Teacher's Guide

Economics

PLATO COURSEWARE

Contents

Overview

Plato Courses are developed to give instructors a variety of ways to engage different learning modalities and to give students an opportunity to experience a range of standards and objectives to ensure academic success.

Plato Courses integrate online curriculum, learning activities, and supporting interactive activities. An array of assessment tools allows the instructor to correctly place students at the appropriate learning level, to evaluate strengths and needs, to create individualized learning goals, and to determine proficiency. Reports assist students in understanding where they need to focus to be academically successful as measured against objectives. Guidelines and tools are provided to track student progress and to determine a final course grade.

Plato Courses give instructors control over instructional choices for individual students as well as for the classroom. Instructors may use all of the components as sequenced or select specific activities to support and enhance instruction. Plato Courses can be used in a variety of ways to increase student achievement.

Course Components

Learning Activities
Three basic types of learning activities form the building blocks of active learning for this course: Lessons, Unit Activities, and Online Discussions.

- **Lessons**. Each Lesson in this course contains an interactive tutorial and an associated mastery test. Each tutorial includes one or more Lesson Activities that constitute mini-projects associated with the tutorial.
    - **Tutorials**. Tutorials provide direct instruction, video instruction, and interactive checks of understanding. Students check their understanding and practice their skills with a wide variety of technology-enhanced practice interactions, including drag-and-drop interactions, graphic interactions, matching questions, multiple response questions, and fill-in-the-blank questions.
    - **Lesson Activities**. Lesson Activities are embedded within each tutorial. These focused mini-projects allow students to develop new learning in a constructivist way or to apply learning from the tutorial in a significant way. Lesson Activities are designed to be an authentic learning and assessment tool.
- **Unit Activities**. Similar to Lesson Activities, Unit Activities at the end of each unit constitute one or more small projects, but their purpose is to deepen understanding of key unit concepts and tie them together. Each Unit Activity includes a simple rubric. The teacher versions include both a rubric and modeled sample answers. Unit Activities are teacher graded.
- **Online Discussions**. Online discussion with instructors and other students is a key activity, based on 21st-century skills, that allows for higher-order thinking about terminal objectives. An online threaded discussion mirrors the educational experience of a classroom discussion. Instructors can initiate a discussion by asking a complex, open-ended question. Students can engage in the discussion by responding both to the question and to the thoughts of others. Each unit in a course has one predefined discussion topic; instructors may add more discussion topics. A rubric for grading discussion responses is included in this guide.

Tools

The following tools are available to assist students as they work through a course. Clicking an icon opens access to the tool. Clicking again closes the tool:

- **Notes (tutorials).** Students can record notes and retain them for later reference.
- **Resources (tutorials).** Students can access key tools and references designed to support their learning.
- **Dictionary (tutorials).** Students can see a definition in English or Spanish for any text that they enter or copy and paste into the provided text field.
- **Text to Speech (tutorials and mastery tests).** Students can play the audio narration for any text they enter or copy and paste into the provided text field.
- **Translate (tutorials).** Students can see a translation to another language for any text they enter or copy and paste into the provided text field.
- **Scientific Calculator (Tutorials).** A scientific calculator is available in case students do not have access to a handheld calculator.

Assessment and Testing

Best practices in assessment and testing call for a variety of activities to evaluate student learning. Multiple data points present a more accurate evaluation of student strengths and needs. These tools include both objective and authentic learning tools.

- **Objective Assessments**. A targeted learning objective is associated with each lesson in this course. Each lesson objective is assessed through objective assessments at three different points during the course: at the end of the specific lesson, at the end of the unit, and at the end of the semester. In addition, pretests based on these objectives are available at the beginning of each unit, if desired by the teacher.

  All objective assessments are taken online. Assessment items are presented in over a dozen technology-enhanced item formats, parallel to those found in many state standard assessments. Typical item formats include multiple choice, multiple select (more than one answer), drag and drop matching, graphic placement, and text fill-in.

  - **Mastery tests** at the end of each Lesson provide the instructor and the student with clear indicators of areas of strength and weakness.
  - **Unit pretests** are optional assessments, typically designed for credit recovery use. If a student shows mastery of a Lesson's objective (80% proficiency), the student may be automatically exempted from that Lesson

in the upcoming unit. Typically, teachers do *not* choose to employ exemptive pretests for first-time credit courses.

- **Unit posttests** help instructors track how well students have mastered the unit's content.
- **End-of-semester tests** assess the major objectives covered in the course.

