

An economics curriculum for today's students

Developments in Economics Education conference 2013

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September 2013*

Overview

- What do students want from an undergraduate degree in economics?
- How does our curriculum match up to these expectations?
- Could we improve the curriculum?
 - Constraints
 - Opportunities

What do students want from their economics degree?

- Study a challenging & fascinating subject
- Learn to think like an economist
- Prepare for PG study, a PhD and economics research
- Learn more about a subject enjoyed at A-level
- Understand how the world works
- Prepare to get a good job
- Make money

Student views from “Why study Economics?”
Economics Network website

Destination of economics students who graduated in 2011

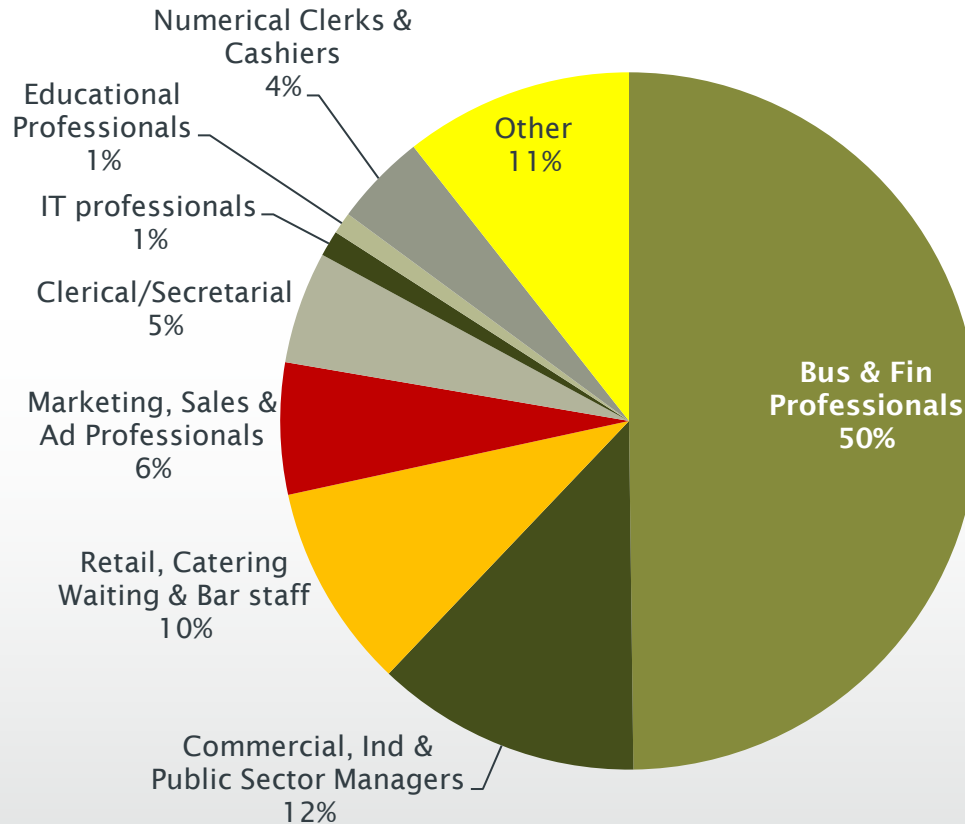
11.6 % of economics graduates were studying in the UK for a higher degree

studying Master's degrees in subjects such as:

- International Business Management
- European Political Economy
- Business and Economics
- Financial Economics
- Politics
- Creative Writing

Source: DLHE 2011

Type of work for those in employment:



Source: DLHE 2011

Does the economics curriculum meet expectations?

- Traditionally:
 - A single honours programme offers a rigorous preparation for postgraduate study
 - Joint (combined) programmes provide a broader perspective
 - Economics as a discipline is well able offer links with many other subjects
 - Accounting, Business, Management, Finance, Philosophy, Psychology, Politics, History, Maths etc
- Is it possible to design a curriculum that is appropriate for all?

