

Teaching statement

I have always enjoyed and taken pride in teaching. During my graduate school days and in my career as a faculty member I have gathered experience teaching a wide array of subjects. I have been an instructor and a teaching assistant for Principles of Economics, which is a combination of introductory Micro and Macroeconomics. I have also been an instructor and a teaching assistant for Intermediate Macroeconomics. In addition, I have experience in elective courses such as Health Economics and Economic Growth, and I have given well-received lectures on environmental economics topics (cost-benefit analysis and sustainable growth) to Master's level, non-economics students. I have also designed and given original lectures on the empirical testing of economic theory, as part of my instruction in Applications of Economic Analysis at the University of Edinburgh. The goal of those lectures was to "deconstruct" peer-reviewed papers, and examine in more detail how a theoretical model gives rise to certain testable implications and specific empirical methodology, depending also on data availability. Students got to read current research in economics, and reception was very positive.

During my tenure at the University of Edinburgh I specialised in teaching undergraduate level statistics and econometrics. I played a key part in the redevelopment of the econometrics curriculum, which began in September 2010. I fully organised and taught an introductory core course in statistics, and I also took over the organisation and teaching of intermediate econometrics. I also drafted and developed (though I did not teach) a new, advanced econometrics course. As a result of all the aforementioned changes, Edinburgh now has a coherent, well-organised econometrics curriculum, which takes students from fundamentals of probability to current social research methodology, as used in cutting-edge, peer-reviewed economics research and publications. We have had positive and improving feedback from students, but the best proof of our progress has been the much improved quality of empirical undergraduate dissertations.

Most of the classes that I have taught have been big, core courses which are compulsory for single or joint degrees in Economics. Registration at times has exceeded 250 students of different backgrounds. It has been challenging, but I am quite comfortable teaching in front of a large audience. On the other hand, I have also taught smaller, seminar-style classes as a teaching assistant at Brown and as a tutorials leader in Edinburgh. The interaction in those smaller groups is different, but equally enjoyable. And then there is the one-on-one teaching that occurs through dissertation supervision, where there is direct engagement with a motivated student on a topic of common interest to both the supervisor and the supervisee.

I have also supported student learning through my role as a Director of Studies and Personal Tutor¹. I received a University-wide teaching award for my work in this capacity in spring 2012. As a Director of Studies (or Personal Tutor) my role is to meet regularly (at least once a semester) with students in order to provide academic guidance and support, help them develop their learning in terms of their goals and aspirations, and be the first point of contact in case problems which might affect their studies arise. I very much enjoy such interaction which goes above and beyond a strict curriculum or a dissertation, and it is a great joy to watch students develop into thinkers during the course of their undergraduate studies.

My experience both at Brown and in Edinburgh has shaped my teaching philosophy, and I take pride in my development as a teacher at the University level. I emphasize intuition over technical proofs that will be forgotten after the final exam, and I try to use many illustrative examples that students can relate to. My ambition is that, years later, my students will still remember material that we covered in the lectures, and that their thinking will have been shaped at least in part by their learning under my supervision.

I use repetition across lectures to highlight subtle points, and I often refer to material previously covered to help students see how everything fits into a bigger picture. I use slides for my lectures, but I do not rely on them. I like to use the blackboard to slow down and focus on certain important points in the lecture. I also find that using the blackboard incentivizes students to attend even early morning or late afternoon lectures, since they do not have access to that part of the lecture simply by downloading the slides!

I am aware that students have many different learning styles, and I try to accommodate these in my lectures. Similarly, I prefer to have many assessment methods in any given course, understanding that one size does not fit all. Later in life, current students will not have to sit conventional exams to showcase their learning and ability, so there is no reason to limit assessment to the habitual test-taking in the context of a university course. Related to this, whenever possible I try to develop students' transferrable skills as part of their learning. For example, students need to complete a team-based empirical project as part of their assessment in Intermediate Econometrics. This fosters friendships and promotes a collegiate environment, but it also teaches students how to work as members of a team under a tight deadline. I understand that many students get to know each other after spending many hours in the library, over computers, united in their exasperation with Stata (and their instructor).

In conclusion, I have substantial experience organizing and teaching courses on many different topics, as well as dealing with different class sizes. My experience has made me an inspiring, solid teacher, and I hope that my future in academic teaching will provide me with even more opportunities to improve.

¹ Directors of Studies were replaced by Personal Tutors at the University of Edinburgh starting 2012-2013. For all practical purposes they have the same role.