

Title: A Perspectives Based Approach to Teaching Economics

Author: Dorrn Otter, Dr. Karl Petrick, Brendan Sheehan, Leeds Business School, MU*

Abstract

From its inception in the 1970s, economics teaching at Leeds Polytechnic/ Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) has had as its central philosophy the aim to ensure that students were familiar with a variety of perspectives in economics issues. While this includes orthodox economics, it has always been made explicit that this was only one of many schools of thought. As originally conceived, the Economics and Public Policy (EPP) degree at Leeds Metropolitan involved an interdisciplinary approach which combined both economics and political science frameworks, and encouraged students to critically evaluate economic policy using these tools¹. While this degree is now changing in line with a more business-oriented focus², still the original principles of embracing heterodox frameworks and encouraging critical evaluation of policy issues informs our curriculum.

This paper will show how we have sought to integrate heterodox approaches into our economics curriculum while at the same time giving students a thorough grounding in the essential skills of an economist, as well as wider academic and personal skills. We will explain how the aims of the economics degree inform the teaching and learning approaches that are used at LMU. These include not only beginning the teaching of alternative perspectives in economics in year one, but also a wide range of course assessments, including presentations as well as essays and exams. Two outcomes of this programme have been a large degree of employability for our economics graduates, as well as recent recognition for the quality of our degree scheme.³

*Dorrn Otter is the head of the School of Economics and Human Resource Management. Formerly he was Economics subject group leader. Karl Petrick is a senior lecturer in Economics. Brendan Sheehan is the degree scheme leader for the undergraduate degree in economics.

Correspondence address:
Dr. Karl Petrick
Leeds Business School
Cavendish Hall, Beckett Park
Leeds LS6 3QS
UK
e-mail: k.petrick@lmu.ac.uk
Tel: 0113-283-7549, ext. 4636

¹ In recent years the conventional wisdom in British universities has been that the survival of economics departments depends upon entrenching orthodox economic thought through the use of benchmarking. During this time, we have noted with interest that although there has been a decline in the popularity of single honours economics degrees in Britain, the EPP degree has survived.

² An Economics for Business (E4B) degree began running alongside the EPP degree during the 2000 academic year.

³ In a Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) audit last year, LMU received the highest score possible (24) for both its economics and business teaching.