I'm writing to you about your application to study the BA Economics (L100) in the Department of Economics at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the BA Economics.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain an advanced understanding of Economics and a wide range of transferable skills. However, to accommodate the new protocols for the 2020-21 academic year, we have made some adjustments to the content and structure of Level 1.

The core modules are all the same but we've made some changes to the range of optional modules we'll be offering. Adjusting our teaching methods over the summer, and then delivering the new blended model in the autumn, will place considerable extra demands on our staff's time, and we aren't going to be able to offer all the options we were hoping to. Unfortunately, the following module won't be running this year:

Economic History of Britain and the Modern World

In addition, we've removed the 40 'unrestricted' credits available at Level 1, where students could study any Level 1 modules from across the University, not just the options listed in the BA Economics regulations. Because of the challenges of managing module selection during the pandemic, the University has suspended unrestricted credits for 2020-21. In their place, we've added to our list of options the following 20-credit modules drawn from other departments' courses, offered by our colleagues in the Department of Geography, Department of Sociological Studies and the School of Languages and Culture:

- Exploring Human Geographies
- Environmental Change and Society
- Sociology of the Everyday
- Understanding Inequality
- Welfare Politics & the State
- French Beginners/Post A-Level
- Understanding Modern France
- Understanding Spanish & Latin American Culture
- Spanish Beginners/Post A-Level
- German Beginners/Post A-Level
- Understanding German History and Culture

Please rest assured that there will still be modules for you to choose from, you'll still get to learn all about Economics, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need for Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

The majority of our teaching comprises lectures, tutorials and workshops, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.
It's not possible to social distance in a full lecture theatre, so we'll be delivering the content of our lectures online in short videos. This content will be presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well.

For our interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you'll have regular, timetabled sessions of each form. The face-to-face sessions will take place in smaller groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this won't change in 2020-21. The digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, and include activities such as Q&A sessions, opportunities to work through workshop problems with staff and other students, and feedback on assessment.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for tutorials and other one-to-one meetings, and will still hold their regular office hours. Where it is not possible for these sessions to take place in person you'll be able to make an audio or video call.

**Learning resources**

Most of our learning resources are already available online. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it’s safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

**Assessment**

Assessments will be a combination of coursework and exams but you will not be required to take any exams in lecture theaters or similar venues in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. Where exams form part of the assessment, we will use an ‘open book’ format. Exam questions will be made available online and you will have a certain amount of time to answer them. You will be able to complete your answers electronically at home, with the ability to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course. We’ll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams in the individual module handbooks you’ll receive when you join us. Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online and this will continue to be the case.

**Costs**

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions.

If you are concerned that you might not be able to afford equipment or have a broadband connection to study remotely, please contact the University's Financial Support Team. The University can provide laptops on loan or a grant depending on your circumstances.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.
If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our Department Administration Manager Bev Rawson at economics-admissions@sheffield.ac.uk.

**Further information**

Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our frequently asked questions, which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on demand content from our online applicant open days which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer and stay safe.

Best wishes

Professor Steve McIntosh
Head of Department
Department of Economics