



Guidance Notes on UCAS

Information on applying for economics degrees
and on building a strong platform for
applications to the UK and overseas

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Introduction to UCAS - Building Blocks to Choosing a Degree

First of all, have a look at the UCAS web site www.ucas.ac.uk and become familiar with the information it contains. There is no substitute for having your own copy of a university prospectus that can be browsed at leisure. New editions of these prospectuses can be ordered online from each of the universities you are considering. Check too for dates of the official open days at each institution.

Economics Faculties:

Bath	www.bath.ac.uk/econ-dev/
Birmingham	http://www.economics.bham.ac.uk/index.shtml
Bristol	http://www.bristol.ac.uk/economics/
Cambridge	www.econ.cam.ac.uk/ & www.econ.cam.ac.uk/prospect/ba/index.html
Durham	http://www.dur.ac.uk/economics.finance/
Edinburgh	http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/economics/
Exeter	http://www.sobe.ex.ac.uk/undergraduate/
Leeds	http://lubswww.leeds.ac.uk/undergraduate/index.php?id=55
Liverpool	http://www.liv.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/courses_e.htm
London School of Economics	http://econ.lse.ac.uk/ and http://econ.lse.ac.uk/study/ugpr.html
Manchester	http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/economics/
Newcastle	http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/subjects/economics
Nottingham	www.nottingham.ac.uk/ugstudy/course.php?inc=course&code=000476
Oxford (Econ & Management)	www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/courses/ecma.shtml
Oxford (General)	www.economics.ox.ac.uk
Oxford (PPE)	www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/courses/ppec.shtml
Royal Holloway (London)	http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Economics/
Southampton	http://www.socsci.soton.ac.uk/Economics/
St Andrews	www.st-and.ac.uk/academic/economics/
UCL	www.ucl.ac.uk/economics/
Warwick	www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/Economics/
York	http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/econ/

Overseas faculties

Trinity College Dublin	http://www.tcd.ie/Economics/
Columbia (New York)	http://www.columbia.edu/cu/economics/
Brown (Economics)	http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/
Harvard (Economics)	http://www.economics.harvard.edu/
Princeton (Economics)	http://www.econ.princeton.edu/
Yale (Economics)	http://www.econ.yale.edu/
Stanford (Economics)	http://economics.stanford.edu/site-map

Alternative University Information and Careers Advice:

Guardian: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/chooseadegree/>

Independent: <http://education.independent.co.uk/higher/>

Open Days <http://www.opendays.com/>

Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk

Times Guide: www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,716,00.html

Economics faculty rankings for 2010 can be found here

http://extras.timesonline.co.uk/tol_gug/gooduniversityguide.php?AC_sub=Economics&x=13&y=6&sub=22

Why Study Economics: <http://whystudyeconomics.ac.uk/> - this is a good site for background on university courses and there are some well made videos from current economics undergraduates.

Guardian 2010 University Rankings

Remember to take these unofficial rankings with a piece of salt but in my opinion they are not too far off!

2010 ranking (2009)	Name of Institution	Guardian score/ 100	% Satisfied with teaching	% Satisfied with feedback	Spend per student (FTE)	Student: staff ratio	Career prospects	Value added score/ 10	Average Entry Tariff
1 (1)	Oxford	100.0	92	68	10	11.8	79	6.7	522
2 (2)	Cambridge	97.0	92	76	9.46	12.1	83	4.9	535
3 (5)	St Andrews	87.0	94	75	6.55	12.8	74	7.2	466
4 (4)	Warwick	84.0	86	60	8.76	15.2	76	6.0	461
5 (3)	London School of Economics	82.4	73	63	7.62	14.5	86	5.4	481
6 (7)	UCL	81.5	85	60	8.34	11.2	79	7.0	451
7 (9)	Edinburgh	78.3	85	45	9.26	15.4	74	6.2	442
8 (6)	Imperial College	77.9	81	50	8.82	12.2	84	4.4	487
9 (13)	Bath	75.6	86	57	5.54	16.0	80	6.0	438
10 (10)	Loughborough	74.6	90	72	5.72	18.7	73	5.4	368
11 (11)	York	74.4	89	64	7.48	14.2	65	4.7	431
12 (8)	SOAS	74.2	90	64	6.99	12.8	65	6.5	366
13 (14)	Exeter	73.0	92	73	4.55	17.6	68	6.5	390
14 (16)	Durham	72.7	87	64	4.54	16.5	75	5.5	456

Studying Economics in the UK

Students come to Economics degree courses from a wide range of backgrounds – it is not necessary to have studied Economics before starting a degree course in it, although an excellent AS and A2 or IB level performance in Economics (together with a good level of Maths) gives students a significant head start!

