide-ranging view of the subject, i.e. not just focused on the UK.**” This is great advice! - Try to show awareness of the rapid and important changes happening in the world!

Focusing on your UCAS personal statement

Your UCAS personal statement should convey a **genuine commitment to a chosen subject** and must demonstrate strong, **hard supporting evidence** of having explored well beyond the syllabus, with a track record of independent study. Show that you can explore beyond the basic theory.

Enrichment and Extension Activities in your Subjects

- **Independent reading**
 - Read articles from a quality newspaper or magazine every day
 - Develop your own **personal learning network** using **blogs and twitter**
 - **Set up your own blog or student magazine** and invite other students to collaborate
 - Watch **TED talks** and talks from the [Royal Society of Arts](#) and the [London School of Economics](#)
- Read up on **critical thinking / thinking skills** – consider buying a book on this to prepare for the TSA tests
- **Get involved in school societies** and make contact with speakers after their visit – follow them on Twitter or draw on some of their most recent articles and books – this is a great way to immerse yourself in a subject
- **Enter at least one external essay competitions** such as the one organized by the **Royal Economic Society** or by one of the Oxbridge colleges that run prize essays – these are an excellent showcase for your talents
- **Get involved with summer schools** that give you fresh insights into subjects you want to take further. Check to see which UK and US universities are organizing summer schools and apply early – they fill up fast!
- **Challenge the conventional wisdom in the classroom** – question what is being taught, have confidence to take issue with your teachers and explore many different arguments – don’t take a back seat, don’t be passive – it will help you in interviews and in university seminars and it will improve your self-confidence
- **Explore areas of the subject beyond the syllabus** such as **game theory** and **behavioural economics**
- **Network - explore opportunities for work experiences** with different organizations and people - the more diverse the experience – the better. Working for a **local charity**, with a newspaper or **business start-up** is more valuable than shadowing boring people in an investment banking office or a firm of accountants!
- **Travel** and seek to understand more about the social, economic, political and historical background of the places you are visiting. Read up about them, perhaps contributing to school-based magazines or other student publications. **Blog** about your experiences and your views! **Chance favours the connected mind!**
- **Attend outside lectures and other events** – look for lectures made available to the general public at your local universities or academic organizations: In London for example I recommend:
 - LSE Public Lectures: www2.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/eventsHome.aspx (London) – video available
 - RSA Events: www.thersa.org/events/our-events (London) - always live streamed
 - RES Essay competition: 2016 - <http://www.res.org.uk/view/essayEduTraining.html> - recommended!

Section 4: Advice on Writing a Personal Statement

- Statements are a **crucial piece of evidence** alongside **projected /actual grades** and the **school reference**
- Only a few universities interview applicants; in these cases the Personal Statement is a candidate's only chance of displaying potential to the admissions tutor.
- **They must be personal** and they **must convey genuine enthusiasm for the subject!**
- Some universities allow (and like) substitute or additional personal statements:
 - Durham substitute statement allowed
 - Cambridge SAQ additional statement allowed
 - UCL 'Arts and Sciences BSc' additional statement required

First paragraph

- What **sparked your interest?** - talk about how you reached your decision to study this subject
- How has it been **sustained?** - Has taking it to A level confirmed you want to take it even further?
- **Be specific** - give an example of something in the course that's really fired your interest and curiosity

Paragraph Two - Your Academic and Intellectual Curiosity

- Books that you have read. Try to think about your independent reading. Give the title, the author, a brief synopsis and explain what it was about that book that you liked/seemed relevant to you and your course. If you can, try to get to the heart of what the book was about, or take issue with it
- The journals or magazines or blogs you've read or follow. Why do you like that particular journal, and which articles in particular have interested you? How have you carried this interest forward?
- If you refer to something you have read, say what you think of it, a chance to show critical thought
- The recent developments in your subject that has caught your eye. Have you studied developments in behavioural economics? Or read different books on globalisation, the financial crisis or the future of the Chinese economy? Find books that you wouldn't normally see on the shelves of your school library!

Paragraph Three - Related interest in your subject(s)

- What it was about that work experience or voluntary work that (specifically) interested you?
- Any academic competitions you've entered. What did you learn from the process?
- What extra courses, lectures, summer schools, and seminars have you attended? Who gave them? What impressed you? What did you take from them?

