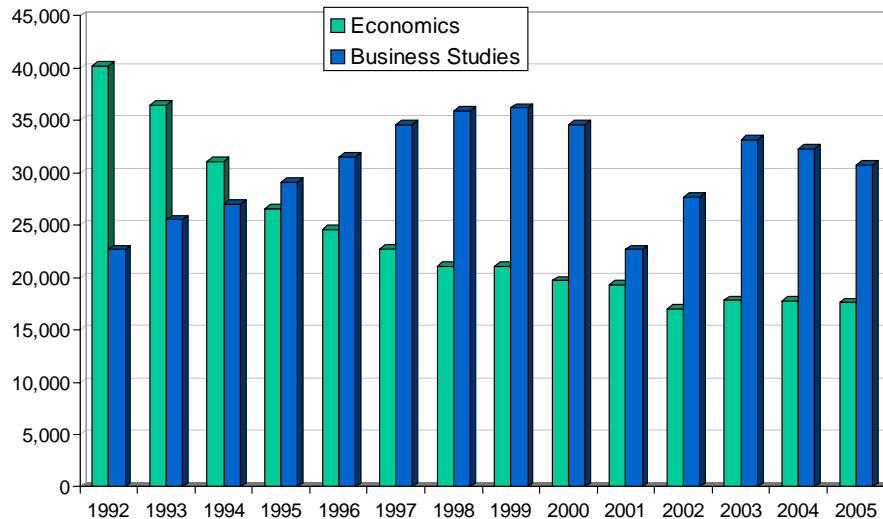


Applications for and admissions to Economics degrees in the UK

A-levels

After several years of declining numbers of students taking A-level Economics, these have now levelled out at around 17,500 per year taking A2 Economics (see Chart 1) and around 21,000 taking AS Economics.



Sources: The Guardian, QCA Statistics

Chart 1 A-level Economics and Business Studies: (number sitting A2)

Throughout the 1990s, the fall in numbers taking A-level Economics was matched by an increase in numbers taking A-level Business Studies (see Chart 1). Since 2000, however, the picture has been less clear-cut. While the numbers taking A2 Economics has levelled out, A2 Business Studies showed a marked fall in 2001, but then recovered in 2002 and 2003, only to resume a gentle downward trend from the peak 1999 levels.

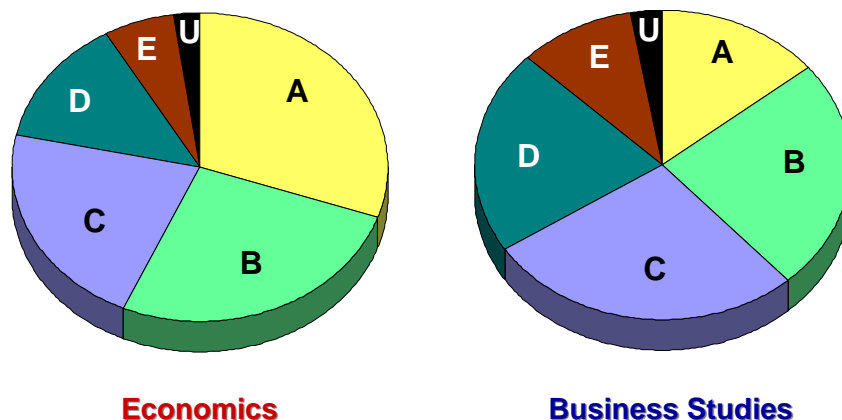


Chart 2 A-level Grades, 2005 (% of total)

Although it is generally agreed that A-level Economics is more rigorous than A-level Business, the results are significantly better, indicating that it is often the more able students that choose A-level Economics. It may well also reflect on the quality of teaching. Chart 2 shows the comparative A-level results for the two subjects in 2005.

Applications for Economics undergraduate degrees

Applications for Single Economics degrees have been rising since the mid-1990s. In 1996, there were 5120 applications (1.22 per cent of total degree applications). By 2004 this had risen to 6497 (1.33 per cent) (see Chart 3).

