

Non-Economics Undergraduate Academic Prizes Won by Economics Students

Academic Year 2022/23

SHELL SILVER MEDAL

Davis Clarence Tey Zhi Yuan

LEE KUAN YEW GOLD MEDAL

Calynn Tan Shu Wen

WAN BOO SOW “雲茂潮” PRIZE

Tan Heang Yi, Charlton

WAN BOO SOW BAHASA PRIZE

Tan Heang Yi, Charlton

NUS SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES GENERAL EDUCATION (GE) PRIZE

N Rizwanul Bahmid

Undergraduate Student Teaching Excellence Award

Academic Year 2022/23

Semester 2

Dorothy Ting Wan Shyuen (EC2101)

Elisha Lee Jian Xin (EC2303)

Goh Zhuo Ying, Justin (EC2101)

Lam Pei Shi (EC2102)

Ong Hong Zheng Joshua (EC1101E)

Ong Yinn Ray (EC1101E)

Tan Yi Jie (EC2102)

Ho Zi Ming (EC1101E)



Justin caught the Northern Lights in Norway.

Justin Goh

EC2101

What course do you assist with, and what are your primary responsibilities as a Teaching Assistant (TA)?

I was a TA for Microeconomic Analysis I (EC2101) in AY2023/2024 Sem 2. The main responsibilities are conducting tutorial sessions, holding consultation hours, assisting with the queries of students and invigilating the midterm exam.

What do you think makes a good TA?

Fundamentally, you need to be well versed in the economics content in order for you to be able to conduct a class well and for your students to gain confidence in you as a TA. More importantly though, show your students that you are passionate in the subject matter and that economics is actually something fun and not just about solving first order conditions and la grange equations. Lastly, show your students that you care for them, that you are in the same boat with them and you will do your best to help them with their learning. Teaching is a two-way process, not a one-way interaction. You will learn from your students too, whether it is economic content or more about yourself.

What skills do you think are crucial for students to succeed in Economics?

Economic modules are very conceptual in nature. Spamming practice question after practice question will not help you score in the exam if you do not understand the basic concepts. Start off with the lecture material and tutorial exercises first, and understand them thoroughly. Then, think about the assumptions that are in the different models – could there be a change in assumptions which would lead to a different outcome in the question? Could there also be different scenarios within the same model – for example, we learn that perfect complements are represented by the minimum function, but what would it mean if the utility function was a max function instead? Work through these on your own as it is a far more valuable use of time than spamming practice papers.

What advice do you have for aspiring TAs?

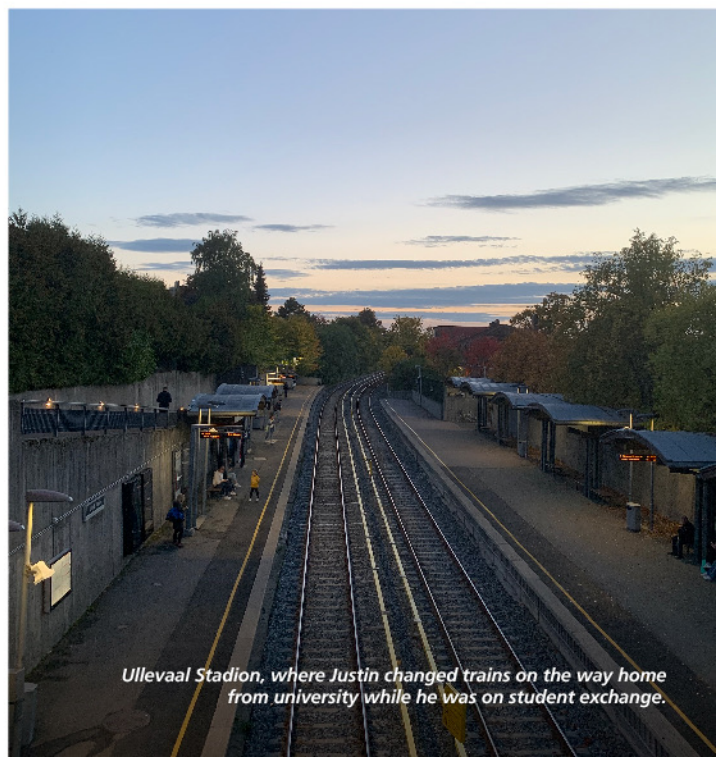
If you are after the money, you can probably earn more being a private tutor teaching secondary or JC math or economics, so please do not work as a TA just for the money. A TA needs much dedication, whether it is preparing the relevant lesson plans for tutorials, replying to student queries, holding consultation hours for students, or revising the lecture material. It is really important that you reply because you truly wish to give back to your juniors, and also inspire them as a senior through their economics journey. If you do so, then you will find it an extremely rewarding experience.

What do you find most rewarding about being a TA?