Paragraph 4 - Extra Curricular - the subliminal messages

- The sports you do and the level you have reached either as an individual and/or as a team
- Any scholarships you have, and how you have continued to excel in that area
- Your orchestras, choirs, bands, societies and say why you like them
- Your positions of responsibility or occasions when you've led teams. What did you learn from it?
- What takes up your free time, and why do you give it so much space in your life?
- Why you think these qualities will make you a good undergraduate?
- Some areas of your life that show you can work under pressure, to deadlines

The Importance of Entry Profiles

On the UCAS website, each course at every university has an **Entry Profile**, accessible when you either search for a course or search for a university. Entry profiles give a clear statement of the **essential and preferred subjects** at A2 and AS, as well as the grades and other requirements universities are looking for from applicants. As well as specifying what **grades** are required, certain courses may specify required **additional tests, skills**, recommended **evidence of relevant work experience** and so on. It is essential you read all of this information closely.

Section 5: A Selection of Past Years - Personal Statements (All Successful!)

Statement 1: Geography (Oxford)

Geographers have a responsibility to think about the future in relation to urban development. This was the basis of a presentation I delivered on the failures of urban planning. During investigative trips to East London, I gained an awareness of how informal economies in deprived areas can play a role in bolstering regeneration. Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh's book 'The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor' illustrates how, in Chicago, the shadow market provides a backbone for urban renewal. Indeed, Paul Knox's 'Atlas of Cities' taught me how the social structure of cities is integral to their success. Structure and function should be integrated, encapsulating a fine balancing act between social diversity and cohesion as well as economic prosperity within a city. One could argue that such structure and function in a city are indispensable to a successful holistic approach to urban planning.

This balance, between structure and form, may be challenged by a city's role as a hub for migrants. Migration is another area in which geographers have to look forward and seek solutions to an often-divisive topic. My research for an internal essay prize on migration and economic development illustrated the variety of different opinions surrounding this topic and the importance of being able to evaluate the positionality of the different arguments. In his book 'Exodus', Professor Paul Collier argues for a human capital quota system to be introduced on immigrants.

Although providing convincing evidence that diaspora could be obviated through the use of quotas, I challenged this conclusion. Given the popular support in Germany for victims of the current Syrian migration crisis, there is an opportunity for a diaspora to integrate without social disruption, something that Collier believes to be impossible. Gaining an understanding of how geographers analyse data for decision-making motivated me to write a research project titled, 'To What Extent has the Use of GIS Become a Way to Exclude the Global Poor?' I assessed how technology can be used to gather and analyse data to offer solutions in areas ranging from rainforest conservation to urban planning. For example, I investigated the use of GIS in Kenya to examine land uses between 1987 and 2011. This data allowed the Ministry of Environment to identify bush areas under threat from environmental changes and human settlements, ultimately leading to new legislation preventing permanent damage. During my research, I interviewed Mathenge Mwehe, a researcher at the GIS Research Institute in Nairobi. Our conversations reinforced the importance of considering how data can be misrepresented by different stakeholders, and made me alert to the risk of making decisions without proper human context, especially, in this case, given the lack of data on lower income citizens.

I have further explored this interest in GIS through its incorporation into my start-up, Edge Mobile. Edge helps ski resorts explore how their visitors interact with the environment around them. Data collected from the app on skier performance enables the analysis of patterns, helping reach conclusions as to where inefficiencies and safety issues may lay; this enhanced my ability to interpret and analyse data.

At school, I ran the Entrepreneurship Society that involved hosting and leading discussions with CEOs of major firms as well as innovative start-ups. I also had a senior role in the Geography Society and was house captain. Over two years, I have mentored English and maths at local schools and given lectures on enterprise at the Brent Summer School, teaching me the importance of clear communication and succinct explanation. I enjoy skiing, sailing, to instructor standard, and the camaraderie of house matches.

For me, geography is strategic and fundamental, it not only evaluates critical issues facing the individual and society but also seeks solutions to these big problems - there can be little more rewarding than that.