Economics can be studied either as a **single subject** or in combination with a range of other subjects (**joint honours courses**). Thousands of students combine Economics with subjects such as Maths, History, Geography, Law, Philosophy, a Modern Language (French, German and Spanish are popular, Economics and Chinese is also an option at some universities including Leeds and SOAS) and also Politics and Engineering and Management. Courses are available for those aiming for a career in engineering. A large number of graduate programmes are provided at Masters Level, and there are also a number of PhD level programmes.

Maths and Economics

Typical course requirements vary by institution and these can change a little from year to year – my document tries to keep up to date with the published requirements but you are advised to contact the university department concerned for precise information before applying.

For many of the top courses, a top grade in Further Maths is recommended to give your application a strong chance. For the higher rated courses however, it is unusual for an applicant without GCSE Mathematics (grades A or B) to be admitted. It is rare for students wanting to read single honours pure Economics to apply without at least an A grade in single Maths.

Recent advice from individual universities

- **Bath:** Typical offer of AAA from 3 GCE A-levels (excluding General Studies and/or Critical Thinking). Mathematics required at grade A. Economics is a strongly preferred subject.
- **Bristol:** For Economics degrees Bristol usually expect you to have or be predicted grades of AAA. Bristol is more likely to make you an offer if you are studying Further Mathematics within the context of four recognised A-level subjects. General Studies not accepted. ([Admissions advice](#))
- **Cambridge:** A-level in Mathematics, or an equivalent qualification, is essential for those planning to study Economics. Whilst Economics and Further Mathematics are also useful subjects, the Faculty does not impose these requirements as prerequisites, other A-level combinations will be regarded as acceptable by the majority of colleges. However, almost all colleges will demand minimum grades of AAA, and in the vast majority of offers require grades of A*AA
- **Durham:** Economics BA (Hons): You will need at least a grade B in AS Level Mathematics if you are not doing A- Level Maths. You will normally be required to have A* grades in GCSE Mathematics and English Language, though some flexibility will be exercised in implementing this condition.
- **Edinburgh:** Typical A-Level Offer: AAB: Single Honours Economics: Maths: Maths AS or A-level desirable. Further admissions information available from <http://www.hss.ed.ac.uk/Undergraduate/index.htm>
- **Exeter:** Our selectors prefer applicants to be offering grade A at GCE A level Mathematics (or grade 6 at Higher Level in the IB) as this provides an excellent preparation for our degree programmes. We also prefer to see subject combinations that demonstrate both analytical and writing abilities.
- **Leeds:** You must have a grade A or grade A* in GCSE Mathematics (or equivalent) if you are not offering Mathematics as a subject at a higher-level examination such as AS or A2 level.
- **LSE:** A level Mathematics is required. A level Economics is not essential. No other specific subjects are required at A2 level, but we prefer traditional academic subject.

What can I do to make my university application as strong as possible?

The majority of university subject admissions tutors are not much interested in how much sport you play, whether or not you are involved in drama, music or have other school responsibilities. **Their main concern is your intellectual / academic potential, commitment and passion for your chosen subject disciplines** compared with other students applying for a specific course. Extra-curricular activities do matter but your subject must come first and please remember this when preparing an application.

Focusing your UCAS statement

Your UCAS personal statement should be at least 80% about commitment to a subject and must demonstrate evidence of having gone well beyond the syllabus, with a commitment to independent study.

Here [is some advice on writing a personal statement](#) from the faculty at the London School of Economics.