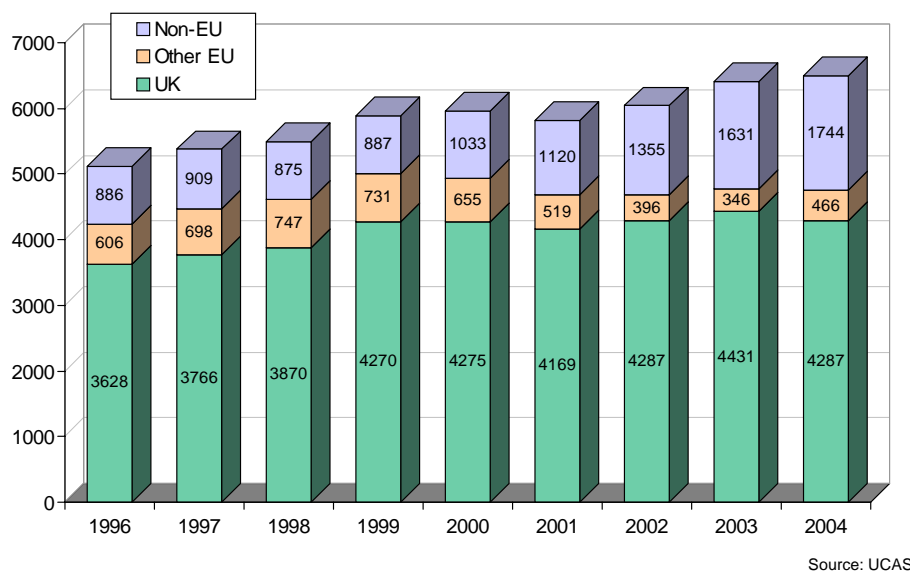


Chart 3 Total applicants to Single Economics UK undergraduate degrees

The proportion of applicants from overseas (non-EU) has risen from 17.3 per cent in 1996 to 26.8 per cent in 2004, while the proportion of applicants from the EU (non-UK) has fallen from 11.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent over the same period.

Admissions to Economics undergraduate degrees

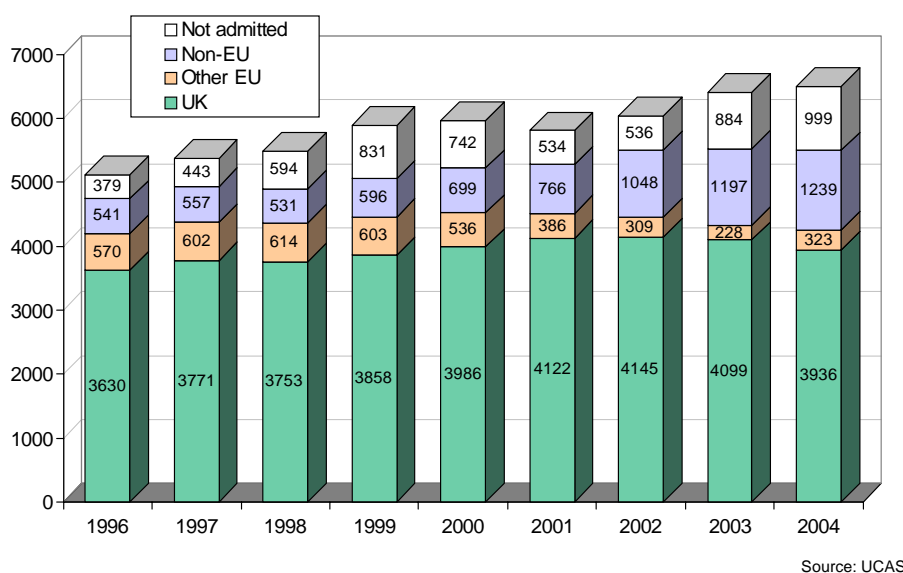


Chart 4 Total acceptances for Single Economics UK undergraduate degrees

There has also been a rise, albeit smaller, in admissions to Single Economics degrees (see Chart 4). The number of admissions rose from 4741 in 1996 (92.6 per cent of applicants) to 5498 in 2004 (84.6 per cent of applicants). The proportion of applicants failing to be admitted

varies according to the geographical origin of students. In 2004, 91.8 per cent of UK applicants gained admission, whereas only 71.0 per cent of international (non-EU) and 69.3 per cent of EU (non-UK) were successful.

