



The Economics Network Newsletter

Issue 22
Autumn 2013



Supporting economics education in the UK and internationally
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ECONOMICS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Editorial

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“The best workshop I have ever been to. Ever.”

2013 New Lecturer workshop participant.

This year the Economics Network has held its largest programme of workshops to date for graduate teaching assistants and new lecturers – with a total of 14 workshops and over 280 participants from across the UK (see p12 for a report from one new lecturer). Participants have fed back that not only do they value the economics-specific nature of the workshops, which are run by a network of experienced economics lecturers from

across the UK, but the opportunity to share ideas with other early careers economists. To this end the Economics Network is hosting an **Early Careers Teaching Staff Symposium** on 2nd April 2013 in London, where economics new lecturers and graduate teaching assistants can build on concepts and teaching methods discussed at previous workshops, reflect on and review their teaching, and network with other early careers staff (see page 11 for more information and how to book).

During September the Economics Network hosted its biennial conference, **Developments in Economics Education (DEE)** at the University of Exeter – over 100 people attended the conference, and from those who fed back, 100% would recommend the conference to others. See page 4-8 for reports on the conference including: an outline of keynote presentations and the panel session, which focused on the future of macroeconomics in higher education.

The DEE conference also hosted the presentation of the Economics Network **Learning and Teaching Awards** (at the

conference dinner) where 9 economics academics from across the UK were recognised for their exemplary teaching practice (see page 9 for full report).

The Economics Network’s **collaborative research project**, which is exploring economics students’ changing expectations following increases in fees, moves on apace. Initial results were presented at the DEE conference, and are now available on our website (see page 13 for more information). The project, which involves 17 UK economics departments, will be running student focus groups this term, and repeating the 2013 survey in Spring 2014.

Finally, the Economics Network is directly funded by the Royal Economic Society, the Scottish Economic Society and over 40 UK higher education departments. If your department is not yet part of the community, please see our website for more information about benefits and how to join: www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/about/supporters

Ros O’Leary
Economics Network



7th biennial DEE conference in Exeter

Ashley Lait

In September, the Economics Network ran its seventh biennial Developments in Economics Education conference at the University of Exeter. We welcomed over 100 delegates from the UK and overseas, including Spain, Portugal, Germany, the US, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa among others.

The conference began with a meeting on our current research project and a drinks reception where the EN team was able to welcome presenters and catch up with our key contacts and associates. The EN research project looks into students' expectations and behaviour in the light of recent changes in higher education, particularly the rise in tuition fees. During the meeting, four of our project leads presented their initial results from the first survey of students and this was followed by a discussion on the next steps for the project, including focus groups and the second survey. A summary of the meeting and the early analysis of the aggregate data is

available later in the newsletter.

The main conference then ran on the 5th and 6th September in the University of Exeter's Business School. This year we received a record number of high quality submissions for all sessions: papers, workshops and posters, and the slides from many of these are now available on the DEE 2013 web page.

As in previous years the workshop sessions provided the opportunity for practical demonstrations of teaching ideas and methods and effective time saving tips. These ranged from the use of mobile technology to promote student engagement to the use of games to facilitate understanding of economic concepts to using teaching to benefit your research.

The paper sessions presented evidence-based research on teaching economics, for example, evaluating the benefits of lecture capture or formative assessment, how to effectively 'flip the classroom' and using

Wikipedia in economics courses to name but a few. The feedback were received on all the sessions was very positive; indeed 100% of those who submitted feedback on the conference said they would recommend attending a future DEE to a colleague.

The keynote and plenary sessions were also very interesting and highly regarded among delegates. Firstly, on the Thursday, leading UK economist John Kay gave a humorous but thought provoking keynote address entitled *The map is not the territory: making economics relevant*, in which he questioned the blind use of economic models without critical assessment of their relevance. Then, on the Friday morning, Paul Ormerod backed up the idea of using models efficiently and in a way that reflects 'the real world', notably by emphasising the need to consider the power and influence of networks.

This was followed by a panel session with EN patron Charlie Bean (Bank of England),

Giuseppe Fontana (University of Leeds), Peter Howells (University of the West of England) and Jack Rogers (University of Exeter) on the future of macroeconomics in higher education. It was agreed that more economic history needs to be embedded in the macroeconomics syllabus rather than offered as a separate module.

