

Diversifying the Curriculum: Microeconomics 4 Blog

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This academic year, we introduced an innovative coursework component within the Microeconomics 4 (ECON 20022 & 20023) module. This new approach aims to enrich student learning and boost engagement by involving them in the creation of blog posts. Students have been working in groups of four, selecting a topic related to the module content inspired by everyday experiences or current events. Their task was to write a blog post on the chosen subject, using the relevant academic literature to support their points. The blog post had to be written in a non-technical style which would appeal to the general public.

Once the blogs were completed by the students, they were shared anonymously with the entire class to foster an environment of peer-to-peer learning and to illustrate real-world applications of microeconomics principles. This approach not only allows students to benefit from each other's insights but also helps them see the practical relevance of the concepts they are studying. For those who preferred not to share their work publicly, there was an option to opt out of having their work published. Nonetheless, student participation was high, and most were willing to share their posts, which were then included in the public blog. For future academic years, students will automatically have access to pasts blog posts, ensuring that diverse perspectives are shared among the students, fostering an environment and platform where multiple viewpoints are heard.

Engaging in topic selection, researching, and writing has deepened students' understanding of microeconomic concepts and helped prepare them for their upcoming exams. Applying these concepts to real-world scenarios provides a more comprehensive and practical grasp of both the module and the economic theories. The students develop different employability skills which will be useful in the future as graduates. They learn to integrate complex ideas and present them logically and coherently. They develop critical thinking and analytical abilities. Groups were randomly assigned, learning to work effectively with diverse team members and developing their communication skills through discussion and collaborative projects.

Once blogs were shared, the team selected the blog post which better matched all the marking criteria, and the team members received a prize in the form of a voucher, and their blogpost was published in the form of an Instagram post at [dailylifeecon](https://www.instagram.com/dailylifeecon/) (<https://www.instagram.com/dailylifeecon/>), a page lead by Sofia Izquierdo Sanchez (module leader of Microeconomics 4), and William Tayler, which they use to relate daily life events to

the theoretical concepts students learn, and they have done further research on using the social networks to increase engagement and implement a research-led curriculum (see for example: https://doc.your-brochure-online.co.uk/Lancaster-University_Scholarship-and-Innovation-in-Management-Education/23/). Recognising the best piece of work served as an incentive for students to continue excelling in their academic practise and future endeavour, encouraging them to create more innovative and creative content, and giving them the opportunity to have an extra curriculum award.

The reception of the assignment has been very positive. Students welcomed the opportunity to explore microeconomic topics that resonate with their personal interests and current events. Students reported that the group dynamics helped them develop better communication and teamwork skills. They found the process of discussing ideas and dividing tasks among group members to be both challenging and rewarding. The quality of the posts reflected the students' understanding of the subject. Many groups chose innovative and relevant topics, showcasing their ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations. The incorporation of current events added relevance to their analysis, making the blogs not only academically sound but also engaging and insightful.

A feedback questionnaire was sent to the students after the submission of the coursework. 10% of the students replied to the questionnaire. 100% said they found the blog coursework very interesting or exciting. 80% said it enhanced their understanding of microeconomic concepts and promoted peer-to-peer learning.

Thanks to the Diversifying the Curriculum grant, we were able to introduce this innovative assessment, having the opportunity to develop the relevant skills for our students further.

Link to the Microeconomics 4 blog: <https://microeconomics4blog.blogspot.com/>