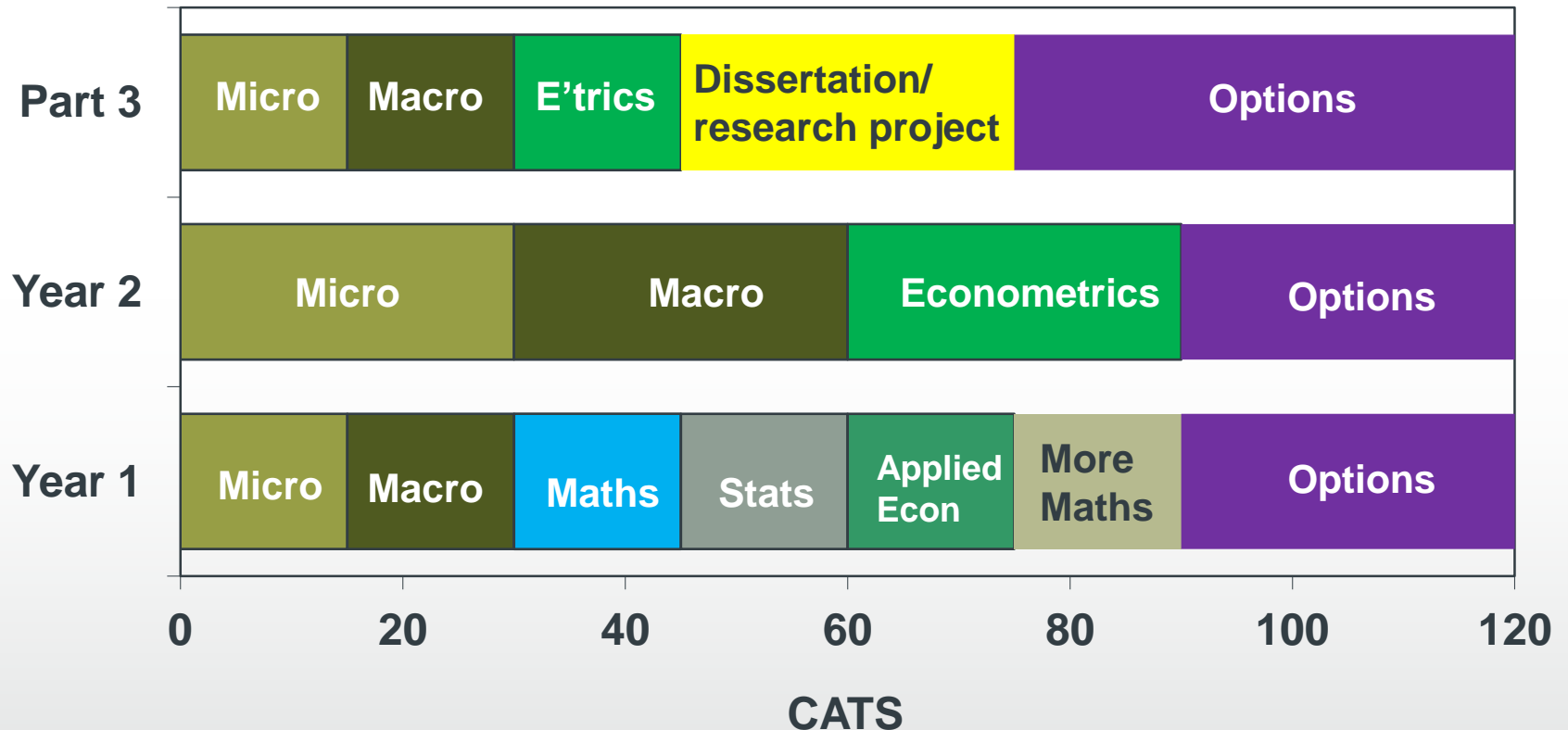
What shapes the economics single honours curriculum?

- National subject benchmarks & QAA requirements
- The need for balance
 - Micro, macro, econometrics
 - Theory, applied
 - Rigour, relevance
- Catering for a diverse student intake
- Providing research-informed teaching
 - The problem of curriculum drift
- Other constraints
 - Credit architecture

