



DESIGNING A SKILLS- BASED CURRICULUM

An Economics Case Study

DR THOMAS ALLEN

WHY SKILLS?

- Belief that we should explicitly try to teach directly useful things to our students, not just hope they pick up some things by accident.
- Not always the case in my own teaching.....
- Feedback from students important.
- Also incentivised by university metrics.



THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE BLOCK SYSTEM

New programmes, with no shared modules allow a programme-level focus.

Self-contained blocks allow us to sequence skills development through the year whilst relating skills to the specifics of that block.

Having regular assessments throughout the year allows planning for progression of a skillset as the programme develops.

WHICH SKILLS?

- Skills identified from:
 - Feedback from students doing placements and going into their careers.
 - DMU Careers team (wheel of skills)
 - Stakeholder consultation as part of programme validation.
 - QAA benchmark statements.
 - [Centre for Teaching and Learning Economics](#) at UCL
 - Economics Network



Software Skills	Economics Skills	Other Skills
Data Management	Application of economics to real world and analysis	Teamwork (leadership within this)
Data Analysis	Communication, specifically of Economics ideas	Organisation/ Task Management
Data Visualisation	Problem Solving (including framing of problems)	Work independently
Fluency with Trading room suite	Writing for an academic audience	Work under pressure
Fluency with Excel	Writing for a non-academic audience	Self-awareness and Confidence
Fluency with Powerpoint	Presenting for an academic audience	Commercial Awareness
Fluency with STATA or another Econometrics package	Presenting for a non-academic audience	Professional Etiquette
Fluency with Tableau	Ability to plan research	Relationship building
Introduction to a programming language (R or Python)	How to find sources and reference	Resilience: learn from failure and tolerate uncertainty
	How to read an Economics paper	Creativity
	Mathematical Problem Solving	Can do attitude
	Diagram drawing	
	Statistical reasoning	



PRACTICAL STEPS

- 1. Which skills are most important to your programme?**
- 2. Which skills will be more important earlier in the programme? Which are more important later in a programme?**
- 3. Which modules/blocks will be best for focusing on which skills?**
- 4. How should we try and teach these skills?**
- 5. Who can help teach these skills?**





CASE STUDY
ECONOMICS AT
DMU

BSC ECONOMICS

Software Skills

Economics Skills

Other Skills

Data Management

Application of economics to real world and analysis

Organisation/ Task Management

Data Analysis

Communication, specifically of Economics ideas

Work independently

Data Visualisation

Problem Solving (including framing of problems)

Self-awareness and Confidence

Fluency with Trading room suite

Presenting for an academic audience

Resilience: learn from failure and tolerate uncertainty

Fluency with Excel

Presenting for a non-academic audience

Fluency with STATA or another Econometrics package

Ability to plan research

Fluency with Tableau

How to find sources and reference

Introduction to a programming language (R or Python)

How to read an Economics paper

Mathematical Problem Solving

Statistical reasoning



YEAR 1 BLOCK 1 – APPLIED MICROECONOMICS

Skills (as linked to LOs)

Recognise the central elements of the economics approach to problem-solving, including exchange, scarcity, trade-offs, marginal thinking and model-building.

Application of economics to real world and analysis, Problem Solving (including framing of problems)

YEAR 1 BLOCK 1 – APPLIED MICROECONOMICS

Skills (as linked to LOs)

Identify and solve economic problems using algebra, diagrams and economic data.

Diagram drawing, Mathematical Problem Solving, Data analysis

YEAR 1 BLOCK 1 – APPLIED MICROECONOMICS

Skills (as linked to LOs)

Investigate a range of problems in applied microeconomics, including issues of sustainability, and analyse these within the framework of an economics methodology, including quantitative methods.

(Problem Solving (including framing of problems), Application of economics to real world and analysis)

YEAR 1 BLOCK 1 – APPLIED MICROECONOMICS

Skills (as linked to LOs)

Compare the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to understanding microeconomic issues, and how to investigate their validity empirically.