By comparing the unit pretest results against unit posttest and end-of-semester test results, the instructor can gain a simple picture of student progress in mastering the lesson objectives for the course.

- **Authentic Learning Assessment**. Of the basic learning activity types described above, three are designed to help exercise and assess higher-level thinking skills: Lesson Activities, Unit Activities, and Online Discussions. These learning activities allow students to develop deep understanding and at the same time provide data for the teacher to assess knowledge development. The following comments address the use of these learning activities for assessment purposes.
  - **Lesson Activities** immerse the student into one or more in-depth problems that center on developing a deep understanding of the learning objective. The Lesson Activities in this course are self-checked by the student; however, it is also possible for teachers to review and grade this student work.
  - **Unit Activities** are similar to Lesson Activities in style and purpose, but are typically more in-depth and time intensive. Unit Activities enable students to demonstrate depth of knowledge and a more integrative understanding of the unit's objectives. Unit Activities are teacher graded and are submitted through the drop box. These activities allow the instructor to score work on a scale of 0 to 4. A 4-point suggested rubric is provided to the student and the teacher for this purpose.
  - **Online Discussions** encourage students to reflect on concepts, articulate their thoughts, and respond to the views of others. In this way, they help teachers assess students' critical-thinking skills, communication skills, and overall facility with critical concepts. Each unit in this course has one predefined discussion topic. Instructors can customize the course, however, to add more discussion topics. Online Discussions may use any rubric the instructor sets. A suggested rubric is provided below for reference.

Online Discussion Rubric				
	D/F 0–69 Below Expectations	C 70–79 Basic	B 80–89 Proficient	A 90–100 Outstanding
Relevance of Response	The responses do not relate to the discussion topic or are inappropriate or irrelevant.	Some responses are not on topic or are too brief or low level. Responses may be of little value (e.g., yes or no answers).	The responses are typically related to the topic and initiate further discussion.	The responses are consistently on topic and bring insight into the discussion, which initiates additional responses.
Content of Response	Ideas are not presented in a coherent or logical manner. There are many grammar or spelling errors.	Presentation of ideas is unclear, with little evidence to back up ideas. There are grammar or spelling errors.	Ideas are presented coherently, although there is some lack of connection to the topic. There are few grammar or spelling errors.	Ideas are expressed clearly, with an obvious connection to the topic. There are rare instances of grammar or spelling errors.
Participation	The student does not make any effort to participate in the discussion.	The student participates in some discussions but not on a regular basis.	The student participates in most discussions on a regular basis but may require some prompting to post.	The student consistently participates in discussions on a regular basis.

Course Implementation Models

Plato Courses give instructors the flexibility to define implementation approaches that address a variety of learning needs. Instructors can configure the courses for individual students to work on their own at their own pace or for students working together concurrently in a group. Furthermore, the courses can be delivered completely online (that is, using a virtual approach) or can include both face-to-face and online components (that is, using a blended approach).

Depending on the learner grouping and learning approach, instructors can choose to take advantage of peer-to-peer interaction through Online Discussions. Similarly, if students have prior knowledge of the concepts taught in certain lessons, instructors can decide to employ unit pretests to assess students' prior knowledge and exempt them from taking the lessons. Note, however, that this feature is primarily designed for credit recovery purposes. For first-time credit, students are typically not allowed to "test out" of course lessons. Following are two common implementation models for using Plato Courses, along with typical (but not definitive) implementation decisions.

- **Independent Learning**
  The student is taking the course online as a personal choice or as part of an alternative learning program.

Learner grouping	independent learning
Learning approach	blended or virtual
Discussions	remove from learning path
Unit pretests	students do not take pretests

- **Group or Class Learning**
  The online course is offered for a group of students. These students may not be able to schedule the specific course at their local school site, or they may simply want the experience of taking an online course.

Learner grouping	group interaction
Learning approach	blended or virtual
Discussions	use; additional discussion questions may be added
Unit pretests	students do not take pretests

Economics Overview

Plato Course Economics is a single semester course based on high school state standards for Economics. In addition, each lesson in this course is designed to address Common Core English Language Arts standards identified by the CCSS. The course also addresses STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) objectives and key 21st-century skills.

A significant portion of the learning in this course is based on an inquiry model. Lessons promote student inquiry by introducing certain information and asking students key questions about the information before supplying explanations. Each Lesson Activity uses a scaffolded inquiry approach to enable students to develop their own initial understanding of the content. Unit activities function as extended lesson activities. They promote in-depth investigations or applications that draw from multiple unit objectives or a completely new objective for the course.