The most rewarding thing is, at the end of the day, knowing that you have made a difference in some way or other to the economics journey of your students. I can remember in one of my evaluations, a student wrote that she hoped tutorials could be extended to two hours because she enjoyed my tutorial so much! That's why I always look forward to my classes, to be able to speak to my students and understand each one of them better.

Out of all the cities you have visited before, what's your favourite?

My favourite country till today is Norway. My first trip was in February 2020, to Tromsø, a small town at the Northern region of Norway, where I saw the Northern lights and also managed to take a husky sled ride. It was truly a magical moment. I told myself I would return to Norway, and that's what I did for my student exchange, when I spent 6 months in Oslo. Each day, when I was going home from school, I would take the train up a slight hill, and get to see the sunset over the entire city through the train window. It was such a cathartic moment. That's perhaps why I always tell my friends that when I was in Norway, I was able to find myself and just be composed.



Ullevaal Stadion, where Justin changed trains on the way home from university while he was on student exchange.

What inspired you to be a Teaching Assistant?

To be honest, the thought of being a Teaching Assistant (TA) never really crossed my mind until I received an email from the department that indicated that the pay was increased by \$15! And as labour economics predicts, when wage increases, the supply of workers (TAs) consequently increases... That, coupled with the fact that I used to be slightly interested in becoming a teacher, made me decide to give it a shot. And I'm really glad that I did, because it has been really fun and fulfilling to help my students understand economics concepts better, especially when they laugh at my jokes.

What course do you assist with, and what are your primary responsibilities as a TA?

I assist with EC1101E. My primary responsibilities are to prepare and conduct tutorials, hold extra office hours for students, and respond to student queries, but the bulk of work is really preparing for tutorials – I'm sure we've all had experiences with bad TAs, so I strive to make sure no one can say that about me.

What is an unexpected benefit that you gained from being a TA? Conversely, what is an unexpected challenge you faced while being a TA?

One benefit would be the increased confidence in public speaking – I think students from the "Covid batch" have been harmed by the ease of reading from scripts that presenting on Zoom allows for (don't do that!). Being a TA has definitely provided me with the opportunity to practice public speaking and to articulate my thoughts clearly. One challenge I've faced is that sometimes the class isn't very participative, and the energy feels low... but on days like these you just have to push through, try not to let that affect you too much, and continue trying to engage them!

Can you share any experiences or lessons from your academic journey that might benefit students?

I think it's important to choose your level-4000 courses wisely – even more so now that CHS only requires students to take 5 of such courses. I feel that 4000-level courses are where economics gets really exciting because you get to apply what you've learnt from the core/foundational courses, and you get to choose subject areas that you're interested in! I would recommend taking courses that excite you, rather than courses which are expected to be 'easier' to score in.

For instance, EC4371 Development Economics under Prof Yogita is known to have quite a high workload, but it was my favourite course in NUS. I learnt a lot from the weekly readings, as well as from working with my groupmates on a "mini-thesis", where we had to come up with our own research topic, find suitable data and run our own analysis. Prof Yogita discussed her own research experience in the field, which made the course all the more compelling. I'd highly recommend reaching out to your seniors and professors to get information on which courses are good to take!

What advice do you have for aspiring TAs?

Try to be the TA that you wish you had! Think about your experiences with the TAs that you have had – what are some things they did that you appreciated, and what are some things that you think could have been improved on? Then try your best to put them into practice. Also, it's okay to not know everything, or if your mind blanks when a student asks you a question that you don't know how to answer – it's perfectly alright to tell them you'll get back to them after the class ends (but make sure you actually do!).



Yinn Ray in front of the Goðafoss (Godafoss) in Iceland, his favourite country to visit while on student exchange.

Ong Yinn Ray

EC1101E

Being a TA definitely requires some effort, but you won't be alone in this journey – don't be afraid to ask the more experienced TAs for their advice or for help with difficult questions.

What are some activities that you enjoy doing during your free time?

I love playing football/futsal! Nothing beats running around the pitch, bantering with my friends, (hopefully) scoring a few goals and then going to a mamak shop for late-night prata and maggi goreng. I also like cooking – I grew up on Gordon Ramsay shows, and now YouTube channels like SortedFood are my go-to. I try to help my mum around the kitchen, and also cook during the weekends whenever I come across a recipe that I want to try! And of course, like most people, I watch TV shows – I recently binged the show Succession, and it was brilliant – I highly recommend it!

If you didn't study economics, what other major would you have chosen to study?

Possibly psychology, because it does seem rather interesting – but to be honest, I was quite set on Economics and never really considered other majors. However, in hindsight, I definitely would have chosen to take up business analytics as my second major instead of management – I think there are quite a few synergies between economics and business analytics. Also, a business analytics major would probably make me more employable. highly recommend it!