

IDONTGOTO UNI

Role Play



KEYWORDS

Higher education; Assessment

ABSTRACT

Learners adopt various staff, student and community roles within an Australian university and explore a controversial issue in assessment that has become a public embarrassment to the university.

CONTACT

Maureen Bell, CEDIR,
University of Wollongong,
mbell@uow.edu.au

DESCRIPTION

The scenario revolves around a newspaper called 'The Daily News'. The editor makes the first posting, which is a news item headed, "All Students Top of the Class". The item quotes an expert in assessment and the views of concerned citizens about the assessment practices at a fictitious university.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

The role play activity is conducted over three weeks. It is usually undertaken in groups of approximately eight.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This learning design aims to:

- engage participants in comparing and contrasting criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment
- develop skills in using online resources, particularly the online discussion space
- develop understanding of the wider framework of influences on decision making in the higher education sector.

TIME AND SETTING

The role play is an activity within the University Learning and Teaching (ULT) course, a compulsory course for all new academic staff at the University of Wollongong. It has been used over seven years, approximately 21 times. One adaptation when course participants from an offshore campus took part the roleplay was set in an offshore campus and relevant roles were included.

RESOURCES

- scenario
- role descriptions
- series of postings that moderators can use depending on how the role play is proceeding
- online access to relevant University policies to which participants are expected to refer
- scholarly literature on assessment in higher education.

PROCESS

The role play is conducted using the asynchronous discussion forum in a learning management site. A separate forum is established for each group. The forum is anonymous and participants title their postings using their role name.

It begins with a face-to-face introduction. The group is provided with a scenario and the character they are to play: Vice Chancellor, Dean of Science, Student, Lecturer etc. The characters have a name, a title and a brief role description and it is left up to students to decide on the character's personality. The teacher takes the role of newspaper Editor.

Participants are required to make a first posting stating their role's view on the case, and then pause to research the issues further. To facilitate the discussion the teacher posts additional new items and quotes from other experts (taken from the published literature) to illustrate the complexity of the situation. Participants respond with further responses that would be typical for their characters and continue interactions over a three week period of online activity.

ASSESSMENT

There are no grades allocated for assessment activities in this course. For the role play task, participants must post a minimum number of times with a final proposal as to how the situation should be resolved.

FACILITATOR ISSUES

The facilitator is a significant support for the activity and must actively facilitate the discussion by contributing online postings that prompt further discussion.

REUSABILITY

- has been modified for use with academics from offshore
- scenarios and role descriptions are Word files
- can be used at university level with students rather than teachers.

REFERENCES AND LINKS

University Learning and Teaching <http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/ult>

Bell, M. (2001). Online Role-Play: Anonymity, Engagement and Risk. *Educational Media International*, 38(4), 251-260.

Bell, M. (2001). A case study of an online role-play for academic staff. In G. Kennedy, M. Keppell, C. McNaught & T. Petrovic (Eds.), *Meeting at the Crossroads. Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference of the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education*. (pp. 63-72). Melbourne: Biomedical Multimedia Unit, The University of Melbourne.