

Economics A Level – Preparatory Work 2022

Economics is the social science which attempts to explain how we organise the world's scarce resources to satisfy human needs and wants.

If the following statements apply to you, then are likely to be suited to studying Economics:

- "I find the news of 'current affairs' interesting."
- "I enjoy a mental challenge, and problem solving."
- "I like working with statistics, data and graphs."
- "I enjoy expressing my thoughts in writing."

Step 1: Understand why you want to study economics

Most students have never studied Economics prior to Advanced Level. You therefore first need to clearly understand what studying the subject entails. **Step 1 in the process of preparing to study Economics is ensuring you have made the right positive choice of subject - one that best matches your interests, skills and aptitudes.**

When you enrol on Advanced Level courses you are **specialising** (an economic concept) to a much higher degree in the subjects you study, since many are dropped. If you choose to study A Level Economics, then you need to consider the alternative subjects you could have studied (another economic concept - **opportunity cost**).

The decisions you make when choosing your A Level subjects (economics studies **choices**) will have a major impact on your future study options and career path. It is therefore very important you make a fully informed choice (economics also studies **information problems**). If you choose one route of study, there is another route you cannot travel.



Watch these videos to find out more about studying Economics:

- [Why YOU should learn economics!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CE5eJbaHL8s)
- [What is economics?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YULdimg3o0)

The Economics Network site provides further information:

- **Why study? Economics:** <http://whystudyeconomics.ac.uk/>

Also look at this data site:

- **Our World in Data:** <https://ourworldindata.org/>

You should enrol for Economics if:

- You are interested in large-scale 'human affairs' notably developments in politics, business, trade, technology and social behaviour i.e. how human social systems operate.
- You like studying and solving, problems applying rules based on well-founded principles (logical thinking). Mathematical aptitudes and skills are useful when studying economics.
- You appreciate the usefulness of statistics and data and find it interesting, and stimulating, to interpret information in this form.
- You want to develop your writing skills.

Studying economics will not teach you how to get rich, or how to make money on financial markets. It can though lead to careers in highly skilled, well-paid, and interesting employment.

You should be interested in answering questions like these:

Why do people specialise specific jobs and firms in certain products?

Why do we use money? Why don't we just trade by barter (swapping products)?

How are prices of different goods and services established? Why is gold expensive and salt cheap?

Why are some footballers and pop stars paid more than nurses or doctors?

What causes unemployment? What causes rising prices?

How can we reduce environmental problems yet maintain our living standards?

Why are health and education provided free by the government?

How does the government seek to manage economic downturns?

Why are tech firms such as Amazon and Facebook so large, yet other firms small?

What are the benefits and costs of greater international trade?

How can low income countries grow faster and become more prosperous?

Why has the coronavirus lockdown caused a large recession?

Current affairs and economics:

To thrive when studying economics as an academic subject you need to pay attention to current affairs. Usually, political decisions have large impact on the economy. It therefore also helps when studying economics to have an interest in political events.

Look at the College Economics Department Twitter feed for some economics-related news:

- **@HSFCEconomics**

The following news media websites are particularly very useful for following economics:

- **BBC News:** www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/economy
- **Sky News:** <http://news.sky.com/business>
- **The Economist:** <http://www.economist.com/sections/economics>
- **Cityam:** www.cityam.com

Please look at them. They will be useful for your Summer Research task – see below.

Tutor2u is the main A Level Economics website. Also take a look at the economic news on the [Tutor2u Economics blog](https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog): (<https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog>).

Still interested? Then find out more below.

Step 2: You could read at least one of the following books before September 2022

Only do this if you have fully completed Step 1 and made your decision!

Now that you have decided you will study A Level Economics you need to prepare some of the background knowledge that will help you perform well once you're an A Level student in September. We recommend you read AT LEAST **one** of the following books:

- **R. H. Frank, The Economic Naturalist: Why Economics Explains Almost Everything**
- **J. Kay, The Truth about Markets**
- **T. Harford, The Undercover Economist**
- **N. Kishtainy (ed.), The Economics Book**
- **P. Krugman, The Accidental Theorist**
- **S. Levitt and S. Dubner, Freakonomics**

These books are written in discrete sections. You can read them in whole, or part. Take some summary notes. These could later help in the writing of your UCAS application personal statement in Year 2.

