



Association for  
Quality Economics

# Shifting the Dial on Economics Education

**Creating meaningful change through  
course accreditation**

May 2026

# Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction .....	5
2. The economics discipline does not reflect the societies it studies.....	6
3. Economics graduates often lack the critical reasoning skills that employers seek.	8
4. Student demands for a better economics are going unanswered.....	11
5. Accreditation as part of the solution .....	16
6. Beyond accreditation: other ways that AQE can tackle issues in the economics discipline.....	18
7. Conclusion .....	22
Bibliography.....	23



## Executive Summary

Economics, as a discipline, is failing. It is failing students who arrive with hopes of making a positive difference in the world; employers who cannot find graduates with the skills they need; and society, which urgently requires economists capable of tackling the defining challenges of our time. This report sets out the case for change and introduces the Association for Quality Economics (AQE) as a vehicle for delivering it.

### Longstanding structural problems

UK economics undergraduate education has been dominated for decades by a narrow, neoclassical tradition that treats the subject as a value-free science. The consequences extend beyond academia. When market outcomes are presented as naturally efficient, and economists are only trained to assess the world as it is rather than also imagine how it could be different, the result is repeated policy failure leading to financial instability, inequality, and climate change.

### Lack of diversity within economics education

These curricular failings compound a significant diversity problem: British women are almost four times less likely than men to study economics at degree level, ethnic minority students face widening awarding gaps, and class disparities begin at secondary school. A profession drawing from a narrow pool produces a narrow range of ideas and outcomes. An aspect of AQE's accreditation scheme is to address this, signalling which courses incorporate diverse perspectives and helping make economics attractive to students who might otherwise look to other disciplines due to lack of representation or accessibility.

### A pressing skills deficit

Employers consistently report that graduates are fluent in theory but struggle to apply it, with critical thinking, communication, and real-world problem-solving all scoring poorly. These are precisely the capabilities UNICEF identifies as essential to the green transition. AQE-accredited courses and modules will be required to demonstrate that they develop these skills in students, closing the gap between what degrees currently produce and what employers and society need. AQE's own 2025 survey of nearly 400 economics students found fewer than half felt their education was preparing them to address climate change, and two fifths had no meaningful opportunity to shape their course.



## **A credible mechanism for translating aspiration into accountability**

Drawing on proven models from bodies such as the Royal Statistical Society, AQE will accredit degrees that meet recognised and sector agreed upon benchmark standards, ensuring graduates emerge with the technical proficiency, critical reasoning, and pluralist perspective the modern world demands. Economics has no equivalent accrediting body and at this moment of climate urgency and student demand for change, building such a body is long overdue.



# 1. Introduction

It has been almost 20 years since Harvard University students walked out of their introductory economics class in 2008, in protest at what they viewed to be an outdated, narrow curriculum which perpetuated 'a problematic and inefficient system of economic inequality' (Harvard Political Review, 2011). Since then, student dissatisfaction has only grown. The student-led organisation Rethinking Economics, established in 2013, has relentlessly channelled increasing student frustration at the way the subject is taught. The organisation's members number in the thousands and span 40 countries (Rethinking Economics, 2026). Meanwhile, economic crises continue to perpetuate, shifting in nature and scale (Caddick, 2025).

Dissatisfaction with the deficiencies of economics curricula in the UK is not confined to students. Many employers are equally dissatisfied, finding graduate economists' skills mismatched to what is needed in a modern workplace. Deficits in critical self-awareness, written communication, strategic and creative thinking, as well as an inability to apply learning to wider contexts, are reported by employers to be widespread amongst economics graduates (Rethinking Economics, 2018; The Economics Network, 2019; Jenkins et al., 2024).

Despite the progress made by initiatives seeking to address these deficits such as Curriculum Open-access Resources in Economics (CORE), the Quality Assurance Agency's forward-looking Subject Benchmark Statements, Rethinking Economics and individual economics departments across universities, most economics undergraduate courses still fail to explicitly examine the most pressing issues of our time. Socio-ecological issues and the climate crisis are broadly ignored, and one school of thought continues to dominate the field (Cathcart and Nelson, 2024).

Within the economics discipline, the lack of diverse student representation in the classroom, absence of critical and pluralist economic thought, and refusal to engage with the most urgent challenges of the modern world is well documented (Bearpark et al., 2017; Heise, 2018; Katsomitros, 2024; Chang, 2025; Yang, 2025). Sections 2 and 3 of this report re-trace some of this ground to provide vital context to the rationale for the creation of the AQE, recognising the significant momentum behind student movements and the lack of translation into UK economics curricula. Section 4 draws on research conducted by AQE through a student survey to better understand students' perceptions of economics and what they are looking for from an economics undergraduate degree. Section 5 proposes a key element in the solution to these challenges: accreditation of university degrees and modules that adhere to a recognised set of benchmark standards, as is typical practice for many disciplines in the UK higher education system (Wale, 2025). We set out a proposed pathway for developing a credible, effective accreditation system that is constructed by and for the economists of the future.