The number of admissions of UK students, however, fell from a peak of 4145 in 2002 to 3936 in 2004. By contrast, the number of international (non-EU) students has risen steeply – from 531 in 1998 to 1239 in 2004. International (non-EU) students in 2004 constituted 22.5 per cent of total admissions to Economics degrees. This contrasts with a figure of 7.4 per cent for all degrees. This markedly higher proportion of international (non-EU) students admitted to Economics degrees compared with the average for all degrees poses particular challenges for Economics departments in providing appropriate types and levels of support for such students, and raises the question of whether resourcing reflects this.

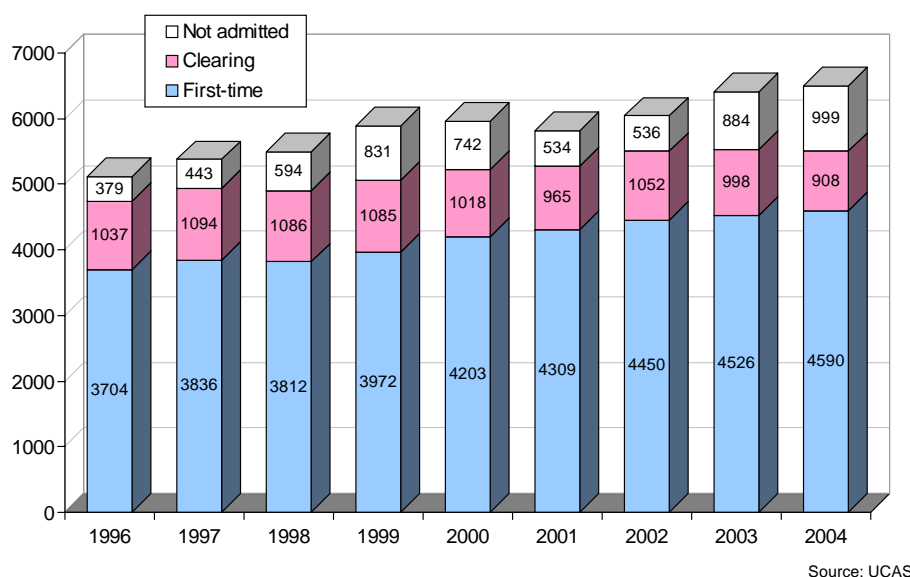


Chart 5 Total acceptances – first-time and through clearing – for Single Economics UK undergraduate degrees

The number of students admitted through clearing has remained approximately constant over the years, varying between 908 and 1094 (see Chart 5). The proportion admitted through clearing has thus fallen slightly. In 1996 it was 21.9 per cent; in 2004, it was 16.5 per cent.

Students studying Economics degrees

From 1996/7 to 2001/2, the number of full-time equivalent students¹ studying Economics degrees, both single, joint and combined Economics at undergraduate level and Economics-named degrees at postgraduate level, remained approximately constant, varying between 22,000 and 24,000 (see Chart 6). As a percentage of total students this represented a decline from 1.26 per cent in 1996/7 to 1.09 per cent in 2001/2. Since then there has been a substantial increase in numbers. In 2003/4, there were 31,520 students, which represents 1.40 per cent of total students. Given the relatively small increase in admissions to single Economics degrees, possible explanations include an improvement in retention rates, an increase in the number of sandwich degrees, a larger proportion of students doing Economics on joint or combined degrees, or a worsening of progression rates between levels, with students taking longer to complete their degrees.

¹ Where a student is on a degree that is only partly economics, the fraction that is economics is counted.