In addition to the busy conference programme, there was also time for catching up and sharing

ideas, particularly at the conference dinner on the Thursday evening. Indeed, this is one of the aspects of the DEE conference that is very popular and valued among attendees, along with the friendly and constructive feedback offered by peers following presentations. The dinner also offered the opportunity to present the 2013 Economics Network Learning and Teaching Awards (more on this later in the newsletter).

Photos and presentations from DEE are now available on our website. So all that's left to say is... after a very successful and enjoyable DEE 2013, we hope to see you in 2015!



Photos and feedback from DEE:



I think the overall relaxed and friendly atmosphere should not be overlooked - it is a great environment for sharing and talking about Economics teaching, not just in sessions but outside them too. And the Economics Network team should take great credit for fostering this over several years.

It is wonderful to attend a conference that was so inspiring.

#dee13 has 1 MAJOR fault: only every other year. Should be annually. better, monthly. Missing the ppl already. Big thanks to @economics_net

John Kay's keynote speech was excellent, and providing us with a number of ideas for describing the limitations and challenges to economics in light of recent events, and some of the things that our students can think about doing differently when they enter the workplace.

Very worthwhile two days, exceeded expectations.



Attending and presenting at DEE

A view from a student entrepreneur

Serena Patel, University of Sussex

I am a third year BSc Economics and Management student at the University of Sussex. While at school, I had an idea for an economics board game - a project that has since come to fruition in the form of *EconoFun*. I was delighted to be given the opportunity to run a workshop at the DEE conference at the University of Exeter this year, where economics faculty played *EconoFun* for the first time. As an undergraduate, it was a unique opportunity to participate in the conference, interact with delegates, and get a feel for the extensive research that goes into the teaching of economics at higher education. A few words on the game itself: *EconoFun* is an educational game to be used in the classroom as a revision tool for AS, A-level, IB Economics and first year undergraduate level. Groups of 6-8 players race to centre of the board, progressing by answering a series of questions correctly. Depending on the space they land on, players need to either describe economic terms, analyse graphs, or else answer short questions on economic theory.

EconoFun developed from an idea into an actual set of prototypes thanks to a £2,000 grant awarded by Sussex Innovation Centre when I was in my first year. This grant allowed me to work with a student graphic designer to develop the artwork for my game. I have been able to develop five prototypes, which served as the basis for the workshop, with delegates playing in small groups.

The DEE conference itself was a really great opportunity to meet academics in the field of Economics and get their perspective on *EconoFun* as a learning tool. I thoroughly enjoyed the conference dinner on the Thursday evening, where I got to interact with delegates, some of which attended the workshop on the following day. Certainly the quiz was a highlight!

My session, entitled 'Introduction to *EconoFun*: An Educational Board Game' was chaired by John Sloman. I started the session with a short presentation, followed by 20-25 minutes of game play. Through this, I could observe closely how the game works in practice, which is invaluable as I continue to develop and refine the game. I concluded the session with a 10-15 minutes brainstorm session in which I collected useful feedback. I was lucky enough to have Dimitra Petropoulou, a Lecturer in Economics from the University of Sussex, join me in this process. Having someone with me in the session helped me take more from it.



Where do I go from here? I've hired a student website designer and the site is near completion; the next step is the filming of a promotional video and travelling to test *EconoFun*. My immediate plans include testing the game at schools across the UK for the next two academic terms. This way I can get feedback from teachers and school pupils, in order to further improve the product before launch.

The DEE conference was a fantastic opportunity to introduce my game to academics and people interested in economics teaching. It helped me understand the strengths and weaknesses of *EconoFun*, allowing me to improve it for the future, while also making some valuable contacts. I thoroughly enjoyed attending my first conference and look forward to many more.

An international presenter's perspective

Tiago Freire, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

The 2013 Development in Economics Education (DEE) Conference was held on the 5th and 6th September at the University of Exeter's Business School.



Over these two days 52 presenters from 13 countries spread over 4 continents discussed the latest in pedagogical innovations in Economics education.

Delegates had an opportunity to hear keynote speaker John Kay, visiting Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics and a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, talk about the importance of critical assessment and relevance in what we teach to economics students. Our second keynote speaker, Paul Ormerod, Partner of Volterra, addressed a problem brought up in a previous DEE Conference in 2011, and emphasized the importance of adding recent developments in economics into teaching. In particular, he focused on how network economics can be incorporated into the traditional intermediate microeconomics module.