Enrichment and Extension Activities in your Subjects

- **Read** – you should be reading a quality newspaper every day and soaking up as many ideas and arguments as you can. Investing twenty to thirty minutes of your time each day reading a newspaper is a hugely valuable activity. [This will give you breadth and great depth of awareness and it will undoubtedly improve your written work.](#)
- **Read** – contact your subject teachers for ideas for books that will broaden your horizons. Your UCAS form must include evidence of challenging and diverse background reading and should include some personal [thoughts and reflections](#) on how this reading has enriched your understanding of a subject.
- **Get involved in school societies** – e.g. the Keynes, Entrepreneurship, Political, Stock-broking and other related societies here at school. Make contact with visiting speakers. Don't just turn up to societies – instead look to get more deeply involved – **be pro-active.**
- **Enter essay competitions** such as the school's Keynes Prize for economics and also the Essay Competition organized by the Royal Economic Society. [Details of the 2010 competition are available here:](#) Several Oxbridge college now run their own essay competitions – keep an eye out for those.
- **Look to get involved with summer schools** that give you insights into subjects you want to study
- **Challenge the conventional wisdom in the classroom** – question what is being taught, take issue with your teachers and explore different arguments – don't take a back seat, don't be a passive student in the classroom – it will help you in interviews and later on in university seminars
- **Work experience:** The summer holidays are a good time to build such experience and the more diverse the placements and experience – the better. Working for a local charity, with a local newspaper or magazine, a business organization or new business start-up is often more valuable than a week or two sat with boring people in an investment banking office or a firm of accountants!
- **Travel** and when you travel try to understand more about the social – economic - political background of the countries that you are visiting. And read up about them, perhaps contributing to school-based magazines or other student publications or blogs
- **Attend outside lectures and other events** – consider the lectures that are available to the general public at your local universities; some universities also run summer business schools for academically able students. See what is available. The London School of economics and the Royal Society of Arts provide tremendous range of free lectures and other events.

Writing a personal statement for Economics

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 A2 level confirmed that you want to take it even further?
- Be specific - give an example of something in the course that's really fired your interest

Paragraph Two - Your Academic and Intellectual Curiosity

- Try to think about your independent reading. Give the title, the author, a brief synopsis and explain what it was about that book in particular 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 you've read. Why do you like that particular journal, and which articles in particular have interested you?
- The recent developments in your subject that has caught your eye. Have you studied developments in behavioural economics? Or read different books on globalisation and the financial crisis?

Paragraph Three - Related interest in your subject

- The work experience or voluntary work has you done.
- What it was about that work experience or voluntary work that (specifically) interested you?
- Any academic competitions you've entered, what did you write about? What did you learn?
- 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.
- 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.

Entry Profiles

On the UCAS website, every course at every university has an **Entry Profile**, accessible when you either search for a course or search for a university. Entry profiles will give a clear statement of the essential subjects and preferred subjects at A2 and AS, as well as the grades and other requirements universities are looking for from applicants. For example, 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.

Target for the AS Exams

In your AS exam papers aim for an average of over 90-93% in each module and 100% in as many papers as you can. There is evidence that some of the most competitive universities disregard the results of AS retakes.

I have provided in the following pages some examples of successful personal statements.

Statement 1: History (Oxford) 2004

History is an enormously difficult subject to define. To me the most appropriate definition is that offered by Cicero, "History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time." This is because the breadth of the subject means that the historian can never be certain of what happened, but tries to give an accurate account based on limited sources. History is something with which to think with; to see how people behaved in the past presents us an opportunity to think how we behave.

My interest in history stemmed from its capacity to develop awareness of differing political, cultural, social and economic structures. This was particularly evident when studying the causes of the American Civil War, and the innate differences between the North and South. My inquisitive nature is a main factor in my desire to study history; I am interested in a broad range of historical topics including the Anglo-Zulu war, the First World War and the American Revolution.

I have been appointed Secretary of the History Society of my school. A particularly memorable speaker was Professor Richard Holmes, who spoke about the Western Front in World War One. Following this talk I visited the battlefield's of the Somme to gain a better understanding of the war. I have enjoyed reading Gary Sheffield's controversial book, *Forgotten Victory*. I was interested by the notion offered that the war represented the greatest military victory in British history and that the First World War was as war that Britain had to fight. I have attended two talks by David Rattray, one at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and the other at the Royal Geographical Society. These talks on the Anglo-Zulu war interested me because of their focus on the battle of Isandlwana being a great victory for the Zulus, and not entirely due to British incompetence. When studying the Causes of the American Civil War, I undertook the reading of *The Great Republic – A History of America* by Sir Winston Churchill. Though more of a synopsis of American history up to the early twentieth century it offers an interesting overview and a good description of the Civil War.