## 2. The economics discipline does not reflect the societies it studies

### Gender disparities

Economics in the UK has, in recent decades, been shaped by a predominantly neoclassical tradition (Heise, 2018) and there are growing calls within the profession for greater diversity of thought and background to broaden the range of perspectives informing economic analysis and policy (Bearpark et al., 2017). A vital step in achieving this goal is to broaden the cohort of individuals studying the subject. Students from underrepresented backgrounds, including women and those from lower socioeconomic groups, are less likely to study economics. Indeed, recent data suggest that British men are almost four times more likely than women to study economics at degree level, with around one in 29 men doing so, compared to one in 105 women (Advani et al., 2020). This gender imbalance, which exceeds disparities in most STEM subjects, begins during A-levels (the final years of secondary education in the UK), where one in six boys study economics compared to one in 17 girls (Griffith et al., 2019).

### Class and racial disparities

As with gender, class disparities start in sixth form and continue as students progress through the discipline. One in five students take A-level economics at independent and grammar schools, compared with one in 12 at comprehensive and academy schools (Advani et al., 2019). This disparity is driven by the relative lack of provision in state schools with only 53% of state comprehensive settings offering A-level economics, compared to 82% of private schools and 90% of state selective schools (Chipperfield, 2025). Even within state schools there remains a north-south divide in studying economics, where 'those from the North East were particularly unlikely to take economics' for GCSE and A-level (Beynon and Plaister, 2025). There are also significant awarding gaps within economics: ethnic minority students are 7% less likely to get at 2:1 in their bachelor's degree, and 11% less likely to get a first. This gap is now wider than it was in 2012–13 (Advani et al., 2020). The cumulative effect of these disparities is that white male students from higher socio-economic backgrounds are significantly overrepresented across all types of universities and represent a third of students in Russell Group universities (Paredes Fuentes et al., 2023).



## **A negative impact on economics and society**

This significant lack of diversity is likely to impede the profession's ability to understand and address the real-world experiences of much of society, including issues of inequality, poverty, and the impacts of climate change, and limit the quality of economics analysis produced (Cathcart and Nelson, 2024; Bearpark et al., 2017). Indeed, Parades Fuentes (2021) argues that 'Lack of diversity in the profession has been considered one of the roots of the problems in economics and its ability as a discipline to deal with these issues [of racism, misogyny and inequality in the profession and the world]'. As May et al. (2018) demonstrate, perspectives on labour market fairness, the desirability of state intervention, austerity policy, environmental protection and gender equity all vary systematically and significantly by gender among economists, while women in economics are also more likely to challenge mainstream perspectives. The lack of diversity amongst economics students can partially explain why a significant proportion of economics graduates remain ill-equipped to imagine radically different solutions to pressing challenges that could benefit society (Caddick, 2025; Rethinking Economics, 2018).

## **AQE's approach for change**

AQE, in its core objective of course accreditation to deliver a generation of future-facing economics graduates, looks to strengthen the reinforcing mechanism that a diverse student body brings to the subject. A more diverse student body can enrich the subject by bringing in a range of perspectives, experiences and questions, strengthening debate and critical analysis. In turn, course accreditation signals where teaching and learning genuinely reflect this diversity of perspectives, making economics more attractive, over time, to students who may otherwise choose not to study it. AQE's approach aims to complement and strengthen the Royal Economic Society's Diversity and Inclusion Network, 'which aims to support those working on increasing diversity in Economics' (Royal Economic Society, 2025). But a diverse student body on its own will not deliver the change that is needed.



## 3. Economics graduates often lack the critical reasoning skills that employers seek

### Lack of plurality in current curricula

Economics undergraduate degrees are often predominantly taught from a mainstream perspective, as though the subject is a value-free, objective science grounded in mathematical models (Cathcart and Nelson, 2024). However, scholars have noted that many core assumptions of neoclassical economics, such as the model of the rational, self-interested individual and the tendency toward market efficiency, reflect particular theoretical commitments. Such approaches can receive insufficient critical scrutiny in undergraduate curricula and need to be accompanied by other schools of thought (Earle and Ward-Perkins, 2017). While there are notable exceptions to this, including the innovative and open-access CORE materials (CORE, 2026), it is still the case that neoclassical economics is taught as a fundamental way of understanding economic life, rather than one school of thought among many.

Out of 480 economic theory modules graded by Rethinking Economics, mainstream neoclassical economic thought 'dominates' 88.3% of them (Cathcart and Nelson 2024, 5). This narrow focus is institutionally reinforced, from the Nobel Prize to dominant journals to government research funding, creating a discipline that actively rewards a narrow vision of economics (Godechot, 5-26, 2011). The dominance of neoclassical economics marginalises alternative approaches such as feminist, ecological, and post-Keynesian economics, that offer alternative explanations to real-world outcomes (Earle and Ward-Perkins, 2017; Heise, 2018; Deaton, 2024). The consequences are not merely academic. As Caddick (2025) argues, when economists are only trained to assess the world as it is rather than also imagine how it could be different, and when market outcomes are presented as naturally desirable and efficient, the result is repeated policy failure on the defining challenges of our time, from financial instability and soaring inequality to inaction on climate change.