In the panel on the future of macroeconomics in

higher education, Charlie Bean, Jack Rogers, Peter Howells and Giuseppe Fontana, discussed how to include lessons from the recent economic crises into our teaching, in particular, the appropriateness of standard macroeconomic models in the current economic situation.

“52 presenters from 13 countries spread over 4 continents discussed the latest in pedagogical innovations”

In parallel sessions delegates discussed innovations in important topics in teaching Economics. Delegates had the opportunity to attend sessions where curriculum design and students' choice of modules were discussed as well as sessions on different types of assessment and their effectiveness or even sessions focusing on innovative techniques to improve student interaction in the classroom through the use of experiments, games and simulations.

As always in DEE conferences, there were several talks on how to effectively use technology in teaching. In particular, there were sessions on the use of response systems (clickers and mobile

phones) as well as papers on the use of lecture capture systems and inverted classrooms. There were also innovative uses of Web 2.0, such as Wikis, as alternative mediums for essay writing and cooperation within group projects. It is along this line that I presented my work.

I brought to the DEE conference a paper on how to improve the standard written assignments through the use of Wikipedia. Compared with a traditional essay assignment, an assignment where we require students to submit their work to Wikipedia can address many of the problems faced by instructors with traditional assignments, such as poor writing skills, lack of primary source research, and poorly balanced discussions.

“An assignment where we require students to submit their work to Wikipedia can address many of the problems faced by instructors with traditional assignments”

Our study was based on our own experience in teaching an upper-level economics module over two semesters: 125 students enrolled in the

first semester submitted a traditional writing assignment, while 125 enrolled in the second semester, submitted two short articles to Wikipedia.

The results showed a large increase in the number of students checking assignment feedback. We believe this was because we told students that their grades would be affected if Wikipedia found problems with their assignments. We also found that the writing quality of students

improved, while they provided a more balanced discussion of the relevant issues and included a greater number of primary sources.

People interested in using Wikipedia as a medium for student submission of assignments may want to read Cumming's "Lazy Virtues: Teaching Writing in the Age of Wikipedia".

EN: Tiago's presentation is also available on the DEE website.

Bio: Tiago Freire joined the International

Business School Suzhou at Xi'an JiaoTong-Liverpool University as a lecturer in 2012. Before his current position he worked for two years as a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Economics of the National University of Singapore (Singapore). Tiago did his PhD in Economics at Brown University in Providence, RI after finishing a MSc in Economics with distinction at the University of Birmingham.

Follow up from DEE conference

We have updated the DEE webpage since the conference and we have a number of resources now available, including:

- Abstracts from all conference sessions
- PowerPoint slides from a large number of presentations
- Photos from the conference and conference dinner
- The twitter feed from #dee13
- Recordings from the keynote, plenary and panel sessions will soon also be available

All available at www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/dee2013

EN Learning and Teaching Awards

Winners announced at 2013 DEE Conference

The EN's learning and teaching awards were presented at the DEE conference dinner at the University of Exeter on 5th September.

The EN awards are given in **recognition of exemplary teaching practice that encourages understanding of and inspires interest in economics**, and this year we received an unprecedented number of high quality nominations and awarded prizes in three categories:

Outstanding Teaching Award

Winners:

Paul Middleditch (University of Manchester)

Paul is described by his Head of Department as 'constantly striving to find ways to improve on existing teaching delivery and introduce technology to enhance the student experience'.



Paul (right) receives his award from EN patron John Kay



Jeremy (left) is presented his award by his Head of Department at the University of Warwick, Abhinay Muthoo

Jeremy Smith (University of Warwick)

Jeremy is responsible for the delivery of the core statistics and econometrics teaching at undergraduate level at Warwick. Jeremy is described as being 'passionate about his subject' and being 'driven by a strong desire to ensure students learn and learn properly'.

Commendations:

Ralf Becker (University of Manchester)

Ralf is an enthusiastic, talented and dedicated teacher of economics. Notably his innovative redesign of a second/third year econometrics module has decreased a failure rate from over 25% to around 10%. Student feedback has also confirmed the popularity of Ralf's teaching methods.



