**The Ups and Downs of Unemployment**

**Subject area/course**: Social Science, Macroeconomics

**Grade level/band:** 11–12

**INSTRUCTOR PROCEDURES**

1. **Task overview**:

Students collect data about the U.S. unemployment rates over the last twenty years and create a graphic representation of trends in unemployment. After researching topics related to unemployment in macroeconomic textbooks and other sources, students write a 3- to 4-page paper that examines causes and effects of unemployment. Additionally, they attempt to draw conclusions or implications about U.S. unemployment trends over the last two decades.

This task is best used after students have learned unemployment-related concepts and topics, such as computing the unemployment rate, types of unemployment (cyclical, frictional, seasonal, and structural), and government automatic stabilizers.

1. **Prior knowledge required:**

Students should be able to:

* Make, read, and analyze tables and graphs.
* Understand unemployment related topics and concepts.
* Draw inferences from sources.
* Demonstrate basic statistics knowledge.

1. **Common Core State Standards aligned to this task:**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/1/) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/11-12/1/) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/1/) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/9/) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

1. **Time requirements**:

After students finish learning about concepts related to unemployment, plan about two weeks for students to complete this task. Students will spend the first week collecting and analyzing data and the second week writing their paper.

1. **Instructor materials to use during administration**:

* Any Macroeconomics textbook
* The Internet has a wealth of information regarding unemployment data, such as [www.economic-indicators.com](http://www.economic-indicators.com)
* Data from the Census Bureau's Current Population
* The Bureau of Labor and Statistics - <http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm>

1. **Instructor procedures during administration:**

After lectures covering the chapter on unemployment, for this task:

* Students should work independently during this task.
* Allow each student two weeks to complete this task.
* If necessary, the instructor may check in with class during the project using discussion questions and/or activities such as the following:
  + How is the unemployment rate computed in the United States?
  + Create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts two of the types of unemployment.
  + Why do many people, including economists, claim that the real rate of unemployment is higher?
  + A high unemployment rate affects almost every part of the economy. Federal and state governments provide some types of automatic stabilizers. Name at least two automatic stabilizers.
* The instructor should provide feedback to each paper.
* The instructor may conduct an overview and group discussion to wrap up this project. Possible topics include:
* Where unemployment data comes from
* How the unemployment rate is computed
* Unemployment rates for selected groups of American workers
* The effectiveness of government automatic stabilizers
* Possible effects of unemployment at the personal level

1. **Student support:**

The following suggestions are examples of scaffolding that can be used to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom.

* Provide class time for research on students’ topic.
* Provide definitions of new vocabulary words ahead of time.
* For the final product, all learners will benefit from peer assistance while brainstorming their topics, as well as a peer- or teacher-edit of their papers before final submission.
* Some students will have good research skills, but some will need guidance in the determination of appropriate sources and where to look for them. It is important to spend class time in review of what constitutes an appropriate source in advance of students’ independent work time.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Students could present the results of their research to the class via an oral or multi-media presentation.
* If there is a particularly interesting and/or controversial topic, a debate could be organized where students choose sides on the topic and defend their views.

1. **Scoring and assessment considerations:**

EPIC developed the *College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Scoring Rubric* to accompany this task. If your school or department uses a standardized rubric that would fit the content and requirements of this task, you may choose to use your existing rubric. The following notes and suggestions are meant to clarify the intent of the rubric and include considerations for the assessment of student work.

* When assigning the task, provide students with the rubric that will be used to score their final product and discuss it as a class.
* Unlike some rubrics, the *CCR Task Bank Rubric* does not predetermine “point values” for the scoring criteria. The rubric thus allows for flexibility with different instructors’ scoring systems and individual determination of the “weight” of each criterion.
* Student work that scores at the *Accomplished* level is considered to be entry-level college work.
* The *Exceeds* category on the rubric provides an example of how a student can go above and beyond the *Accomplished* level. These examples are intended to be only ONE way a work product can exceed expectations, thus allowing room for your professional judgment.
* If needed, consider including task-specific criteria as an additional scoring category to the rubric or providing a checklist of requirements for the task.