### Plurality and employability

Beyond leaving generations of graduates ill-equipped to tackle major global challenges, the economics discipline is failing students and employers across a broad range of more transferable skills. The Rethinking Economics module research found that the majority of economic theory modules were 'almost entirely taught through quantitative technical skills' (Cathcart and Nelson, 2024). Employers find that economics graduates are often fluent in theory, but struggle to adapt learnings to the real world. As one consultancy employer noted, candidates 'know a lot of



economic theory and they can talk about theoretical concepts...but they're not able to apply what they've learnt to a real-world problem' (Rethinking Economics, 2018).

## Skills gaps leave graduates and employers struggling

Economics is a subject with profound and consistent graduate skill gaps, with employers repeatedly highlighting these in both the Economics Network's employer surveys and in surveys of the Government Economic Service (The Economics Network, 2019; Jenkins et al., 2024). The 2019 Economics Survey found that 'there are numerous skills for which over one third of respondents believe economics graduates' skills are 'not very high'. These include 'general creative and imaginative powers', 'awareness of cross-cultural issues' and 'critical self-awareness'. The 'ability to apply to what has been learned in a wider context' also scores poorly (The Economics Network, 2019).

This reflects a significant gap, 'given that application of knowledge is consistently rated as one of the most important skills for economics graduates to have' (The Economics Network, 2019). Moreover, the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statement for Economics repeatedly highlights that economics courses should develop in students 'an ability to apply economic reasoning and tools to applied topics' (QAA, 2023). It further suggests that economics should 'enable students to be productive and responsible citizens who can critically evaluate and apply the tools and content of the course to identify key contemporary problems – the climate crisis, political uncertainty, economic instability, poverty and inequality [...] and many others – and develop strategies to address them' (QAA, 2023).

The skills that evidence finds to be lacking in many economics graduates are amongst those listed by UNICEF as important to for individuals looking to support the green transition in their career (UNICEF, 2024). Their Green Skills Framework highlights, amongst other skills, the importance of communication, creativity, critical thinking and reasoning, disruptive vs. normative thinking, future and anticipatory thinking, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary thinking, and respecting diverse viewpoints (UNICEF, 2024). If economics graduates are lacking in these kinds of skills, it is fair to question whether they are being meaningfully prepared for the challenges of the future, of which addressing climate change is certainly one – being described in the Stern Review as requiring urgent economic expertise at the highest level (Stern, 2007).

Box 1: The absence of green skills in economics graduates.



## **AQE's approach**

At the heart of the AQE accreditation project is the need to better align the skills students gain through their undergraduate degrees with what employers need from economists: not only the ability to use theoretical models and handle quantitative complexity, but also to communicate clearly, apply knowledge in real-world contexts, and think critically.



## 4. Student demands for a better economics are going unanswered

Despite decades of student and academic-led campaigns and initiatives, the fundamental content of economics degrees has remained largely unchanged. As discussed in section 3, there have been some positive shifts, such as the widespread use of CORE, a freely available, online textbook designed to bring cutting edge research into the classroom (CORE, 2026). This includes a focus on economic history, inequality and climate change. CORE is now 'used at over 500 universities globally with two-thirds of that figure using it as their primary textbook' (Cathcart and Nelson 2024, 149). However, neoclassical economics remains the dominant focus of courses (Cathcart and Nelson 2024).

### Our research

In summer 2025, AQE conducted a survey with 383 respondents who are currently studying or have previously studied economics, as well as school pupils considering pursuing economics in higher education. Results from this survey echo conclusions drawn by Cathcart and Nelson, finding that students are generally dissatisfied that their course is not living up to their expectations, life experiences or aspirations. Before presenting the findings, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this survey. The sample size is small, and the data should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The sample is not representative of the broader economics student population in terms of gender: 57.9% of respondents identified as women, 36.7% as men, and 5.3% as non-binary, preferring to self-describe, or preferring not to say. This contrasts markedly with the general gender distribution in UK economics education, where women make up approximately a third of students (Batemen et.al, 2021). The exact drivers of this overrepresentation are unclear; however, it is likely linked to the fact that the National Union of Students database, through which the survey was shared, has more women opted in to their research communications and women tend to answer surveys at higher rates than men (Stone et. al, 2024). Although we found little difference between genders in responses to the substantive questions, and a degree of consistency across several findings, the results should still be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. The sample is too small to support statistically significant generalisations.