Peter Dawson (University of East Anglia)

Student feedback on Peter's teaching is evidence of his dedication to, and patience with, students, e.g. "The quality of the teaching from Peter Dawson was absolutely fantastic" and "Perfect; explained everything slowly and methodically so everyone could understand. My best lecturer by far."



Ralf and Peter receive their awards from EN patron Paul Ormerod

Best New Lecturer Award

Winner:



Chris (right) was presented his award by Eric Pentecost, Chair of CHUDE

Chris Colvin (Queen's University Belfast)

Professor Paul Latreille, external examiner, singled out Chris's module commenting that "The module is, quite simply, exemplary. Its structure, delivery and assessment have been crafted, and Chris' imaginative treatment of the material, integration of theory and practice, and innovative pedagogy such as the moot court, games and the Office of Fair Trading reports make for a superb learning experience. For a staff member in their first year, the module represents a genuinely outstanding achievement."

Commendations:

Laura Delaney (City University)

Laura has achieved near perfect 5 out of 5s from students' evaluation for this module, and her ability to teach relatively difficult subject material in an interesting and relevant way is praised by both students and colleagues.

Christian Spielmann and Parama Chaudhury (University College London)

Christian and Parama have collaborated over the last two years to develop a toolbox of new interactive teaching techniques. They have also started a series of informal seminars, where they (and others) discuss and share their experiences with various teaching techniques.



Christian (right) receives his award from Paul Ormerod

Winner:

Fabian Winkler (London School of Economics)

Fabian Winkler is Course manager for the LSE's second year Macroeconomics course, managing 38 seminar classes and 17 Graduate Teaching Assistants and over 500 students. Fabian is described as a 'committed', 'tireless' and 'inspirational' by students and colleagues.

*Visit our website to read more about our
2013 award winners:*

<http://economicsnetwork.ac.uk/awards/2013>



2012 Autumn Workshops

Training for graduate teaching assistants and new lecturers

With the support of the Royal Economic Society, Scottish Economic Society and subscribing economics departments across the country, the Economics Network has completed another successful series of autumn workshops. These workshops are for graduate teaching assistants and early career lecturers and remain well attended and highly regarded. The Network's workshops are economics specific and compliment or replace parts of generic teaching training offered by universities.

This year, EN associates have trained over 260 graduate teaching assistants from 29 different departments at 13 workshops across the UK.

Sessions in the GTA workshops explore the role of the GTA, how to run small group classes, how to deal with different classroom situations and how to give effective marking and feedback. In addition, the events

offer the opportunity to discuss experiences, share concerns about teaching and gain useful tips for the classroom, which in many cases are the aspects of the workshops that assistant tutors appreciate the most.

This year's new lecturer workshop was held at the University of Manchester, where the EN welcomed 15 early career lecturers for the two day event.

The attendees had a full programme including sessions on the traditional lecture, small group teaching, designing assessment and giving feedback, using games and experiments in the classroom and a final session on alternative use of lecture time, such as problem-based learning and 'flipping' the classroom.

As with previous years, we received excellent feedback from the workshop series, including:

The workshop "reassured me that

there are others in my position with the same worries/concerns about first time teaching".

"I will definitely find out what students expect at the beginning of the class and constantly remind them of the ultimate goal, it is not about a pass but good grades and employability".

The workshop emphasised "the importance of enthusiasm and passion for teaching (shown by the presenters who were excellent)".

"A well thought out course. The facilitators kept us engaged at all times and allayed our fears about teaching for the first time".

"I would like to attend other workshops if there are more".

"I learnt new techniques for teaching seminars, also methods for dealing with difficult students".

"Excellent choice of content to be presented".

One day symposium for GTAs and new lecturers

The EN is running a follow-up event for graduate teaching assistants and new lecturers. The sessions will:

- build on the concepts addressed in the autumn workshops
- provide the opportunity to review teaching practice
- explore teaching of specific subjects, e.g. microeconomics or econometrics

Date: 2nd April 2014

Location: London School of Economics, London, WC2A 2AE

Booking now open at:
www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/news

The Autumn Workshops

Participants' perspective

GTA Attendee - Margaret Antony, Royal Holloway University of London

The one day-GTA workshop aimed at providing participants with a broad understanding of their teaching roles and responsibilities and practical guidance on how to make their teaching more effective. The workshop covered topics on effective teaching methods, assessment procedures and requirements and organising seminars, through three interactive and lively sessions. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and thoughts on classroom teaching. The discussions enabled participants to gain insights on various techniques and practices that could be adopted to make teaching and learning more effective. The workshop was well-structured and adequately balanced with group exercises and presentations on the relevant topics by the well-experienced facilitators.