Since coming to the school I have gained an internal scholarship based on exam results. I have also won three History prizes in exams as well as in several other subjects. Last year I won the lower-sixth Divinity prize. In this essay I drew on examples from history as a means to explore what may be justified in the future. Looking at key events in history, such as the Industrial Revolution, I concluded that to hold back human development for the sake of future generations would be a mistake.

Recently I have entered the Birley prize for an historical essay written and researched entirely independently. I chose the topic of The Olive Branch Petition and the American War of Independence. I was particularly interested by Bernard Bailyn's book 'The ideological origins of the American Revolution', a book which gave great significance to the political philosophy of the revolution. I was also able to research Parliamentary debates from 1775 at the House of Lords Record Office, which was a rewarding and useful experience. My interest in Politics led to my appointment as Vice-President of the schools Political Society. In this position I am able meet a number of significant political figures. Both the editor of *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* have come offering their views of the role of the media in society.

As I am young for the year I probably need to take a Gap year. For three months I plan to do voluntary work in a Game Reserve in Natal Province, South Africa. From here I will have the opportunity to visit both the Boer and Anglo-Zulu War battlefields. The opportunity to gain some understanding of other cultures should enhance my ability as an historian.

The Oxford history course's broad chronological sweep and geographical range, including topics such as Spain and America in the 16th Century, is particularly appealing. I would relish the opportunity to study a history course that is not focussed merely on British and European histories. Having had a small sample of the tutorial system at my school, I feel that I would benefit enormously and gain much enjoyment from such a system.

Statement 2: PPE (Oxford) 2009

PPE is the ideal combination of theoretical discussions and logic juxtaposed with the analysis of current events in the world today and their historical contexts. I am fascinated by how societies interact and why they differ. Economics is vital in our appreciation of how political decisions are constrained – recently underlined in the debate in the UK on spending cuts – as well as furthering our understanding of how a society's resources are traded amongst individuals. Taking Economics on to A-level has fuelled my interest in economic problems whilst reading the Financial Times and the Economist has kept me abreast of their relevance in the real world. Philosophy seems crucial, not only in bringing intellectual rigour to my own understanding of the world, but in addressing key issues of knowledge, morality and existence. Politics allows us to analyse societies and the decisions that drive how they are governed; I am particularly interested in international relations and how governments interact with one another – a topic that is suffused with economic considerations. The moral implications of states often acting selfishly are also fascinating. Recent economic distress in the West and political turmoil in the Middle East have underlined the importance and relevance of studying PPE in the 21st Century.

One issue that has particularly captivated me has been that of American decline. Two lectures I attended at the LSE by Walter Russell Mead and Fareed Zakaria argued differently on the subject and I wanted to reconcile the two points of view. The Assault on Reason by Al Gore brings to light the extent to which democracy in America has been debased in recent history and the decline of its hegemonic dominance. I was able to compare the similar ways in which two spheres, wealth and power, had come together in Britain, too; Robert Peston's Who Runs Britain? plausibly argues that Britain is increasingly governed in favour of the super-rich. I went on to write about the issue of American decline for the school's Essay Society.

Introductory texts about philosophy such as Thomas Nagel's What Does it all Mean? and Simon Blackburn's Think have introduced important philosophical ideas to me, sparking an interest in the issue of free will, in particular, and confirming that I want to take the subject further. Reading Jonathon Woolf's An Introduction to Political Philosophy, I was specifically interested by its defence of democracy on the grounds of its inherent value. The book has also improved my critical awareness of the debates surrounding issues such as liberty and equality. I fundamentally agreed more with Dan Ariely's depiction of human irrationality in Predictably Irrational than Tim Harford's argument for the rationality of humans in responding to incentives in The Logic of Life. I subsequently communicated with Ariely about an example of relativism in a British talent show and reviewed his book in a school magazine. I found Vince Cable's The Storm instructive in its analysis of recent economic problems and their wider political implications.