Statement 2: PPE (Oxford)

When I was fifteen years old, I had the privilege of being elected Deputy Young Mayor of the London Borough of Newham. Engaging with the electorate, senior politicians and media, I experienced some of the links between economics, politics and philosophy, energising my decision to pursue the subjects academically. I enhanced my abilities through self-study, reading *The Times*, *The Economist*, debating and writing an online blog. This initiative helped me do well at school: youngest Chief Editor of the school magazine, highest achieving GCSE student in the borough and a Sixth Form Scholarship for state school pupils to my school.

While reading Harford it dawned on me that there is an economist in each of us. I explored the idea in my article 'sKOOlonomics' by examining how students use economic thinking to make rational decisions in school situations. However, in my essay 'Tragedy behind the School Gates' I investigated the paradox in the Prisoner's Dilemma of how reason can be self-destructive and discussed measures to promote cooperative behaviour. In 'King's Speech' (a highly commended piece for the 2011 RES essay competition), I echoed Mervyn King's fear of a repeat of the financial crisis and considered how government response has not fully addressed issues such as banks being too important to fail and deep-rooted global imbalances. I agree with Rajan's analysis that serious 'Fault Lines' lay not in economics but in politics. I enjoy running the College Economics Society, organising meetings, interacting with the experts and learning from them.

In my paper 'It's the Economy, Stupid' I argued that politicians must address the economic aspirations of a society to get elected. However, in the context of the sovereign debt crisis, economic reforms are being undermined by politics. In a lecture on the Arab Spring I attended at the LSE, Dr Lisa Anderson cautioned against placing too much emphasis on the causal relationship between poverty of the masses and political unrest: ideologies play a role. My essay 'Fear is the Key' (winner, College Politics prize) discussed how conservatism is a positional attitude driven by fear of change rather than an ideology. I have met leading politicians, visited the Houses of Parliament and witnessed proceedings of the Newham Council. I complemented my experiences and studies by reading Woolf's *Introduction to Political Philosophy*. I am a Committee Member of the College Political Society.

Philosophy enables us to think critically about some of life's deepest questions and provides the economist and the politician with a moral compass. This encouraged me to think and engage in discussion. Having read Warburton's *Introduction to Philosophy*, I attended his exhibition 'Picturing Philosophers' which inspired me to design 'Walk with Philosophers', a new course for the Newham Summer School, which I taught in a Socratic style. Debate Chamber's Philosophy Summer School and a Harvard online course on Justice enhanced my thinking. Then, having read *Liberty and Equality* edited by Machan, I am scheduled to talk at the College society on how the two can be compatible yet contradictory depending on their conception.

My other involvements and responsibilities included positions as Deputy Head Boy, School Council Chair and jazz band member. At College I revived the Debating Society, hosted Berkshire Schools debating competition and was ranked in the top twelve at England Schools 2012 Debating Team Trials. Outside College I have taught debating at an Oxbridge Summer School, GCSE History lessons and other workshops.

I volunteered as a primary classroom assistant and had work experience at Freshfields law firm. I have been selected as a London 2012 Young Leader and host community events associated with the Olympic Games. These experiences have strengthened my organisational skills and ability to work to tight schedules.

Statement 3: Teacher Reference for a Top US University (Economics)

I have been teaching at two of Britain's most academic schools for over twenty five years and, in all of that time, it is a hard to think of a student who can match the intellectual engagement, urbanity and sheer positivity that Student X brings to his many and varied activities. I recommend Student X to you in the strongest possible terms and without reservation. Student X loves launching himself into any opportunities that flow his way, he is not someone inclined to sit back and let life drift by. At school he has long been among our most academically able students and he delivers assignments of originality, insight and balance.

The breadth of his work is reflected in prizes awarded in subjects as diverse as Politics, Chinese, Maths and Economics. In Politics, he was honoured for a vibrant essay on socialism in the United States; his research on Chinese soft power earned a second place in our annual Xanadu Prize. I have been teaching Student X Economics for the last two years and I expect to be informed and entertained in equal measure with each submission! Student X gets into the hidden wiring of a subject; he has exceptional ability to leave the published syllabus behind to find a relevant case study or slightly contrarian perspective with which to challenge the conventional wisdom. His written English is a delight, of panache and standard one would expect from professional journalists with many years of writing under their belt. A sophisticated written style is - in part - the product of countless hours reading articles and papers from Foreign Affairs, the Economist, the Financial Times, Project Syndicate and Brookings Papers. With some students, persuading them to explore around the subject is akin to pulling teeth. Not so with Student X! He has a stupendous capacity to read across a range of subjects with global relations, economics and politics his particular forte.