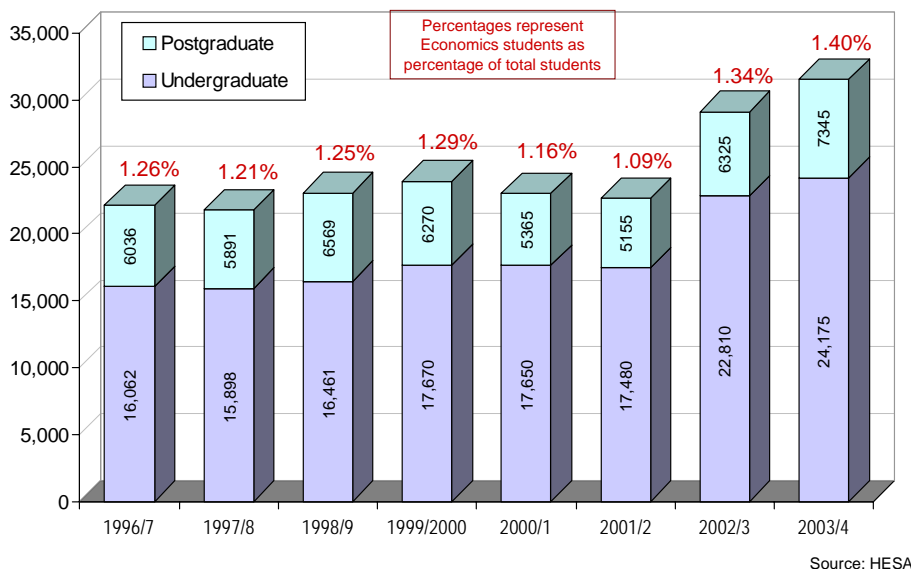


Chart 6 Total Students Studying Economics Degrees (single, joint and combined) by full-time equivalent student

The proportion of postgraduate students peaked in 1998/9 at 28.5 per cent. By 2001/2, this had fallen to 22.7 per cent. With the surge in numbers of both undergraduates and postgraduates in 2002/3 and 2003/4, the proportion of postgraduates rose slightly to stand at 23.3 per cent in 2003/4.

Students studying a PGCE in Economics

The future health of Economics depends in part on the number of school students studying Economics and this, in turn, depends in part on the number of teachers who are specialist economists who bring commitment and enthusiasm to their teaching.

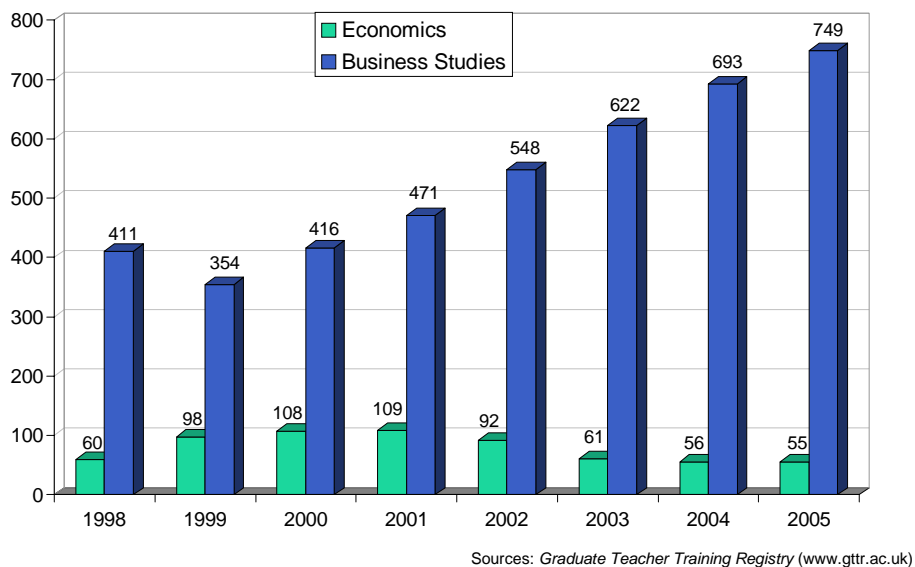


Chart 7 Students pursuing PGCE courses in Economics and Business

Chart 7 shows the number of PGCE students specialising in Economics and Business Studies. While the numbers studying Business Studies has steadily increased since 1999, those studying Economics has fallen since 2001. There are now only three PGCE courses in the UK in Economics – Staffordshire, Warwick and Worcester (there were five in 2000).