The first session on issues broadly concerning small group teaching, the roles, responsibilities and skills required of GTAs and on facilitating learning provided a very professional perspective on classroom management. Important factors concerning small group teaching and the essential skills of a GTA were identified through a group exercise. Some of the major points made on the anxieties and concerns GTAs faced in handling small-group teaching had to do with time management, handling the apathy or lack of response from learners, overcoming the intimidating feeling of being in charge, handling the doubts of learners, drawing the line with help, making seminars participatory and overcoming language barriers. Effective ways of approaching these issues were also discussed at length. Using slides and PowerPoint presentations, which could be made interactive as well and flip charts were noted as effective tools in time management. Outlining one's expectations as well as finding out the expectations of learners at the outset, being open and adopting a personal approach by learning the names of students, e-mailing absent pupils and involving pupils in working out solutions in the class were pointed out as effective ways for motivating students and ensuring the continued engagement of

learners. Maintaining a level of strictness in the use of mobile phones and ensuring that learner's paid attention in class it was felt were also important. The need for adopting a participatory approach and involving all learners, by asking questions, conducting group exercises and making the students workout/explain solutions was further emphasised upon. Among the skills recognised as important in effective classroom management were good knowledge of the subject, self-confidence, proper time management and organisational skills and the use of appropriate resources to enable learning. Suggestions on setting up a 'Moodle' forum for students and seminar/workshop facilitators to interact, using flip charts or PowerPoint presentations and carefully studying and exploring problem sets to identify where the challenges lie were particularly noteworthy.

The second session was focused on the organisational aspects of a seminar, identifying the needs of learners and providing practical guidance on 'subject-specific' teaching. The use of appropriate resources to enable learning, including introducing games in understanding basic concepts and differentiating between kinaesthetic, auditory and visual learners were the major highlights of this session. Group exercises on teaching quantitative modules and economic theory were undertaken and different teaching strategies examined during the course of the discussion. The need to make a narrative or discourse around the solution of problems in quantitative modules was pointed out by the facilitators.

The concluding session of the workshop dealt with issues related to assessment and feedback. Additional teaching resources, including a Handbook on teaching economics, and various online sources were mentioned by the facilitators as useful aids in improving one's teaching skills. The importance of providing meaningful feedback was particularly emphasised upon and the need for 'sandwiching' comments such as to not

discourage learners was pointed out. The option of copying and pasting comments for feedback from relevant online sources was also mentioned.

The workshop provided one with the necessary orientation to classroom teaching and management and was particularly useful to the new GTAs. Overall, the workshop was

effectually designed to benefit both new as well as experienced GTAs. Participants were provided with adequate references and useful materials to back up the information gained at the workshop. The experience and enthusiasm of the facilitators made this one-day event a particularly pleasant and very informative one.

New lecturers' attendee - Jana Fiserova, Staffordshire University

This was the most relevant and useful workshop I have ever been to.

The workshop was specifically targeted at early-career Economics lecturers and was therefore directly applicable to all participants. It was a fantastic opportunity to exchange ideas and examples of best practice. The practical experience and experiments demonstrations were incredibly useful and provided great insight into the issue of how to improve student engagement. Early-career lecturers tend to find it rather difficult and time-consuming to prepare lectures and tutorials in terms of content and activities. The resources that have been introduced through the Economics Network will be very useful in reducing the workload and the insecurity of early-career lecturers.

In fact, as a result of the workshop I have already used some games and experiments in my Economics of Strategy classes. After the discussions about the issue of quality feedback provision, I have implemented two sets of formative assessment and a rubric system for marking for this (Economics of Strategy) and other modules. I am now planning to record video-clips and podcasts to convey complex messages and material to students, which was successfully implemented at the hosting institution (Manchester) and resulted in very positive student feedback. In addition, I have decided to follow another example of good practice, namely to plan my lectures and tutorials more formally by designing and following worksheets.