Undoubtedly the biggest passion in Student X's academic life here at school is his leadership of our debating program. He has competed at international level in debating events and has been a finalist at numerous high-profile competitions including schools events organised by the universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Durham. Student X is President of the school Debating Society - a commitment that requires him to organize school teams entering local, regional and national events. From competing most weekends at an elite level to nurturing and encouraging our youngest students to dip their toes into the experience of debating head to head with each other, Student X relishes the work that his debating team do each week. Researching for competitions is a catalyst for building exceptional contextual knowledge. And the challenge of debate undoubtedly helps Student X to write and argue with passion, precision and purpose. When a student finds their element great things can happen and I know this to be true in Student X's case. He is one of the best debaters that we have produced over recent years.

Involvement with our wider community is also part of Student X's DNA. He has been active in supporting local schools to start up debating clubs and enters the local competitions he organizes. He has participated for several years in our out-reach support program for the elderly. And he has been an accomplished, considerate and effective mentor to students at a local school, helping to build confidence in Mathematics and English. One of the exceptional features of life at our school is the array of societies run by students. Few people in my experience have embraced this as well as Student X! He is an active member of the Economics and Entrepreneurship Societies and a co-Founder and editor of a new inter-school economics magazine due for launch later on this autumn. I regularly take students to enrichment talks at the Royal Society of Arts and the London School of Economics and Student X can be relied upon as the first student to confirm his attendance! He has completed extensive internships in the office of Senator Max Baucus in Washington and also at the Beijing office of the insurance company ICBC where Student X researched and delivered a paper analysing pension systems in Europe and the United States.

Academic terms here are draining on all concerned; it is to Student X's credit that he uses his holiday time to travel, read and be wonderfully proactive in seeking events and courses that can satisfy his intellectual curiosity. Although not a natural sportsman, Student X keeps himself fit by participating in competitions for his boarding house in swimming, squash, football and tennis. Notably, he was a founding member of the College Baseball Club. Student X is a true delight to teach and will be a superb asset to the campus of any of the top universities in the world! I say this as a teacher who has seen hundreds of outstanding students pass through my care over the years - Student X is right up there with the best! He is collegiate, ambitious, personable, articulate and, most of all, a team player of the highest calibre. There is genuine depth and insight in his work and Student X has the skills and motivation to go a very long way indeed.

Statement 4: Politics, Philosophy and Economics (Oxford)

It is our inherently selfish nature that drives politics, philosophy and economics. This self-interest led to the social contract and the creation of civil society; it shapes markets and underpins our human existence, from which stems philosophical thought. However it is our rational faculty that defines us as human and this plays a crucial role in PPE. My passion for debate, curiosity and appetite for learning in a tutorial setting is what draws me to Oxford.

Blackburn's Truth sparked my interest in philosophy, prompting me to write an external essay on the effectiveness of language to achieve knowledge in the Platonic sense. Following analysis of the epistemology in *The Republic*, I concluded the practicality of language means it cannot convey truth. I explored the definition of knowledge I found in *Theaetetus* in an essay entitled "Is Knowledge Justified True Belief" looking closely at the Gettier problem, and the notions of quietism and foundationalism, arguing that knowledge cannot be defined as a second order concept. Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* was the most challenging book I have read, but looking at it alongside *The Outsider* revealed to me the absurd, and I took interest in his line of reasoning for living life to the full in a world devoid of meaning. Discussion at my school's Philosophy Society helped me formulate logically valid and reasoned arguments. This enabled me to come first in my school's Theology exam and gain highly commended for an essay criticising the idea of inherent Human Rights, arguing as Bentham did that we cannot rely on such a priori ipse dixitisms.