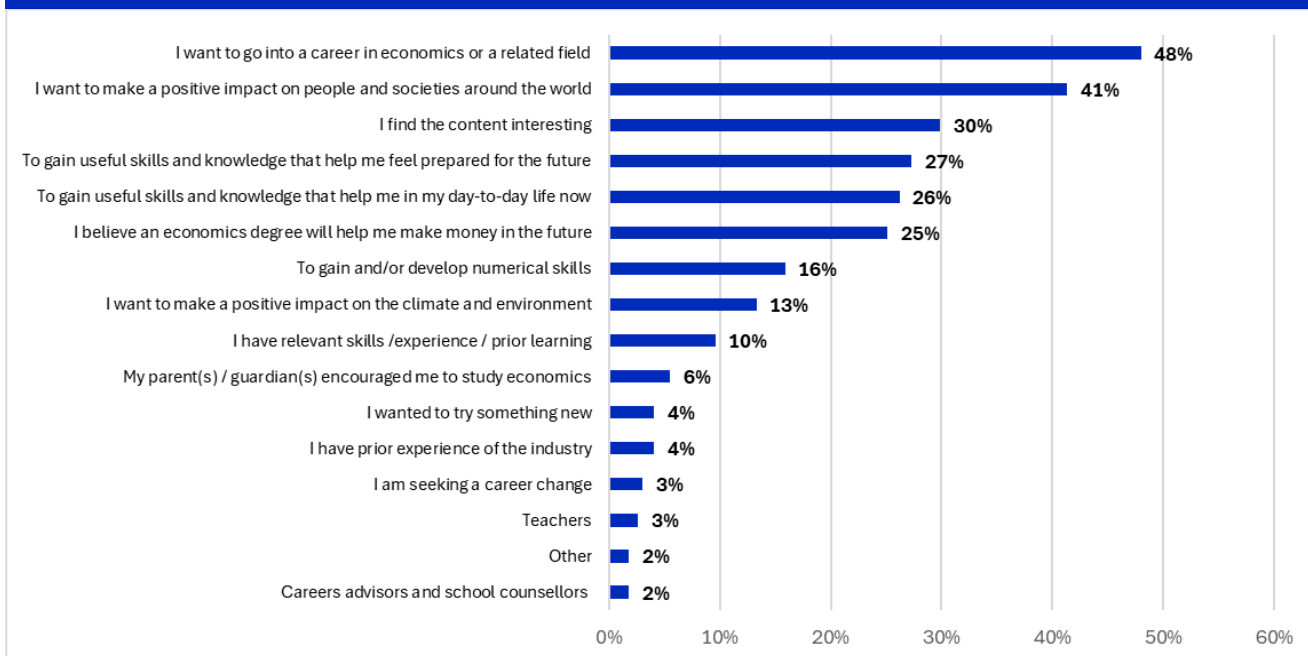
### Our results

The most cited reason for studying economics was wanting to pursue a career in economics or a related field (48%; Figure 1). The second most common was a desire to make a positive impact on people and societies around the world (41%). This



suggests that a meaningful proportion of students arrive at economics with an orientation toward public purpose and societal impact.

**Figure 1. Reasons for choosing to study economics (maximum three answers)**



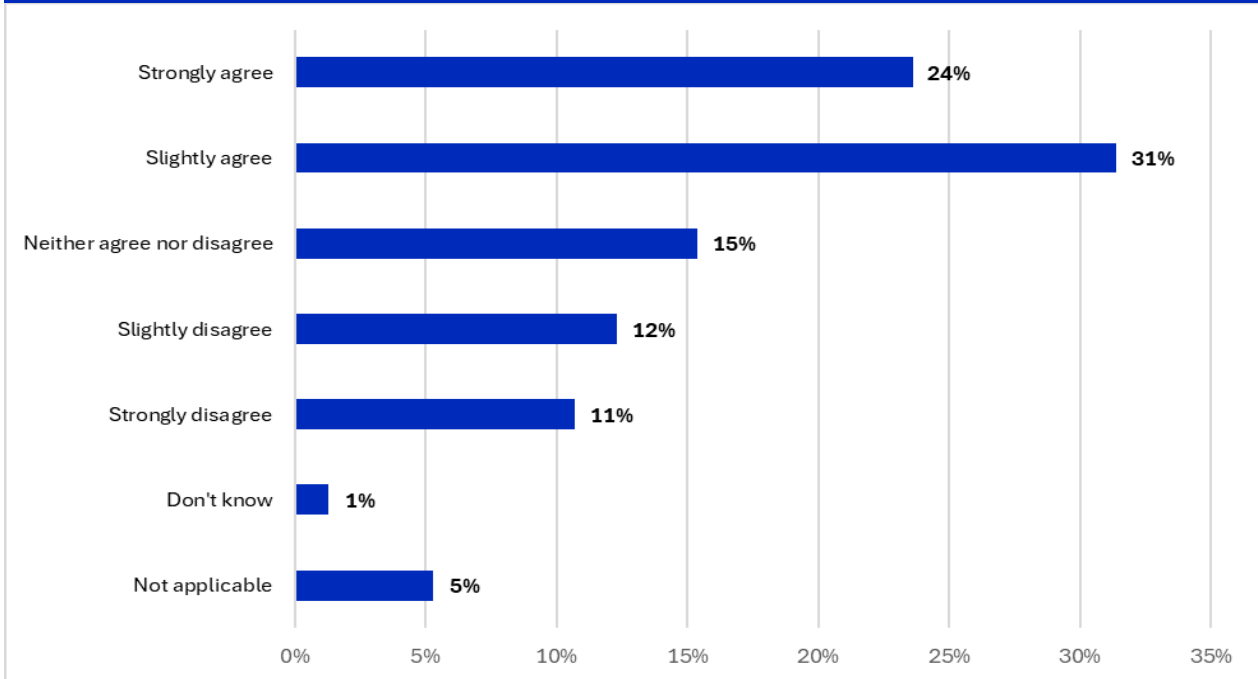
Q. 'Why did you choose to study economics?' [BASE: 271]

Against this backdrop, it is notable that a substantial minority of students did not feel their course was equipping them to address climate change (Figure 2), one of the most significant economic challenges of our time. Approximately a quarter of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their course is helping them develop the knowledge or skills to address climate change, with a further 15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Taken together, this means that fewer than half of respondents positively agreed that their economics education was preparing them for this challenge.