I am bilingual in French and English and have won declamation prizes in both languages. Being secretary of the Essay and Entrepreneurship Societies as well as co-editor of the school economics magazine has improved my organisation and communication and been intellectually stimulating. Work experience in Redmond with Microsoft and with an entrepreneur launching a new soft drink in Belgium was fascinating and the dissimilarities in structure, approach and finance were particularly informative about contrasting business models in real firms. A few days in the House of Lords fostered my interest in the UK legislative process. In my free time I play as much tennis and hockey as possible and I am a keen actor, the highlight being the opportunity to play Hamm in Samuel Beckett's Fin de Partie, last year.

Statement 3: Teacher Reference for Stanford (Economics) 2009

X is a student with huge and exciting academic potential and he is undoubtedly one of the brightest pupils that I have taught in over twenty years of teaching. I recommend him to you in the strongest possible terms and I do so without reservation.

X joined my department in the Fall of 2007 and it quickly became clear that he was not someone content to accept the conventional wisdom! For some of his peers, the sight of a freshman student already deeply immersed in the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times was an amusing novelty! But they and I soon realized that here was a young man with genuine independence of spirit and strong self-motivation prepared to lead discussions rather than settle for passive absorption of ideas.

Since I have known him, he has ventured far beyond the boundaries of published course programmes in pursuit of new intellectual challenges aided by a natural ability to assimilate material rapidly and to deconstruct flimsy arguments. X thinks for himself; he bubbles with ideas and appreciates the nuances and complexities inherent in the ever-changing landscape of turbulent domestic and global economic affairs. I can envisage him crafting a career writing leaders for the Wall Street Journal and allowing me to showcase them to a future generation of economists in my classes!

X is the real deal and some shrewd judges at the top of the Economics profession in the United Kingdom have been excited by his recent work. An essay on 'feed-in tariffs' for the 2008 Royal Economic Society 'Young Economist of the Year' competition was ranked 3rd among many hundreds of papers submitted by students from across the world. One of the judges on the awarding panel, Mr John Vickers - chairman of the UK Anti-Trust Panel and President of the Royal Economic Society - commented that "X's essay on feed-in-tariffs (a tax/subsidy scheme to promote renewable energy) was a focused analysis of a practical policy that contributed to, but did not get distracted by, the general climate change debate."

More recently X researched and delivered an excellent paper on the economics of innovation which was awarded second prize in the school's annual Keynes Essay Competition. He made strong use of academic literature and produced a piece of work of exceptional quality and insight. This essay and his work for the Royal Economic Society has been 'sent up for good', an accolade given to those rarely seen essays that deserve to be held in the library of Eton College in perpetuity.

I am happy to cite further evidence of X's academic prowess.

- He has been consistently at the top of our own faculty rankings which cover over two hundred economists, many of whom are gifted academics in their own right.
- He has won three distinctions in the school's internal exams, an award reserved only for those who reach the highest standard in a given exam season across their chosen subjects.
- X has been highly placed in the UK National Mathematics Challenge
- He has been a school prize winner in Geography and Latin.
- In his external exams this summer, X gained more than ninety per cent in each of his subjects demonstrating a high level of commitment, organisation and academic rigour.

X is a fantastic contributor in school reflecting his active engagement with learning. His comments are perceptive and considered but he isn't afraid to try out new ideas whatever the time of day or night! It follows that X will be a real asset in a tutorial or seminar. He has strong skills in researching ideas and then fleshing out his own views in a crisp and focused way but with a delightful lightness of touch on paper that makes his work eminently readable and accessible. I have rarely seen a student of his age write with such flair and fluency.

Beyond the schoolroom

Away from the schoolroom X contributes enormously in ways that enhances the life and reputation of our college community. He has worked for the last fifteen months at a local primary school as a teaching assistant helping to coach soccer and providing classroom help to small groups of 10-11 year old children. Many students drop out of our social services programme after the first year but X's commitment has never wavered. He has also acted as a rowing coach to our youngest students and he is a boarding house representative for our school dining committee providing an important channel of communication from pupils to the professional kitchen staff. X is a volunteer for the Charteris Day Centre where he works with a group providing good cheer, companionship and conversation to senior citizens.