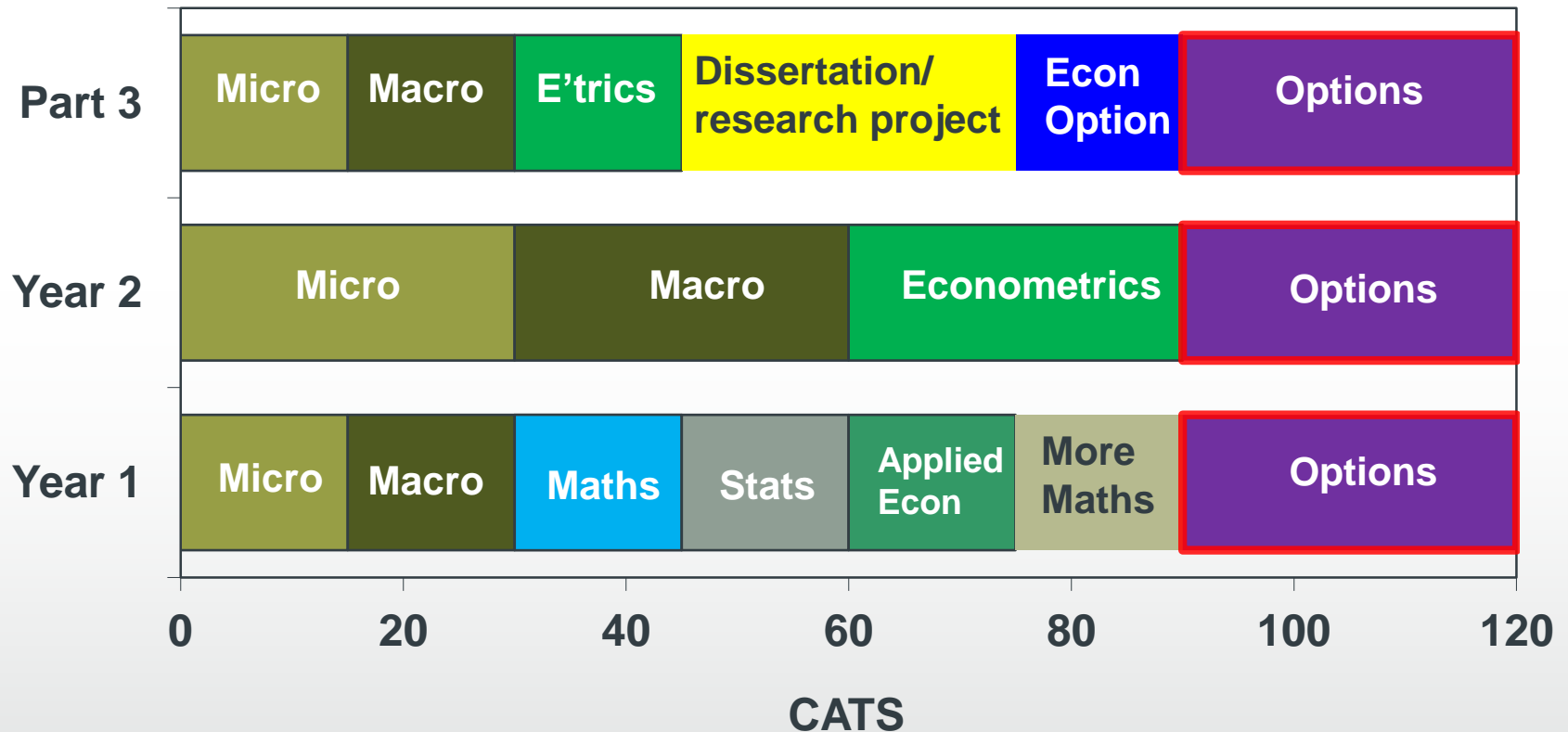
Credit architecture: an institutional constraint

- Modules (courses, units) are the building blocks of the curriculum
- Most UG degree programmes operate on 8 modules per year (Part)
 - but some on 6 (or 12)
 - some use a dry-stone wall approach
- A department does not normally have control over this...

A single honours economics programme
(8 modules per year)



A single honours economics programme (8 modules per year)



3 levels of choice

- 2 modules per year can be used to:
 - Deepen your knowledge and understanding of your subject by choosing further modules in economics;
 - broaden your studies by taking a combination of economics modules and some modules from other disciplines;
 - study modules from a pre-defined grouping that allows you to study another discipline or theme in more depth, or to take a foreign language

A Major/minor structure

- QAA rules state that a degree programme can include a named subject if a student has spent a quarter of the programme studying it.
- So under the third level of choice, it is possible to append “with X” to the degree title.
- Southampton launching for new entrants in 2013

Minors at Southampton, 2013/14

- American Studies
- Anthropology
- (Applied Economics)
- Archaeology
- Creative Writing
- Criminology
- Demography
- Education
- English
- Film Studies
- Geography
- History
- International Relations
- Jewish History and Culture
- Linguistics
- Modern Languages (10 options)
- Music
- Politics
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Social Policy
- Sociology
- Sustainable development

The M.Econ

- Another initiative to attract students through curriculum design is to build a 4-year integrated Masters' programme
- The normal 3-year BSc programme leads to a 4th year in which students take core modules from the MSc programme, plus an advanced research project
- They graduate in the June of the 4th year with a Masters' degree
 - and get 4 years of student loans

Conclusion

- There are rules & regs that constrain the curriculum
- but there are also opportunities to look for product differentiation
- Our curriculum should be designed to prepare our graduates for life after University
 - whether this be as professional economists
 - or a variety of other career paths