Step 3: Summer research task – for September

Throughout the two years of the A Level Economics course you will often be required to research an economics news item and write an analysis and evaluation of it. You can start doing this over the summer. You will need to **bring your research report to the first Economics lesson in September.**

Requirement:

1. Identify three, or four, **economic news stories** in the media e.g. on the **BBC News** or the **Sky News** site (see media sources below) which particularly interest you. **Carefully select one news stories on which to write a report. It is best to choose the one you most understand.**

You may wish to examine a technological development e.g. driverless vehicles and consider the economic implications, or instead examine the trade conflict between the US and China or consider the impact of the government-imposed coronavirus lockdown, or the rising cost of fuel and inflation. There are many issues you can explore.

You should then write a report on the news story in which you:

2. Briefly **identify** the economic event, issue or development the news item discusses.
3. State **why** you selected this news story, including what particularly interested you about it.
4. Write an **analysis of the news item** which explains what is happening and the economic impact now, and/or in the future.

You could examine the impact of an economic event on
individual citizens,
workers,
firms,
government and countries as appropriate.

You should explain any **economic terminology and concepts** you encounter in the article. You can find out what these terms and concepts mean using the glossaries on the AL Economics websites below.

You could enhance your analysis by including percentages, percentage changes, averages, graphs and other numeral data where it is suitable.

Length: 750-1,000 words

Here are some key media sources:

- **BBC News:** www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/economy
- **Sky News:** <http://news.sky.com/business>
- **The Economist:** <http://www.economist.com/sections/economics>
(register to get some access for free)
- **Financial Times:** www.ft.com (register to get some articles for free)
- **The Guardian:** <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/business>

- **Cityam:** www.cityam.com

The Metro is not a preferable source and is not to be used!

On these A Level Economics web sites are definitions of economic terminology and concepts you may encounter in the article:

- **Economics Online:** <https://www.economicshelp.org/economics-a-z/>
- **Economics Help:** <https://www.economicsonline.co.uk/category/definitions>

Bring both the news item and your research report to your first Economics lesson at Hereford Sixth Form College.

Please be prepared to present your findings to the rest of the class. **You must submit your research in the form of written, or printed, work not by e-mail.**

Step 4: Once you have completed your research report you ready to start studying Economics at Hereford Sixth Form College

1. Key information for starting study

Syllabus studied:

You will be studying the **Edexcel A Level Economics A** syllabus here:

https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/economics-a/2015/specification-and-sample-assessment-materials/A_Level_Econ_A_Spec.pdf

Recommended textbooks:

You will be issued with Micro and Macro **Study Guides** when you start the course. For home use you may want to obtain a textbook. The HSFC Economics Department recommends you get either of the following textbooks written specifically for the Edexcel Economics A syllabus:

**Alain Anderton, Edexcel AS/A Level Economics (6th edtn) Pub: Pearson
ISBN- 13: 978-1-4479-9055-0 From £20.12 (Amazon price)**

Or:

**P. Smith, Edexcel A Level Economics A (4th edtn), Pub: Hodder
ISBN-13: 978-1510449596 £37.99**

2. Further preparatory study

Starting some study now:

Should you want to start your study of economics before you commence the A Level Economics course there is nothing to stop you from getting ahead now. You can do this through the following preliminary self-study:

A. Watch these [Marginal Revolution University \(www.mruniversity.com/\)](http://www.mruniversity.com/) video lectures outlining the **principles of economics** which come with practice questions:

- **MRU:** [Principles of Microeconomics](#) (88 videos) and [Macroeconomics](#) (79 videos)

If you work your way through these video lectures and the associated 'check on learning' questions on the MRU web site, you can gain a good grasp of Economics before you start the course.

B. Work through some of these [Tutor2u \(https://www.tutor2u.net/economics\)](https://www.tutor2u.net/economics) **microeconomic study notes:**

- **Microeconomics study notes:** <https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/reference/as-microeconomics-study-notes-topic-listing>

If you work your way through the study notes on the following **introductory economics concepts** you will be very well prepared for the early part of the course:

- [What is economics?](#)
- [Positive and normative economic statements](#)
- [Renewable and non-renewable resources](#)
- [Opportunity cost](#)
- [Production possibility frontiers](#)
- [Specialisation and the division of labour](#)
- [Economic systems: free market economies, mixed economy and command economies](#)

Start listening to some podcasts:

There are an increasing number of economics and economics-related podcasts available in the UK and USA. Key ones you may want to start listening to are:

- **Planet Money:** <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510289/planet-money>
- **More or Less: Behind the Stats:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrss1/episodes/downloads>
- **Economist Radio:** <https://www.economist.com/podcasts/>
- **IEA Podcast:** <https://ieapodcast.podbean.com/>

We look forward to seeing you in early September!

Key requirement: Submit your news item and associated research report to the first Economics lesson in September.