

Economics AS and A level (AQA)

What is the Economics Department like?

The department is accommodated in a new building, with very good IT facilities.

What is the course about?

The course covers all aspects of the subject, from the price of beer, to the price of shares on the Stock Market.

What sort of work will I be doing?

The course is taught through a variety of methods, including tutorial, videos and computer packages. It is usually divided into Micro-Economics and Macro-Economics.

Micro-Economics looks at problems as they affect individuals and companies. How are we best to spend our money? What should firms produce? What determines the price of goods in the shops? What determines wage levels? Are students entitled to the Minimum Wage? Why are teachers so badly paid?

Macro-Economics looks at the big economic issues facing the government of the day. It looks at current debates about unemployment, and what State benefits are appropriate. It also looks at issues like the Single Currency, asking whether it is in our interests to adopt the Euro. A further area of study is the Stock Market.

The Department has a number of computer packages which will help with the course. One involves students playing the roles of foreign exchange dealers, pitting their wits against the market. The Internet is also used regularly.

What about educational visits?

These are considered to be an important part of A level Economics, and several visits are built into the course. These include fieldwork at Coors Brewery and Ballard's Brewery, followed by a study of local beer and lager prices.

In the summer term students go to the Isle of Wight to study the tourist industry, and again research local beer prices (which are surprisingly low compared to those found in Surrey).

In the second year there is a residential visit to Brussels, to support our studies on the Economics of the EU.

What qualifications are recommended?

A minimum of five GCSE subjects at Grade C or above including a Grade C in English and Mathematics. Much of the course requires an ability to write fluently. Whilst the modern course contains no mathematics in itself, an ability to think logically is important. No previous knowledge of Economics is assumed, but a willingness to take an interest in current affairs is essential.

How will I be assessed?

The syllabus is divided into 4 units, the first 2 being examined at the end of the first year, the others at the end of the second year.

The units are:

1. How Markets Work
2. The National Economy
3. Business Economics
4. Government Policy

What might I end up doing afterwards?

Economics is taken by students studying a wide range of other subjects. It complements well the work of students studying predominantly Arts or Sciences. As a well respected A level, it is an ideal subject for those aiming at the traditional Universities. Many of our students go on to take Economics degrees. Typical career destinations here include the Stock Market, International Banking, Insurance and Accountancy.

What skills will I develop during this course?

Economics provides the opportunity to contribute to your key skills portfolio in the areas of application of number, communication and information technology.

Can I do any supplementary courses?

Many students study for an AS level in Business Studies as well, taking advantage of skills that are transferable between the two courses. This additional qualification is obtained with only one more timetabled lesson per week, and is available in the **second** year.

Students who perform well during the first (AS) year of the course in Economics are given the opportunity (at the discretion of the Department) to enter for the Advanced Extension Award or 'world class test', and in their A2 year are helped to prepare for it. The work covered will also be appropriate for those contemplating Oxford or Cambridge entry. Students taking the Oxford Entrance Exam in Economics will also be given extra tuition.

What extra work can I do?

Read the financial and business pages of a quality newspaper. The best Economics students are usually those who have a good grasp of current affairs.