New Lecturer attendees at the workshop in Manchester

Progress on the EN Research Project

Students' expectations in the light of HE changes

Ashley Lait/Ros O'Leary

In the last edition of the EN newsletter (<http://economicsnetwork.ac.uk/news>), we gave a brief update on our interdepartmental research project, which has now been underway for around eight months.

For those who are unfamiliar with the project

This project, in which over 20 departments are engaged, explores the expectations and behaviour of economics students in the light of recent changes in higher education, in particular the increase in tuition fees.

We are looking into these issues by:

- Surveying first and second years (in 2013 and 2014) about their expectations of their course and whether or how these have been met. Note that the first and second years in 2013, in general, paid different levels of fees, whereas by 2014 first and second years will be paying the same.
- Gathering data about student attendance and submission of work throughout the academic year.
- Running focus groups to increase understanding on how students viewed the questions and on their expectations.

Update on the project's progress

At the Developments in Economics Education conference, we held the second project meeting and the first since departments have had the initial data from the first survey. During the meeting, four project leads from different departments (Aberdeen, Bristol, Lancaster and University College London) all presented their analysis of this data and then discussed their findings with all those engaged with the project.

What's next?

During the project meeting, the next steps were discussed and it was decided that it would be valuable to:

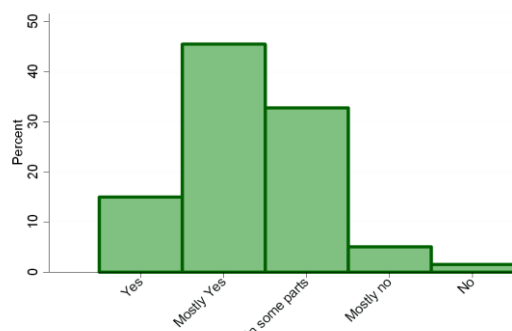
- Be able to match survey data to supporting data (e.g. students' exam results, assignment submission records etc) where ethically possible.
- Consider redesigning the survey questionnaire for 2014 to gather additional or more specific information.
- Run focus groups to gain an insight into how students understood the questions in the survey and to gather further qualitative data.

Summary of initial findings

The findings of the four departments that presented during the project meeting were all very similar and this was also reflected in the aggregate data presentation given by Alvin Birdi, coordinator of the Economics Network, during the main conference session. This presentation is available on our website.

- Total students surveyed: 3,483
- Year One: 1,990 (57.9%); Year Two: 1,422 (41.4%)
- Male: 2,020 (58.3%); Female: 1,444 (41.7%)
- Permanent residence: England 52.14%; Scotland: 7.895%; Wales: 1.272%; EU (non-UK): 11.36%; other international: 27.33%

Has studying on this degree course met your expectations overall?



See <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/research2013> for more information and results.

Upcoming Events & News

The Festival of Economics, 18-23 November 2013

This is the second Festival of Economics, programmed by Diane Coyle, in which economists and other experts from around the UK will be debating with each other – and their audiences – on some of the key economic questions of our times. Discounted rates are available to students from Bristol.

For further information, please visit: <http://www.ideasfestival.co.uk/2013/events/2013-festival-of-economics-save-the-date/>

One day symposium for early career lecturers and graduate teaching assistants, 2 April 2014

The Symposium has been designed as a follow-up to the autumn workshops for new lecturers and graduate teaching assistants. It will:

- build upon the concepts addressed in earlier workshops
- provide the opportunity to share experiences and innovations as well as review your teaching practice
- explore teaching of specific subjects e.g. econometrics or microeconomics
- offer sessions aimed specifically at GTAs and others for new lecturers, e.g. a session on course design

To book a place and for further information, please visit our website:

<http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/events/gta/2013>

The 2014 National Teaching Fellowship Scheme

The Higher Education Academy has recently released a call for nominations to the 2014 NTF scheme, which recognises and rewards excellent learning and teaching. There are up to 55 awards of £10,000 made to recognise individual excellence. The award is intended for professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.

The deadline for nominations is 14 January 2014 and we would encourage economics lecturers to apply.

Three of the EN's associates are National Teaching Fellows so if you would like their advice on the scheme or applying, just let us know.

More information including on how to apply is available at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ntfs>.

Please contact Ashley Lait (Ashley.lait@bristol.ac.uk) or visit the events page of our website (www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/news) for any further information on these events or any other matters relating to the newsletter.