

## **Assistant economist information request for external GES website**

**1. What is the name of your department?** Department for Education (DfE)

**2. Could you briefly explain the function of your department and policy areas that your department leads on?**

The DfE is responsible for education, including higher and further education, apprenticeships and children's services. It has the aim to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for children, young people and individuals, no matter what their background or family circumstances. This will be achieved by raising standards of educational achievement so that all children can reach their full potential; supporting social mobility, economic growth and empowering individuals to succeed as the skilled workforce of tomorrow.

**3. How is analysis generally used within your department?**

Economists work closely with policy colleagues, statisticians, social and operational researchers where the DfE values analysis more than ever before as it seeks to ensure that policies are well-designed and deliver best value for money.

Economists in the DfE have access to exceptionally rich data sets, including the National Pupil Database which contains detailed information about all pupils in England since 2002. In addition, this data is linked to the further and higher education sectors. This, and with other datasets allows a whole host of innovative analysis to support policy development. For example, analysis has been produced to understand the returns to different types of further and higher education, the role that school choice and competition plays in educational outcomes, and the understanding of cost drivers for childcare providers has been used to set various funding rates.

Economists are also at the heart of any Spending Review, Budget and Autumn Statement preparations.

**4. Could you briefly highlight any high profile analytical projects that your department is currently working on or has completed. Please provide any links to published work if applicable.**

Economists in DfE have opportunities to get involved in a huge variety of work:

- Designing reforms to apprenticeship funding (e.g. the apprenticeship levy) and policy (e.g. the Institute for Apprenticeships) to delivery 3 million apprenticeships
- Appraising and evaluating student finance reform across HE and FE
- Delivering the Higher Education and Research Bill

- Assessing the health of the teacher labour market
- Reviewing the costs of early years childcare  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-childcare-costs>)
- Estimating lifetime productivity returns for key qualifications  
([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/387160/RR398A - Economic Value of Key Qualifications.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387160/RR398A_-_Economic_Value_of_Key_Qualifications.pdf))
- Analysing the optimal allocation of resources across education phases;
- Advising on the role of the market in education and children's services

### **5. What types of roles would an Assistant Economist occupy in your department?**

Assistant economists work in six analytical divisions embedded within each of its four policy directorates: Education Standards; Infrastructure and Funding; Children Services, Equalities and Communications; and Further and Higher Education. In addition, a central analytical division undertakes strategic and cross-cutting work across the department's policy areas, and sits in the Strategy and Resources Directorate.

With annual fast stream rotations, they have the opportunity to experience various roles, for example: using pupil level data to understand exam performance or geographical variation; estimating the value for money of various infrastructure and funding options (should we build new schools or maintain existing ones?); analysing various quasi-markets (adoption, early years, special educational needs) to understand whether they are working efficiently; shaping high profile policy reforms across further and higher education (e.g. the Higher Education and Research Bill).

### **6. What skills would an Assistant Economist need in order to work effectively in your department?**

Assistant economists in the DfE are on a development grade and will spend their first years building up skills through various types of training.

In terms of technical skills as they have access to exceptionally rich datasets, they will have the opportunity to build on their analytical skills and make use of software such as Microsoft Excel, SPSS, and Stata. Those with appetite to explore datasets could potentially gain experience of 'R' and 'SQL.'

In addition, they will build on both the Civil Service and GES competencies. A premium is placed on impactful communication.

### **7. What salary and other benefits could an Assistant Economist starting in your department receive?**

Assistant economists can choose to be based in either London or Sheffield. Their pay is reflected accordingly:

London: £31,843 to £40,258

Sheffield: £28,258 to £36,340

Permanent staff who entered the Department with a Master's degree in an Economics related discipline may qualify for a £2,000 salary up-lift.

Pay uplifts and non-consolidated bonuses are negotiated on and awarded every year; these are typically tied to Performance Management outcomes