**(Communication, specifically of Economics ideas, Data analysis,
Writing for an academic audience)**



YEAR 1 BLOCK 1 – APPLIED MICROECONOMICS

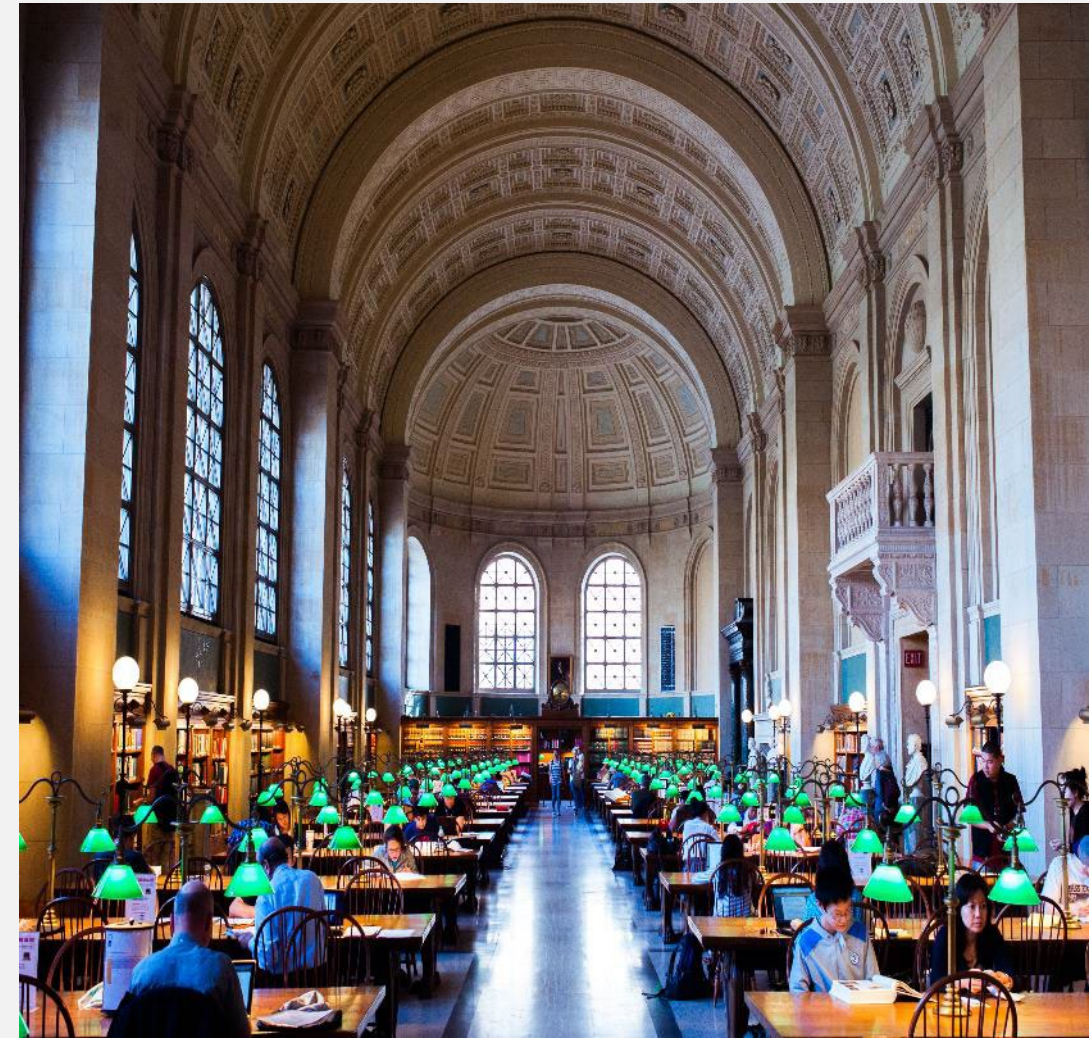
Skills (as linked to LOs)

Recognise and develop the skills required for successful university study including communication, organization, writing and time management skills.

