

James Symons-Hicks

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EDUCATION

MSc Economics

University College London (UCL), UK

2023 – 2024

Grade: Distinction

Named on Dean's List, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences.

Thesis: “*A Q-Learning Approach to Algorithmic Market Making for Risky Securities*”

Electives: Advanced Macroeconomic Theory; Advanced Microeconometrics; Machine Learning in Economics; Topics in Money and Finance.

Audited: Advanced Microeconomic Theory.

BSc Economics

University College London (UCL), UK

2020 – 2023

Grade: First Class Honours

Thesis: “*Unravelling the Influence of Retail Investors on Liquidity and Volatility in UK Markets*”

Selected Modules: Advanced Economics of Finance; Advanced Macroeconomics; Game Theory; Mathematical (Real) Analysis; Economics of Financial Markets.

RESEARCH POSITIONS

Pre-Doctoral Research Assistant

Profs. Matthias Doepke & Ethan Ilzetzki, London School of Economics

Sept 2024 – Present

London, UK

- Assisted in research on “*Family Macroeconomics*” (Doepke) and “*Fiscal Policy, Productivity & Growth*” (Ilzetzki).
- Solved and calibrated heterogeneous-agent models with EGM, constructed and analyzed large-scale archival datasets, performed instrumental-variable analysis, and assisted with manuscript preparation and revisions.

Research Assistant

Prof. Antonio Guarino, University College London

May 2022 – Sept 2024

London, UK

- Assisted in research on financial decision-making, social learning, and experimental economics.
- Analyzed experimental data, performed hypothesis testing and structural estimation for behavioral models, coordinated interactive laboratory experiments with students and professional traders, and drafted manuscripts and prepared conference materials.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Publications

“The Influence of Market Dynamics on Retail Investor Attention” [Paper]

UCL Journal of Economics 2(1), 2023.

Working Papers

“Q-Learning and Algorithmic Market Making: Loss-free, Collusive, or Competitive Prices?” [Paper]

with A. Guarino (UCL) and P. Jehiel (UCL, PSE). CEPR Discussion Paper No. 20461, 2025.

“From Learning to Earning: Financial Literacy and Wealth Accumulation in the UK”
[Paper]

Presented at LSE Pre-Doctoral Work-in-Progress Seminar (May & November 2025).

OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Peer Reviewer, UCL Journal of Economics	2024 – Present
Student Research Fellow, UCL Economic Tribune	Oct 2022 – Jul 2023
Presenter & Panel Member, Discover Economics Project	Jun 2023
Scientific Committee, UCL Explore Econ Conference	Jun 2023

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

Tools for Macroeconomists Summer School [Link]	Aug 2025
SICSS–ODIESSI (Summer Institute in Computational Social Science) [Link]	Jul 2025
Workshop on Demand System Asset Pricing [Link]	May 2025
Audited LSE PhD macroeconomics courses (EC442 and EC555)	2024 – 2025

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: English (Native), Spanish (Advanced)

Programming: *Proficient* — Stata, MATLAB, Python, R, L^AT_EX; *Familiar* — Dynare, Mathematica

Other: Level 3 Emergency First Aid, LTA Level 2 Tennis Coach

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Tennis Coach <i>The Access to Sport Project</i>	Nov 2021 – Aug 2022 <i>London, UK</i>
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- Delivered free/low-cost sessions for children and adults, including school group classes of over 30 participants.
- Mentored 5 volunteers through coaching qualifications.
- Undertook training to teach players with additional learning needs.