I'm writing to you about your application to study the MSc Financial Economics (L101) 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 MSc Financial Economics.

**Course content**

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain proficiency in advanced understanding of Finance and 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 this Masters Programme.

The core modules are all the same and 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 modules won't be running this year:

- ECN6002 Development Finance
- ECN605 International Trade
- ECN607 Public Policy Evaluation

You can find full information about the course next year, including details of the modules that will now be available, on our MSc Financial Economics course web page. Please rest assured that there will still be a wide selection of modules for you to choose from, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need to progress onto a career in Finance and Economics.

**Teaching**

The majority of our teaching comprises lectures 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 26th October 2020.

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, involving a range of activities such as Q&A sessions, opportunities to work through workshop problems with staff and other students, and feedback on assessment.

Staff will still hold their regular office hours, where students can have one-to-one meetings with their lecturers. 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 Senior Postgraduate Learning & Teaching Officer, Louise Harte at econ@sheffield.ac.uk. Please also let Louise know if you have any medical or personal circumstances that might affect how you're able to participate next year. We understand that some students may be temporarily unable to attend on campus, due to international travel restrictions, visa delays, medical reasons or a disability. We are committed to ensuring that you are not excluded or disadvantaged for this reason. You will be able to access our induction activities and all our digital learning online, until you are able to join us later in Semester 1 or at the start of Semester 2.

**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 recent online open day which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer, stay safe, and we'll look forward to welcoming you to Sheffield in the autumn.

Best wishes