Responses suggest that most students do not feel meaningfully involved in shaping their learning (Figure 3). Approximately one third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had had the chance to shape course content, while almost two fifths disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder were neutral. Whilst it would not be expected that students design their own curricula, a discipline that aspires to greater pluralism and critical thinking might reasonably be expected to model those values pedagogically, including by creating genuine space for student voice in shaping the direction of their education.

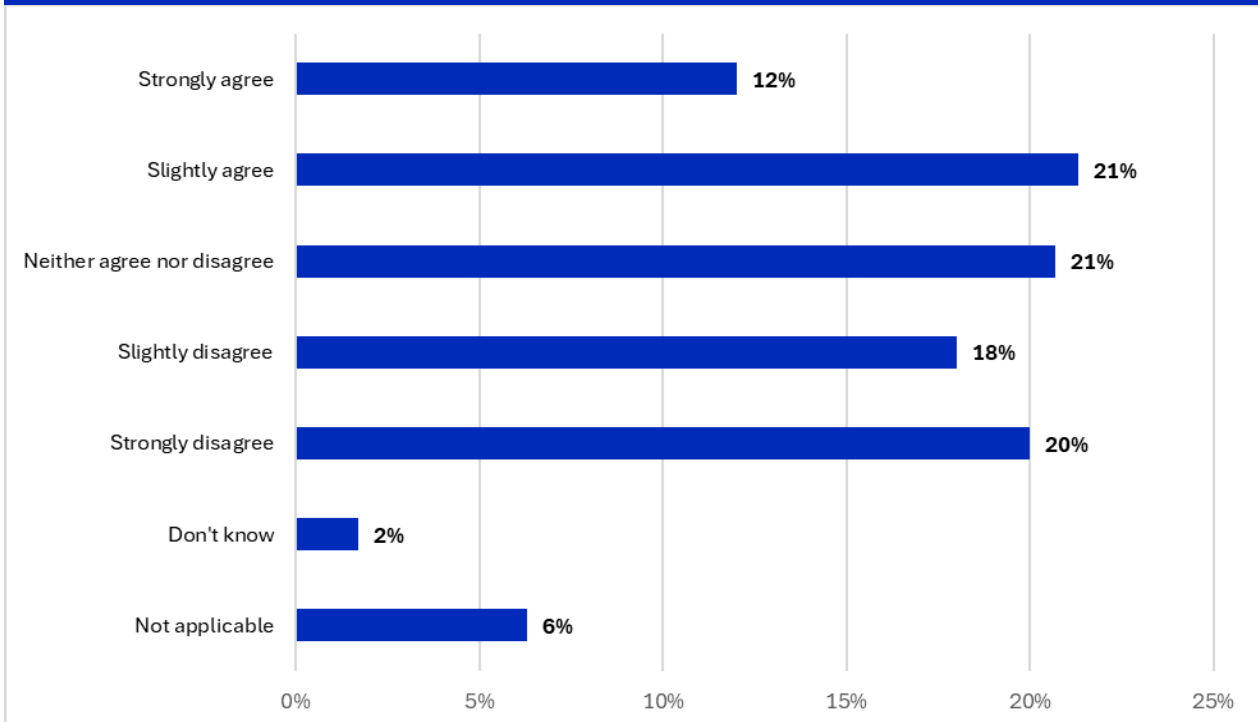


**Figure 2. Perceptions of the extent to which 'Economics is helping me to develop knowledge/skills to address climate change'**



Q. We would like to know how much you agree with the following statements. 'What I currently am taught in my economics course... is helping me to develop knowledge/skills to address climate change' [BASE: 300]