My RES competition essay on the morality of high drug prices came 2nd out of 2100 entries. In it I echoed Sandel's fear of the ever-widening scope of corrupting and undemocratic markets, analysing the patent system and the subsequent lack of affordable life-saving drugs. Recently I've enjoyed reading the work of economists such as Mazzucato and Hidalgo. The latter's use of mathematical models to analyse the topocratic nature of economies provided a convincing argument for greater connectedness and more diverse networks. I attended a talk by Hidalgo in Oxford on complexity theory that emphasised the holistic nature of economics, and I was interested in his model of economies as computers which develop by crystallising imagination and growing information. In another external essay I criticised footloose capitalism, using the Marxist language of exploitation to argue firms should face restrictions when expanding into the developing world. The central role of institutions was revealed to me in *Why Nations Fail*, and despite the arbitrary use of the undefined labels of inclusive and extractive institutions, the argument was convincing. At an LSE lecture I saw that the EU's failing institutions were one source of its economic and political difficulties.

Democracy has been a rarity throughout political history, and the current western worldview of it as an innate good is something I have been keen to question. With emphasis on the Middle East, I looked at whether authoritarianism can ever be acceptable, concluding that it is not intrinsically immoral and can be effective. Attending a talk by Zac Goldsmith at the RSA tempered my growing scepticism of democracy, and having read Rousseau's *Social Contract* I returned to the idea that participation by the electorate is fundamental for principles of equality and freedom. Following a week with my local Lib Dem MP, and having read Mendoza's harsh critique of austerity I adapted my formerly pro-austerity view, recognising the need for a well funded welfare state. At a politics summer school I explored ideas such as public choice theory, equality and utility-maximising wealth distributions, and as part of my school's MUN team I have enjoyed debating global political issues. As head of the Economics Society I invite speakers to enthuse young economists from a range of schools. I am an academic prefect, bagpiper and grade 8 cellist.

Statement 5: Economics and Management (Oxford)

It is difficult to think of a more important and interesting time to study and understand Economics. As the coalition government embarks on the biggest spending cuts since the time of Thatcher and the world looks set to plunge back into recession through the instability within the Euro Zone, one cannot ignore the impact of economic policies on all our lives. This is what draws me to the subject.

Since taking up Economics at AS level, my main interest has lain with the evolution of innovation which is especially apparent in the past century. "The Rational Optimist" by Matt Ridley is a book that addresses the adaptability of the human race to overcome the obstacles of the past and argues for optimism when looking to the future as human ingenuity and innovation will provide a basis for continued growth despite issues like food shortages and strained resource supply.

To develop my understanding of this subject, I researched and wrote an essay for the school's Economics prize on the importance of urbanization to provide the high density living that is required to spark innovation, boost productivity, and ultimately fuel growth. I concluded from this research that urbanization is one of the most important factors for continued growth due to the increased creativity and enterprise experienced in high density locations. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important from an environmental stand point in order to reduce the future carbon footprint of developing countries such as China and India. I ended up winning 1st prize for this competition, examined by Professor Paul Collier.

For me, what makes the subject so fascinating is its dynamic nature due to the irrational actions and decisions of the global populace. As a mathematician, I was fascinated to find that even this irrationality can be modeled and calculated through the application of Game Theory which has become something in which I'm especially interested. "The Art of Strategy" by Dixit and Nalebuff was one of the most useful books I read in relation to this subject as use the of extensive case studies practically demonstrates the principles of Game Theory to everyday human decision making. Furthermore, Leonard Mlodinow's "The Drunkards Walk" gave me an insight into how ineffective the human brain is at understanding probability and statistics which can explain why many of the irrational choices we make are governed by the view that these instincts are in fact rational. In this book Mlodinow shows through the manipulation of statistics that the chaos of randomness can be understood through awareness of the chance affecting our decisions.

Over the summer I spent two weeks working for Ceres Fund Ltd. I found the work rewarding as an experience which gave me an insight into how complicated the workings of the market are, reinforcing all that I have learnt of the irrationality of most consumer choices. Furthermore, I worked for African Access Holdings (Pty) Ltd for 3 weeks, being seconded to a group company specializing in travel and event managing. This was a particularly enlightening experience as it made me aware of the importance of such demanding managerial structures in larger companies. I also managed a shop on Portobello High Street which was interesting to experience first-hand the role of economic theory in practical situations.