A champion of societies

Our school has a thriving community of societies all of which are organised by the students who invite external speakers and run the show. It will come as no surprise that X is at the forefront of this truly outstanding programme. This academic year he is Secretary of the Hispanic Society and also of L'Imagination au Pouvoir (which champions the creative arts). I am delighted to have X on the committee of the Keynes Society (Economics) and he is a great supporter of the Entrepreneurship Society which was launched last fall. It is safe to say that there is rarely an evening when X is not at one of the society meetings! He provides inspirational support to teaching colleagues for whom the societies are a deeply loved part of their academic life and his engagement with visiting speakers is first-rate.

Passion, flair and seeing the bigger picture

In twenty years of teaching I can think of less than a handful of students who have come close to matching X for his passion for economics, finance and business issues! As befits someone with triple nationality, X adopts a global view of the world and he has an instinctive ability to see the bigger picture. He is articulate, tenacious, unconventional, contrarian, full of good humour and impeccably well organised. In short X is a gem who will be an asset to any university around the world.

I am happy to discuss any aspect of this personal reference and I have provided contact details below.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Riley
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Statement 4: Economics and Management (Oxford and Bristol) 2006

The best description of why I feel we study economics comes from Machiavelli - "Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times". Economics is the study of an ever-changing environment where theory and practice are interlinked; economic "rules" are constantly being refined and improved. Indeed, it is this uncertainty that draws me towards the subject. I am Secretary of the School's Keynes Society, which attracts some of the country's best economists to give presentations. One of the most stimulating speakers was Franz Fischler, who is in charge of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. I was not convinced by Fischler's justification of EU subsidies. He stated that €5 billion would be invested into the accession countries' subsistence arable farms in the next two years to help them become profitable. From a strictly economic point of view this is inefficient, since the money should be used to maintain these countries' comparative advantages instead of supplying products which the EU has a massive surplus of, or of which the countries in question are not suited to produce, like cereals.

As a mathematician, one of my favourite economic topics is Game Theory. In "Dr. Strangelove's Game" by Paul Strathern, I was intrigued by the accounts of John Nash and John von Neumann, who tried to place human behaviour into mathematical models. I find it fascinating that basic actions such as self-preservation can be placed into a series of equations. "Thinking Strategically" by Dixit and Nalebuff was a valuable insight into zero-sum and multi-player games, and how they relate to management techniques, such as trade union negotiation. In my essay for the school's major economics prize on Rational Economic Man, I came to the conclusion that social stigma and lack of information are the two prime causes of irrational behaviour. I believe that humans will intrinsically do what is best for themselves and it takes external influences such as speculation or greed to cloud their judgement and make them act foolishly. I think that this "bounded rationality" occurs when a situation is too complicated for an economic agent to think it through carefully or when imperfect information is available (such as when buying a second-hand car). Instead, responses are based on subjective opinions about the situation which are essentially flawed and irrational, and the agent ends up worse off.

My real passion, however, lies in the practical application of economics. I was the Operations Manager for a successful catering business at school, and I was delighted, when, at the beginning of this year, "Note Enterprises" became profitable for the first time. I am also the Business Manager of the school magazine, which involves raising funds from local businesses to help pay for the printing of the magazine. These activities provided invaluable real-life experience of running a business. I also enjoyed work experience at Diversey-Lever, where I helped with the company's accounts and profit analysis.

I value academic work highly, and was delighted when the school made me an honorary scholar for my consistently high performance in public exams in 2003. Such scholarships are awarded to the top 20% of boys in the year. I have entered internal prizes for other subjects, such as the Theology essay prize and the Medical Society prize. I was pleased to receive the lower-sixth Geography award in December 2003, and I was awarded the maximum score of 300 for my AS level economics exam. Since I gained a full junior scholarship from my state primary school to Eton in 1996 I have tried to take every opportunity that I can. I play regularly for the 2nd XI football team and have trained at karate for four years. I also enjoy cycling and scuba diving outside of school.

I completed the Duke of Edinburgh Silver award early this year. This was a superb experience, and a valuable lesson in proper leadership and teamwork. The Junior Scholarship scheme is something that I am passionate about, and I have given talks to prospective scholars to encourage other bright boys from the state sector to come to Eton on a scholarship and enjoy the benefits that I have received.