**Figure 3. Perceptions of opportunities to provide course content feedback**

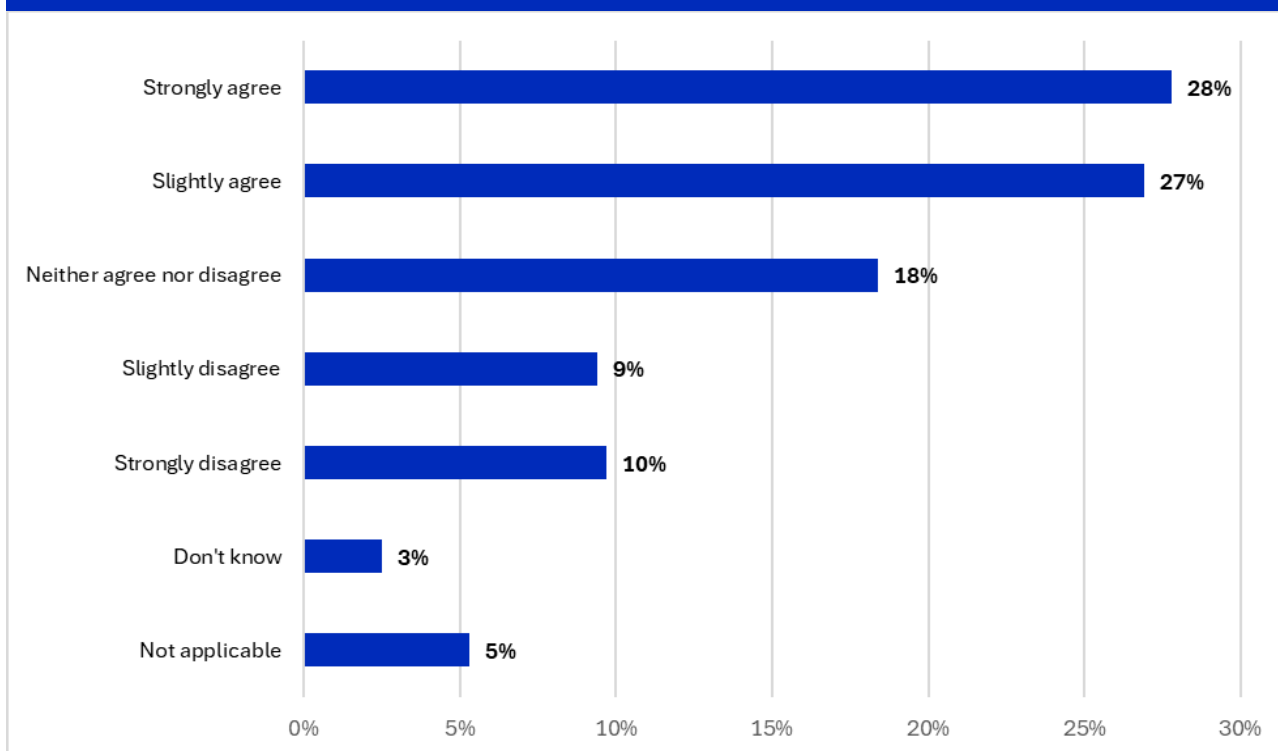


Q. We would like to know how much you agree with the following statements on your engagement with economics teaching. 'I have had the chance to contribute to / help shape course content' [BASE: 300]



Interestingly, when asked whether students felt that their culture and/or background is reflected in what they are learning, most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (Figure 4). Approximately 1 in 5 disagreed or strongly disagreed. While this is a positive response that runs somewhat contrary to our earlier conclusions based on the literature (for example, Parades Fuentes, 2021), it is worth noting that given the well-documented lack of diversity in the economics student population, this sample may underrepresent the very students most likely to feel that their backgrounds are not reflected in the curriculum. The true proportion may therefore be higher than the survey results suggest.

**Figure 4. Extent to which respondents believe their culture and/or background is reflected in their learning within economics**



Q. We would like to know how much you agree with the following statements on what you are currently taught in economics. 'I believe that my culture and/or background is reflected in what I am currently learning/have learnt' [BASE: 320]



## Reflections on the results

Given the small sample size, it would be inappropriate to draw firm conclusions from these findings alone. However, the results are somewhat consistent with wider evidence on economics education and point to areas warranting further investigation:

- a notable minority of students do not feel equipped to address climate change; a larger proportion do not feel involved in shaping their education; and
- a non-negligible share does not see their backgrounds reflected in what they are taught.

These findings are suggestive rather than definitive and should be read alongside the broader literature presented in this report.

Views on the adequacy of the UK university economics curriculum are wide-ranging, but the evidence discussed throughout this report suggests that different stakeholders hold a variety of overlapping concerns about the discipline. We will now consider how accreditation, delivered by an official professional body for economics, can provide the systemic infrastructure needed to drive meaningful improvement across each of these areas.



## 5. Accreditation as part of the solution

By convening different stakeholders in economics education within a shared membership body, AQE aims to provide momentum and structure for common standards to help economics work better for students, employers, academia and wider society. The QAA's existing Subject Benchmark Statement for Economics will form the basis for AQE's course accreditation. Accreditation acts as a signal to students that the associated courses will equip them with the skills needed to thrive in a range of careers and contribute meaningfully to society. It will signal to employers that graduates from accredited courses have developed key skills aligned with the standards. Given that the economics discipline faces challenges with disparate graduate skillsets and persistent misalignment between curriculum content and workplace requirements, a professional accreditation body can serve as a crucial mechanism for standardising quality and bridging the education-employment gap.

### AQE's path for change

AQE's objective for 2026 is to grow as a membership body, bringing together students, academics, employers, and other stakeholders with a shared commitment to improving economics education. In this first phase, AQE will focus on building the trust, credibility, and shared ownership necessary for any standards-setting process to carry genuine weight across the sector. This includes working closely with existing membership and sector bodies such as the Royal Economics Society, the Society for Professional Economists, the Economics Network, Rethinking Economics, QAA, and others. AQE differs from these bodies in that it combines two specific characteristics:

- Firstly, the organisation itself is student-led, having been created by Students Organising for Sustainability UK in partnership with the New Economics Foundation, thus ensuring the centring of student voice.
- Secondly, AQE has a tangible, focused goal of course accreditation developed in collaboration with members which will include students, academics and industry professionals.