At school, I am Secretary of the Advertising Society, on the committee of the Model United Nations, the school's Psychology Society and the Entrepreneurship Society as well as being Secretary of the more informal Meditation Society. I enjoy the responsibility of organizing house games, captaining my house football and cricket teams while also representing the school in both sports. I am looking forward to the challenging nature of an Economics and Management course, as it will allow me to study the theory that fascinates me in tandem with the practical side of economics, which is so relevant to every choice I make.

Statement 6: Economics at Cambridge

I first became aware of the importance of Economics when I represented Iraq at a Model United Nations conference in Edinburgh. I debated issues ranging from the problem of aid dependence to the economic impact of terrorism, and won the “Best Delegate” award in the Economics Committee. Since then, I have extended my knowledge of different areas of Economics by reading the Financial Times and The Economist, and by attending open lectures at the LSE and RSA. In my gap year, I am working as an economic research assistant for the International Growth Centre (at the invitation of Professor Tim Besley) in a team planning to measure private returns to education, with the exciting possibility of undertaking fieldwork in India.

My interest in Game Theory as a method for understanding strategic decision-making encouraged me to read ‘The Art of Strategy’ by Dixit and Nalebuff. I am intrigued by how empirical evidence seems to refute the assumptions of Rational Choice Theory, leading us to question how rational we are and how useful the assumption of self-interest is, given the strong social, cultural and moral influences promoting altruism. Game Theory also appeals to me because it provides an opportunity to use my aptitude for Mathematics to analyse economic problems. I am working through ‘Mathematics for Economics and Business’ by Ian Jacques, and have enjoyed applying calculus to problems such as those encountered in constrained optimization. I am eager to develop my Mathematical skills and their application to Economics at University.

Recent turmoil in the global economy led me to read ‘Animal Spirits’ by Akerlof and Shiller, which introduced me to the intriguing manner in which psychology affects the performance of the macro economy. In my essay for the RES Young Economist of the Year Competition, entitled “Are Economic Recessions Inevitable?” I argued that there was convincing evidence to suggest that underlying psychological factors, rather than policy failures, cause the business cycle. Since then, I have begun to explore rival theories of business cycles, including Keynesian, Monetarist and Austrian ideas.

Amartya Sen’s ‘Development as Freedom’ sparked my interest in the role of economic and social liberties to increase the advancement of poor countries, via the market mechanism. However, I found that much debate surrounding development is concerned with the time frame in which transitions towards market-based economies occur, rather than simply evaluating the benefits of free markets. The development of social capital appears to be a challenging but essential part of this process. My belief that it is necessary to adopt a bottom-up approach to improving living standards of citizens in developing countries was reinforced by reading ‘The White Man’s Burden’ by William Easterly. My interest in microfinance came from reconciling this approach to development with the improvement of economic freedoms and my entry for my school’s Economics essay prize focused on the recent growth in microfinance to fund small Indian businesses. I concluded that regulation of microfinance lending should be increased to ensure that credit bubbles do not grow, burst and cause havoc, as they have done in the developed world.

In my view, education is the best remedy available to improve global living standards. Through mountaineering expeditions to the Himalayas and the Andes, I have raised \$12 000 to help educate orphan girls from the Masaai tribe in Tanzania. I will be teaching in Tanzania for three months from next April.

As the secretary of my school’s Economics Society, I sought out inspiring speakers from varied academic and business backgrounds to enthuse budding economists from several local schools. This experience has helped to develop my organisational and time management skills. I am keen to make the most of the opportunities that a university education can offer, and hope one day to pursue a career in academia.

Statement 7: PPE at Oxford

Every issue in philosophy and political economy hinges upon human nature. Machiavelli's *The Prince*, for instance, expresses a manifesto of governance at one level, yet has an underlying pessimistic view of mankind. Such mistrust is evident to a lesser degree in Burke's idea that interconnected institutions, not individuals, make up society's bedrock. I align with Augustine, whose view accounts for original sin, whilst explaining man's capacity for both malevolence and benevolence. Research for a school essay on Augustine impressed on me that much scholastic analysis might be underpinned and constrained by one's intrinsic make-up.