(Professional Etiquette, Work independently, Organisation/ Task Management, Work under pressure)

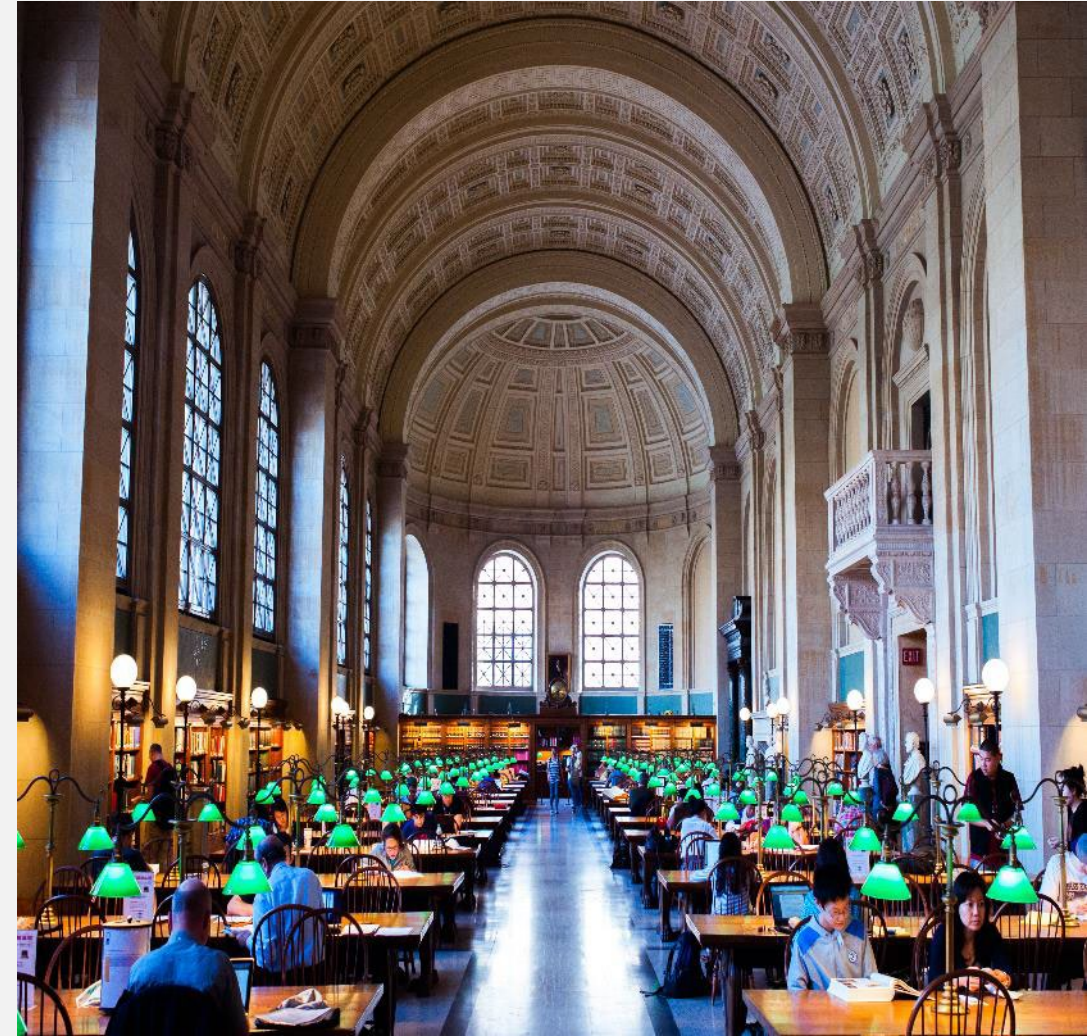
HOW TO TEACH IT?

- First example:
- For my block 1 module I want them to learn more about 'How to find Sources and Reference'.
- Workshop activity:
 - I have a set of questions for them on referencing
 - An activity where they find references they will be using in their final report
 - Write up what the reference should look like for me to give feedback.
 - Supported by various documentation.
 - Done at the end of the course when they are completing their reports.



WHO TO TEACH IT

- Second example:
- Colleague from the library takes lecture session on ['Introduction to Academic Writing'](#).
- Workshop activity:
 - use the resources from library session
 - students take some of their sources and practice summarising what they say as part of their assignments.
- Combine expert knowledge from multiple sources.



SUMMARY

Do all of this at programme level not module level.

Programmes with entirely unique modules and block sequencing makes this practical in a way that it was not before.

3-hour workshops and 2-hour lectures also fundamental. Help make skills session an organic part of the course rather than something tagged on.

Help students be confident in what skills they have developed – give them summaries of this process and what skills we hope they will be improving.