I think this particular course is perfect for me. It will allow me to continue to study, in tandem, the theory which fascinates me and the real-world element of practical economics which is something I take seriously, and something which I enjoy thoroughly.

Statement 5: Politics, Philosophy and Economics (Oxford) - 2005

When I chose my AS level subjects a year and a half ago, Economics was my fourth choice, and I aspired to read Greats at Oxford. After a term of Economics I switched focus, becoming absorbed in the intricacies of the subject, whilst also retaining a love for certain aspects of Greats.

As Secretary of the school's Keynes Society I have been fortunate enough to correspond with, and hear, many eminent speakers from the world of economics and business. Through these meetings, one idea which has been a recurrent theme is the concept of business dynamism, and the need for the evolution of firms. "Why Most Things Fail", by Paul Ormerod, puts forward the proposition that failure on an individual level is actually beneficial to the progression of society as a whole, since the "failing" characteristics of that person soon become extinct. This evolutionary aspect of economics seems crucial in understanding how firms adapt to changing conditions.

I have not studied Politics and Philosophy as school subjects, but have experienced parts of each in subjects such as Classics, Divinity and History. The Greek syllabus brought me into contact with a small amount of text from Plato's "Republic", and I went further into the dialogue in my own time, enjoying the challenge of analysing arguments and exploring apparent flaws. Over the summer holidays I extended my research further and wrote a dissertation for the Newcastle Classical Prize, in which I focused on the lack of individual liberty in Plato's "Ideal State", and his assertion that democracy, in fact, and paradoxically, reduces this liberty. The style of the Socratic dialogues, where Plato poses various questions in order to get you thinking, rather than merely "spoon-feeding" you, was one which I enjoyed, and which helped me when I attempted to get to grips with Kierkegaard's "Fear and Trembling". This was a set text for the Newcastle Scholarship, the school's philosophy and theology based essay prize. It also required me to produce other timed essays that needed a critical analysis of various problems, including looking at political concepts such as democracy.

History, as a subject, has given me knowledge about relevant political periods, such as the Cold War or Nazi Germany, which I could manipulate when answering these questions. However, they required me to look at problems from a fresh perspective. This sort of thinking, which questions, as J.K. Galbraith has put it, the "conventional wisdom", is one that appeals to my sense of critical observation. Another Galbraithian sentiment, articulated in "The Economics of Innocent Fraud", explains why PPE is such a relevant course for the modern world. He points out that "social progress" cannot, and should not, be measured purely in terms of economic growth. A tri-disciplined course, such as PPE, gives one the tools to assess situations with a broader perspective, without having to sacrifice detailed examination.

Apart from my academic studies I also represent both my school and house in various sports, including cricket, soccer and hockey. The last of which gave me the opportunity during the summer holidays to go to South Africa, where I was able to assess at first hand the economic and social problems faced by Third World countries. Before I left for South Africa I helped organise major fundraising events in order to take money out to a project that the school supports, which focuses on helping children orphaned by Aids. I also joined the children in building this new school facility. I enjoy teaching at a local state primary school once a week, and this encouraged me to go on a residential charity course during the summer holidays in Peckham and Camberwell, helping underprivileged children get the most out their surroundings. Recommended Reading for Economics

Statement 6: Russian at Oxford - 2007

My original reason for studying Russian was because it made a change from my other subjects and although I had studied other languages, it presented me with a new and more stimulating challenge. The more I studied Russian, the more I became fascinated with the language, the culture, and more recently the literature. The AS course does not entail any literature unfortunately, but my own limited experience of Russian literature is what draws me to studying the course at university. I have read Solzhenitsyn's 'One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich', a story that provided an insight into Stalin's infamous gulags, a period that I had previously studied in History. I was truly shocked by the conditions in which they had to live, and I hope to have the chance to study this period in greater detail. I have read short stories by Babel, Tolstoy and Zoshenka, all of which have provided me with a taste of the literature which I hope to have the chance to study in the next few years. I have recently started reading 'Crime and Punishment' by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

However, my interest in the Russian language does not lie solely in the literature. I am very keen to improve both the fluency and accuracy of my Russian language skills. I have taken an intensive Berlitz language course to improve the fluency of my spoken Russian. This summer I studied at the Moscow State University for 2 weeks, which gave me the chance to experience Russian culture first hand, as opposed to just reading about it in books. I have been appointed secretary of the school's Slavonic society for 2007/8 and I am hoping to invite some intriguing speakers to enhance the awareness and popularity of both Russian language and culture within the school. I have won the school Russian prize, and entered the all-Russian competition in 2007.