The *Financial Times* and *The Today Programme* on Radio 4 is my daily reminder that, as confirmed in Lewis' *Big Short*, our financial system is flawed. Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* has led me to consider the relationship between the rise of neo-liberalism and a lack of regulation that may have caused the 2008 crash. I witnessed this residual fragility of the markets at first hand whilst working for Securis Investment Management in 2012. In exploring Britain's laboured recovery from the crash, I studied the role that QE can play in Monetary Policy. I argued, in a highly commended piece for the RES essay competition, that QE was both necessary and effective in the context of the UK's negative output gap. At a macro level, network economics gives QE an added dimension, accounting for its profound effects upon emerging markets like Brazil. Its application at a micro level, when combined with game theory, encouraged me to investigate how criminal groups act in a real life Prisoner's Dilemma. I concluded that the mafia and authorities constantly change the factors and pay-offs of the game to encourage and discourage cooperation respectively.

As a Conservative Party member, I am provoked by Thatcherism's legacy. Although I disagree with its central idea of 'big bang localism,' Jenkins' *Thatcher and Sons* offered a fascinating take on her policy and marked influence upon successors. I had the opportunity to debate my views at a Politics summer school in London. During this time, I challenged my opinion on Parliament's effective uni-cameralism. In one essay, I advocated Lords reform due to its unelected nature. Time spent in the Westminster village this summer has prompted me to reconsider this in the context of coalition government. Drawing on the work of Bogdanor and McLean, I now question the stability of a coalition that lacks a firm ideological basis. Cable's recent blistering criticism of his Tory counterparts is an example of this.

From *The Philosopher's Toolkit* (Baggini & Fosl), I sense that a great benefit of the study of Philosophy is training in the art of logical argument. In competing for my school's Philosophy prize (highly commended) I read Williams' *Morality*. Although diffuse work, it made me ponder the role of morality and whether it is a priori as a concept, or a social contract adopted for pragmatic purposes. In a contemporary context, his defused subjectivism and my subscription to natural law means I now advocate both condemnation of and intervention into the Syrian regime.

This year, I am secretary of my school's Economics, Amnesty and Catholic Societies, as well as being on the committee of the Political and Entrepreneurship Societies. I have invited and hosted several speakers such as Sir Martin Broughton and Andrew Mitchell MP. I have also organised a panel event on the Financial Crash featuring Ha-Joon Chang and Paul Ormerod, two economists who recognise the importance of networks in economics and are prepared to challenge orthodox thought.

Outside of academia, I am captain of my school's chess team. As a qualified football coach, I have managed a school XI to an unbeaten season and received national awards from ISFA.

Statement 8: Engineering, Oxford

The opportunity to make an impact on people's lives through engineering excites me. Working with GlaxoSmithKline for nine months as part of the Engineering Education Scheme provided an opportunity to tackle a customer protection issue that GSK had been grappling with for five years, namely inconsistent sealing on their toothpaste boxes. Our team, through a process of trialling and refining, built seven experimental rigs and conducted research on the production lines at GSK's factory in Maidenhead. The pivotal moment came when we realised the need to motorise our setup, enabling us to generate more reliable data. This led to a new understanding of the ripping mechanism generating an insight that GSK had never considered. Our industrialised rip measurement system, supported by a sixty-page analysis report, was presented to senior engineers and earned a CREST Gold Award as well as selection as the inaugural Gold Level Industrial Cadets. I found collaborating with and leading the team a rewarding experience. The project made me acutely aware of the importance of an optimum, cost-effective engineering solution broadening my experience beyond the theoretical, ideal solutions found in routine schoolwork. The chance to deliver a more ambitious project in my final year at university particularly interests me.

This summer, I completed an 8000-word dissertation for the school science prize on the future of commercial air travel. As well as mechanical and aerospace engineering, I was introduced to information engineering, focusing on drones and autonomous planes. In future, I would like to research new sense and avoid systems and their applications in reducing the 50 per cent of accidents that result from pilot error. Reading J.E. Gordon's "The New Science of Strong Materials" demonstrated to me the reliance of engineers' creations on materials, which remains as significant now in engineering as when Gordon was writing in 1968. Last spring, I wrote an essay and delivered a presentation analysing links between the properties of Graphene and its possible future uses. I was struck by the subsequent unearthing of other two-dimensional crystals, such as Boron Nitride. This project placed second in my school's Year 12 Physics prize. In another extended research project, I examined the implementation of smart materials in transport, including morphing bodies using piezoceramics, multifunctional composites, damage detection systems and even self-healing structures. I carried out interviews with engineers at the National Composites Centre and Airbus. I would like to develop my enthusiasm for aerothermal engineering in my fourth year at university.