To address ELA standards, some Lesson Activities will require students to compose their thoughts in the form of scaffolded parts of essays and complete essays. Students may also perform analysis of literary, informational, and other types of texts. The course uses real-world connections and introduces various career opportunities in the fields of math and science to address STEM objectives. Lesson Activities are designed to target behaviors that support one or more math practices.

Economics Curriculum Contents and Pacing Guide

This section provides a brief summary of the course units in the semester. This semester is divided into four units spread over 90 days. The Unit Pacing Guide provides a general timeline for presenting each unit. It is designed to fit your class schedule and is adjustable. The guide is based on a typical 180-day school year with 90 days per semester.

Unit 1: Introduction to Economics

Summary
This unit begins by explaining scarcity and choice as basic economic problems in every society. You will explore the different economic systems and how they handle basic economic questions. You will also understand the impact of changes in supply and demand on an economy.

Day	Activity/*Objective*	Type
1 day: 1	**Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation** *Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.*	Course Orientation
4 days: 2–5	**Scarcity and Opportunity Cost** *Explain why scarcity and choice are basic economic problems faced by every society.*	Lesson
4 days: 6–9	**Economic Systems** *Describe how different economic systems answer basic economic questions.*	Lesson
4 days: 10–13	**Market Economies** *Analyze how market economies differ from other major economic systems.*	Lesson
4 days: 14–17	**Supply and Demand** *Interpret the impact of changes in supply, demand, or both.*	Lesson
5 days: 18–22	**Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 1**	Unit Activity/ Discussion
1 day: 23	**Posttest—Unit 1**	Assessment

Unit 2: Free Market and Businesses

Summary
In this unit, you will learn about production possibilities curves and understand how they can be used to maximize efficiency in allocation of resources. You will look at the different types of business structures that form in a free market economy. You will also take a close look at labor markets. At the end of this unit, you will explore how various factors affect the growth of a country's economy.

Day	**Activity/***Objective*	Type
4 days: 24–27	**Production Curves** *Categorize resources into factors of production and use production possibilities curves to interpret the scarcity of resources.*	Lesson
4 days: 28–31	**Business Structures** *Explain how the market system encourages entrepreneurship and analyze the different types of business organizations that result.*	Lesson
4 days: 32–35	**Labor** *Describe elements of the US labor market.*	Lesson
4 days: 36–39	**Growth** *Analyze how productivity, technology, and trade relate to growth.*	Lesson
5 days: 40–44	**Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 2**	Unit Activity/ Discussion
1 day: 45	**Posttest—Unit 2**	Assessment

Unit 3: Government

Summary
This unit focuses on the role of government in an economy. You will analyze the costs and benefits of US economic policies on the United States and the world. You will also understand the use and goals of fiscal policy, government regulations, and taxation in the US economy. Finally, you will learn about the structure of the Federal Reserve System and analyze its impact on US monetary policy.

Day	**Activity/***Objective*	Type
4 days: 46–49	**The Role of Government** *Analyze the influence of the federal government on the US economy.*	Lesson
4 days: 50–53	**Costs and Benefits of Government** *Analyze the costs and benefits of US economic policies on the United States and the world.*	Lesson

4 days: 54–57	**Taxation** *Explain the use and goals of fiscal policy, government regulations, and taxation in the US economy.*	Lesson
4 days: 58–61	**Money and the Federal Reserve** *Explain the structure of the federal reserve system and analyze its impact on US monetary policy.*	Lesson
5 days: 62–66	**Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 3**	Unit Activity/ Discussion
1 day: 67	**Posttest—Unit 3**	Assessment

Unit 4: Regulations

Summary

This unit focuses on trade regulations. You will compare the four market structures and explain the reasons for international trade and its impacts on the US economy. You will examine the need for international trade and its importance to the economy. You will also understand how trade restrictions and changes in political borders impact trade and the economy of a country.

Day	Activity/*Objective*	Type
5 days: 68–72	**Market Structures** *Compare the four market structures.*	Lesson
5 days: 73–77	**The Benefits of Trade** *Explain the reasons for international trade and how it impacts the US economy.*	Lesson
5 days: 78–82	**Regulation of Trade** *Analyze how establishing or reducing trade restrictions and addressing changes in political borders affects the US economy.*	Lesson
5 days: 83–87	**Unit Activity and Discussion—Unit 4**	Unit Activity/ Discussion
1 day: 88	**Posttest—Unit 4**	Assessment
1 day: 89	**Semester Review**	
1 day: 90	**End-of-Semester Test**	Assessment