Since taking up the subject at AS level I have grown interested in economics. I have done a presentation on the rise of the BRIC countries, which led to an in depth study of the Russian economy and its huge potential for growth in the next 50 years. I am on the committee of the school's Keynes society and have seen successful entrepreneurs in Russia, such as Shev Khemka, speak on the Russian economy; indeed it seems as though there has never been such an interesting time to study Russia, its politics and its economy. I have been lucky enough to have the chance to work at the world's largest oil broker, PVM Oil Associates, and I was able to gain an insight into the market for oil, one which is key to the progression of the Russian economy. I am also the editor of the school's economics magazine.

I started a company last year, Falstaff Catering, which provided catering for school run theatre productions. I have done volunteer work at both Comic and Sport relief, which was great experience in working in all different areas of a large company. In 2005, a friend and I climbed Mont Blanc, and together we raised over £26,000 for the Oxford Children's hospital. I am a very keen sportsman; I played in the 2nd XI football team in my second last year, and have represented the school at Tennis. I used to compete in national skiing competitions, my enthusiasm for which has inspired me to create a school ski team, which is currently in its 3rd year of existence.

Suggestions for enrichment and extension reading for Economics

1. Animal Spirits (Akerlof and Shiller) ISBN: 978-0-691-14233-3
2. Art of Strategy (Dixit and Nalebuff) ISBN: 978-0-393-06243-4
3. Crisis Economics (Nouriel Roubini) ISBN: 978-1-846-14287-1
4. Development as Freedom: (Amartya Sen): ISBN: 0192893300
5. Drunkard's Walk (Leonard Mlodinow) ISBN: 0713999225
6. Fifty economics ideas (Edmund Conway) ISBN: 978-1-84866-010-6
7. How Markets Fail: The Logic of Economic Calamities (John Cassidy) ISBN: 1846143004
8. How the economy works (Roger Farmer) ISBN: 978-019-539791-8
9. How we Decide: (Jonah Lehrer) ISBN 978-0-618-62011-1
10. Keynes – the Return of the Master (Skidelsky) ISBN: 184614258X
11. Losing Control (Stephen D King) ISBN: 0300154321
12. Meltdown – the end of the age of greed (Paul Mason) ISBN: 1844673960
13. New Ideas from Dead Economists (Todd Buchholz) ISBN: 0452288444
14. Obliquity: Why our goals are best achieved indirectly (John Kay) ISBN: 1846682894
15. Origins of Virtue (Matt Ridley) ISBN: 0140244042
16. Predictably Irrational: Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions (Dan Ariely) ISBN: 0007256523
17. Prophet of Innovation: Joseph Schumpeter & Creative Destruction (TK McCraw) ISBN: 0674025237
18. Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008 (Krugman) ISBN: 1846142393
19. The Age of Instability: (David Smith) ISBN: 978-1846683107
20. The Ascent of Money (Niall Ferguson) ISBN: 014103548X
21. The Big Questions: Tackling the Problems of Philosophy with Ideas from Mathematics, Economics and Physics (Stephen Landsburg) ISBN: 143914821X
22. The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine (Michael Lewis) ISBN: 1846142571
23. The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing (Paul Collier): ISBN: 0195374630
24. The Plundered Planet: How to Reconcile Prosperity with Nature (Paul Collier) ISBN: 1846142237
25. The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves (Matt Ridley) ISBN: 978-0007267118
26. The Upside of Irrationality (Dan Ariely) ISBN: 978-0-00-735476-4
27. Whoops! Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay (John Lanchester) ISBN: 1846142857
28. Worldly Philosophers (Robert Heilbroner) ISBN: 0140290060

Reading list last updated June 8th 2010