One of my passions is the coordination of the school's student-run societies system, which involves over 200 meetings per year. A key achievement has been to welcome nearly forty local schools to these events. I invited Professor Graham Richards, former Head of Chemistry at Oxford, to speak at the inaugural meeting of the Scientific and Entrepreneurship Societies and I was excited by his discussion of the collaboration between Engineering and Chemistry students in the foundation of new scientific businesses. I chair the Economics Society and this autumn, launched and edited a global, interschool economics magazine. I have also organised our school's charitable society for two years, which has raised 90,000 pounds for numerous charities through annual events involving a dinner, auction and lecture. I have worked for three summers in an ice cream shop. One of the most intriguing challenges has been maintaining the machinery used for the production and storage of ice cream.

This summer, I recruited and ran a team that wrote content for a new educational app called SmartUp. We create interactive games that teach users about entrepreneurship. As a member of my school's 2nd VIII, I rowed at Henley, won the 2014 National Championships and will be competing internationally this year in the USA.

Section 6: Recommended Reading for Economics / Management / PPE

This is a selection of books for enrichment and extension reading (February 2016 edition)

1. **23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism** (Ha-Joon Chang)
2. **Art of Strategy** (Dixit and Nalebuff) – especially good for Game Theory examples and analysis
3. **Consolations of Economics: How We Will All Benefit from the New World Order** (Gerard Lyons)
4. **Drunkard's Walk** (Leonard Mlodinow) – brilliant history of Maths and lots of relevant applications
5. **GDP: A Brief but Affectionate History** (Professor Diane Coyle)
6. **Inequality** – a superb book on one of the defining issues of the age (AB Atkinson)
7. **Misbehaving: The Making of Behavioural Economics** (Richard Thaler)
8. **Phishing for Phools: The Economics of Manipulation and Deception** (George Akerlof and Robert Shiller)
9. **Poor Economics: Rethinking Ways to Fight Global Poverty** (Banerjee & Duflo)
10. **Positive Linking – Networks and Nudges** (Paul Ormerod) – good intro to network economics
11. **Risk Savvy - How to make good decisions** (Gerd Gigerenzer) – the world of heuristics
12. **Ten Great Economists** (Philip Thornton) – biographical background, well worth a read
13. **The Box - How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger**, (Levinson)
14. **The Euro: How a Common Currency Threatens the Future of Europe** (Joseph Stiglitz)
15. **The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon** (Brad Stone)
16. **The Great Divide** (Professor Joseph Stiglitz)
17. **The Great Escape** (Professor Angus Deaton)
18. **The Idea of Justice** (Amartya Sen)
19. **The Plundered Planet: How to Reconcile Prosperity with Nature:** (Professor Paul Collier)
20. **Thinking Fast and Thinking Slow:** (Professor Daniel Kahneman)
21. **What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets** (Professor Michael Sandel)
22. **Who Gets What - And Why:** Understand the Choices You Have, Improve the Choices You Make (Al Roth)
23. **Why Information Grows: The Evolution of Order, from Atoms to Economies** (Cesar Hidalgo)
24. **Why Nations Fail: Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty** (Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson)
25. **Worldly Philosophers: Lives, Times, and Ideas of Great Economic Thinkers** (Robert Heilbroner)

Reading list last updated Sunday, February 07, 2016

Other Suggested Resources

The **Enlightenment Economics** blog written by Diane Coyle is excellent for keeping up to speed with the flow of new economics books that are being published at the moment: www.enlightenmenteconomics.com/blog/

Superb regular articles available from the Project Syndicate website: www.project-syndicate.org/

I post regular university and economics subject advice on my Twitter feed: @tutor2ugeoff

You are welcome to contact me on any aspect of the UCAS / United States application process.