### Other avenues for impact

Beyond community-building, in its initial stages AQE will focus on bolstering the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) for Economics, which was formally reviewed and updated by an academic panel and published in 2023. The 2023 Economics benchmark panel chaired by Professor Parama Chaudhury consisted of 15 academics, one master's student, and lacked industry representation. While most subject benchmark review panels contain only one student member, AQE would work to strengthen student and industry voice in



any future Economics SBS reviews. Encouragingly, key changes to the SBS from this 2023 review are responsive to many issues outlined in this report, focusing on improving equality, diversity, and inclusion; accessibility; education for sustainable development; employability; and entrepreneurship and enterprise education within economics degrees. However, these standards are not statutory. The rich evidence of the lack of diversity in the student body, teaching on sustainability, and development of core workplace skills outlined in previous sections of this report imply that the SBS remains unimplemented across economics courses. A core purpose of AQE is to provide the formal accreditation to aid with that implementation.

Professional bodies in comparable fields demonstrate how accreditation can establish minimum competency standards while allowing pedagogical flexibility. The Association for Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute provide frameworks with which universities voluntarily align, knowing this enhances graduate employability (ACCA, 2026; CFA Institute 2026; Royal Statistical Society, 2026). Economics is an outlier in not already having such body. Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies exists in over 100 other UK disciplines and provide considerable structural support to these disciplines, which economics currently lacks (HEBRG, 2011). For an extensive review of professional bodies in other disciplines, see our 2025 report (Wale, 2025).



## 6. Beyond accreditation: other ways that AQE can tackle issues in the economics discipline

### Membership as a mechanism for change

As discussed in section 5, to build the level of trust, buy-in and credibility required to effectively accredit economics courses, AQE must develop a strong, engaged membership base representing students, graduates, academics, industry professionals, and senior leaders. As such, alongside focusing on students' experience of, and satisfaction with, undergraduate economics education, our 2025 survey sought to better understand the needs of students interested in joining AQE as members. Overall, 64% of respondents said they would find course accreditation either appealing or very appealing, with only 1% saying they would find this unappealing. More generally, we found a keen interest from students in being part of a membership body, with 84% of respondents saying they would consider joining a membership body for economics and only 2% saying this is something they would not consider.

As well as seeking student membership insights via the survey, we have consulted with academics about what would make a membership attractive to individuals and departments. Based on our survey results, conversations with academics, and the literature in this space, we have split out membership into categories relevant to students, graduates, academics, industry professionals, institutions and employers.

### The student and graduate offer

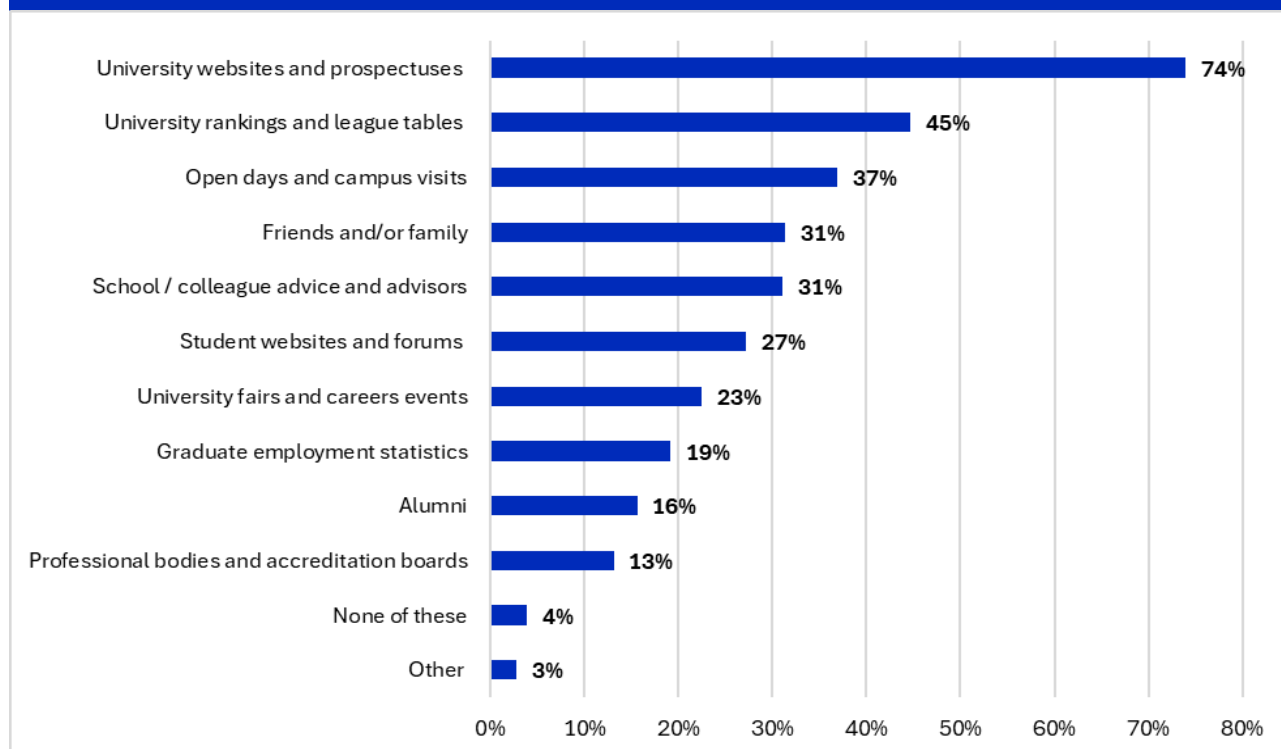
The student and graduate membership packages are specifically tailored to support those who might face additional barriers to stay in the profession, such as women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, although all members are welcome. Our survey results indicate that career resources are crucial for this, with respondents reporting misperceptions about the topics covered in an economics course and the careers it can lead to. This is corroborated by the literature: a recent Royal Economics Society report into tackling the gender gap in economics found that school-age girls making A-level choices expressed uncertainty about economics careers, with some saying 'I'm not like too sure about like careers in economics' and describing job prospects as both 'too limited' and 'too broad at the same time' (Loupi et al., 2025). When asked about what an economics career could consist of, they tended to either cite specific examples from family or the media, largely referencing careers such as accountancy or finance rather than the broader range of prospective jobs available to economics graduates, or seemed very unsure (Loupi et al., 2025).



