Interacting With Students Through MobLab

Kelvin Wong, Arizona State University

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Some Context

• My classes (primarily Principles of Microeconomics) typically have between 270 to 380 students

• Meet either two times a week for 75 minutes per class, or 3 times a week for 50 minutes per class

• I still teach in a lecture format; students are not expected to have any work done prior to coming to class
  • Incorporate active learning through in-class activities conducted on MobLab
Problems From My Lectures

• Even the most committed student will lose focus at some point in the lecture

• It is easy for a student to just defer reviewing material from class until a later date
  • Which of course is not ideal

• Not the easiest for students to ask questions in a larger lecture

• Some concepts in economics are also not ideal to just talk about. It is much more effective if students can learn by doing.
My Solution: MobLab

- MobLab provides one platform that I can use to give quizzes/surveys and run economic experiments/games

- In a typical lecture, I will give a quiz or survey every fifteen to twenty minutes to break up the class time
  - These can range from 1 minute to 10 minutes long
  - Students can work in groups to discuss if they want (most of them do)

- In a typical semester, I run between 3-5 MobLab experiments
  - I always use experiments for teaching convergence to the equilibrium, game theory, and the tragedy of the commons.
In Class Survey and Quizzes

• Each quiz consists of a small number of questions (2 to 6 usually) that students have to work through something I just discussed. Questions in general are multiple choice or numeric response questions.

• Use Case 1 (Quizzes): I just discussed different ways to measure cost, and want to see if they can do it.

• Use Case 2 (Survey): I am starting a section on international trade and I want to see their stance.

• Use Case 3 (Feedback): I ask students to submit questions via MobLab at the end of each major topic. I can then go over all of the questions and answer them in an announcement post or email. Or, I ask them about how they studied for an exam so I can give them better feedback.

Think back to the last topic we finished covering (International Trade). Do you have any questions about it? Anything that is still unclear?
In Class Surveys and Quizzes: Administrative

- I tend to reuse quiz questions semester to semester, but will write new ones where I see fit.
  - These are written prior to class, and I just hit “run” in class to activate it

- Quizzes are also a way for me to take and encourage attendance

- I always have access to all the data. MobLab also compiles results right away if I want to show the class how they did or how they answered

- You can assign point values to questions, group things however you want, and send grades back to your LMS

- Students can go back and see the questions and the right answers (only if you allow them to)
Experiments and Games

• Experiments are not just something interactive and fun to do in my class, it is critical to the student learning process

• The results we get from the market experiment are brought up time and time again for the rest of the semester in other contexts
  • Students can much more easily grasp how the market equilibrium is determined in those different situations

• Pre-game instruction and post-game discussion are very important
  • MobLab gives great resources on both!
Market Experiment

• You are either a buyer or seller of oranges
  • Either 3 oranges to buy, or 3 oranges to sell (assume pay-to-produce for producers)

• You can buy or sell one orange at a time
  • buyers submit bids – an offer to buy
  • sellers submit asks – an offer to sell

• When bid $\geq$ ask: a transaction happens!

• Your goal: Make as much profit as you can
  • Partial EconPoints are awarded to high scorers!
If You Are a Buyer:

Welcome BUYER
You want to BUY 3 oranges. To make a profit, buy each orange for less than its value.

first unit value: $1.14
oranges: 0/3

Got It
If You Are a Seller:

Welcome SELLER
You have 3 oranges that you would like to SELL. To make a profit, sell each orange for more than its cost.

first unit cost: $0.50
oranges: 3/3

Got It
Buyer’s Screen
Seller’s Screen

**SELLER**

- Cost: $0.50
- Oranges: 3/3
- Earnings: $0.00

**Order Book**

**BIDS**
- $0.99
- $0.94
- $0.93

**ASKS**
- $1.76
- $1.80
- $2.08

Profit: $1.00

Round 1
Final Thought

• Professors do not have to completely change their class to add surveys or experiments. I understand that class time has a high opportunity cost.

• My suggestion: Start small! Add one survey/quiz to each class, or one game in a semester.

• MobLab has excellent resources and customer support. Use them abundantly!