## Careers information as a pathway for change

Our survey data looked at how students gather information about economics careers (Figure 5), showing heavy reliance on impersonal, institutionalised channels such as career websites (59%), talking to professionals (52%), and school advisors (44%). Given the high reliance on career websites (59% of respondents) as the primary information source, it is worth interrogating whether there is a risk that misconceptions about careers in economics are reflected in those sites.

**Figure 5. Information sources used by respondents to understand careers in economics**



Q. 'There are lots of different sources of information when it comes to choosing which course to apply to. Which sources did you use or are you using, if any, to decide which course to apply to?' [BASE: 360]

Prospects, the UK's largest graduate recruitment website, draws on the Higher Education Statistics Agency's Graduate Outcomes Survey which tracks what graduates are doing 15 months after finishing their degree, showing that eight of the top ten graduate destinations for UK economics graduates are in business, finance, and marketing, with finance and investment analysts (18%) and chartered accountants (14%) leading the list (Prospects, 2024). While the Prospects website does discuss alternative careers such as working for the Government Economic Service and think tanks or NGOs, it leads with the statistic that eight of the top ten jobs held by economics graduates are in business, finance, and marketing, which



can contribute to normalising these careers as the default outcome of an economics education. While platforms like Prospects offer accessibility and reach, their emphasis on a narrow set of industries could deter diverse applicants that may be interested in other pathways an economics degree could offer.

In contrast, AQE's resources would be especially tailored towards those with an interest in a career focused on people and planet, as well as bringing sustainability values into a range of careers. Through proactively highlighting a broader range of careers options than are traditionally perceived as being connected to economics, AQE hopes to make economics attractive to a wider range of students, including women and those from marginalised communities (Ng and Sears, 2010; The Boston Consulting Group 2014).

More broadly, AQE will provide opportunities for students and academics to learn more about different schools of thought and about how economic theory can be applied to pressing global concerns such as climate change, economic inequality, and gender and racial inequality. AQE will be an inclusive forum for discussion, supporting a broad cross section of society to engage with, feel part of, and thrive within economics. It will do this through convening conversations and trainings, and providing resources and learning opportunities, such as fellowships and mentorship schemes. AQE will also feed into existing sectoral processes for designing subject guidelines to support academics to excel in teaching about a broad range of economics topics and support students to develop skills that help them meet the needs of employers and wider society upon graduating.

## **Our academic and industry offer**

Our academic offer has been designed through direct conversations with academics, including those on the AQE advisory board, conversations at conferences on economics education - such as the Economics Network and CORE conferences - and interactive events, such as an AQE workshop held at the newly established I-LEAD centre and the official AQE launch in Westminster. In our various conversations with academics, there was some scepticism around the added value that membership to a body such as AQE could provide over and above other economics professional bodies. However, academics fed back positively on the unique ability of AQE to convene students with academics in dialogue around the future of the discipline - something both students and academics feel is crucial in this current tumultuous global context.

Drawing on these conversations, the academic and industry membership packages are focused on supporting academics and employers to access engaging and student-focused resources and Continuing Professional Development, to ensure they can keep providing relevant and inclusive content and opportunities for their



students in an increasingly complex and fast changing world. AQE will support academics and employers to hear directly from students and provide space to input their expertise into the development of the AQE accreditation scheme.

More information on the membership offers for both students/graduates and academics/departments can be found [on the AQE website](#).



## 7. Conclusion

The economics discipline stands at a crossroads. Decades of student campaigning, employer criticism, and academic debate have produced insufficient systemic change despite widespread acknowledgement that something is wrong. Economics degrees in the UK continue to over-rely on a single theoretical tradition, underserve a diverse range of students, and produce graduates who are ill-equipped for the real-world challenges that increasingly define the profession's purpose.

AQE was created in response to this impasse. By establishing a credible, student-led accreditation body partnered with discipline and industry experts, AQE aims to translate longstanding consensus about the need for change into a practical framework for delivering it. Accreditation will signal to students where they can expect a rigorous, pluralist, and skills-focused education; to employers where graduates have met recognised professional standards; and to the sector at large that the status quo is no longer adequate.

This is not a task AQE can or should accomplish alone. The challenges of diversity, curricular breadth, and skills alignment documented in this report are deeply embedded and will require sustained collaboration across students, academics, employers, and institutions. AQE's ambition is to be the convening force that makes this collaboration possible, building the trust and shared ownership on which lasting reform depends.



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