

## ABSTRACT

*The project is an online simulation of an election campaign in which students role-play as journalists and political advisers. The students participate in tightly integrated events in the role-play, student activities, assessment tasks, skills-based mini-workshops, in the lecture topics and reading tasks. This enables students to develop diverse co-operative and competitive communication skills in a real world situation.*

## KEYWORDS

Media; Communication; Politics;  
Political campaign

## CONTACT

Dr Sally Young  
University of Melbourne  
[s.young@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:s.young@unimelb.edu.au)



## DESCRIPTION

The project is an online simulation of an election campaign in which students role-play as journalists and political advisers. It is an integral assessed component of the subject. Individual students are each allotted a role as either a:

- political adviser in a campaign team, or
- journalist covering the campaign.

Each student will be given a 'pair' or an initial 'contact'. It is the political adviser's job to try to influence their journalist's reporting. It is the journalist's job to get behind the adviser's 'spin' and report the campaign. This relationship is not only highly interactive but also, as in the 'real world', both cooperative and competitive. A number of unexpected events will occur in the online campaign simulation and there are key assessment tasks for each student to complete.

## AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

The subject is a part of a coursework masters degree in media and communications. Postgraduate students in the Media and Communications program come from diverse countries, have experience of different media systems and many are working, or aim to pursue careers, in media and related cultural industries. It is necessary to provide them with appropriate experiences that help them to gain a deep understanding of the relationship between media and political processes and give them some first-hand experience of how communication operates within and across various political contexts.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The learning objectives of The Campaign include:

- gain an understanding and appreciation of the complexity of media communications in a real world setting
- experience a range of different relationships and communication activities
- gain practical skills in writing press releases, writing news articles, establishing effective working relations, evaluating news coverage, media stunts and promotion, journalism techniques, damage control strategies, and speech-writing
- develop communication, research, critical thinking, negotiation and decision-making skills and an appreciation of cultural differences and approaches
- help prepare students for working in multi-disciplinary and international environments.

## RESOURCES

The Campaign is a rich resource for students. The online role play manages communication between different roles, and provides varied resources and direction for each group of students. There are opportunities for controlled communication, submitting draft and finished communication and media products. The role play artefacts include TV news broadcasts, media releases, newspaper and magazine articles. Resources are also available for academic staff interested in participating in The Campaign.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment of The Campaign is based on a number of submissions of role written tasks and participation in the forum activities.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The role-play simulation lasts from Week 2 to Week 9 of a 12 week semester. Interspersed with the tabulated tasks and events are a series of lectures and reading topics, and some skills-based mini-workshops. The mini-workshops are centred around practical skills associated with the two main roles: writing press releases, writing news articles, establishing effective working relations, evaluating news coverage, media stunts and promotion, journalism techniques, damage control strategies, and speech-writing.

Week	Writing Tasks		Simulation Events
1	<b>Advisers</b>	<b>Journalists</b>	
	Campaign itinerary	1 <sup>st</sup> news article	Establishing journalist-political adviser relations
	Press release	2 <sup>nd</sup> news article	
2	Forum question	Forum question	
	Plan for campaign launch	3 <sup>rd</sup> news article	The Campaign launch. Issue: reporting on policy or personality?
3	Forum question	Forum question	
	Plan for media events	Journalism techniques report	Unforeseen event: campaign receives no media coverage.
	Damage control strategies	4 <sup>th</sup> news article or analysis piece	
4	Forum question	Forum question	
	Online press conference	Online press conference	New event breaks. Preparing for the Press conference.
	Victory or concession speech	5 <sup>th</sup> campaign article	
	Forum question	Forum question	

### **FACILITATOR ISSUES**

The Campaign requires facilitation input during the simulation. It is integrated into a program of workshops and lectures. The lecturer takes on the role of ‘candidate’ and the ‘editor’. This is exceptionally valuable in overseeing student work and skill development, and also in creating new opportunities for postgraduate student-teacher professional relationships.

### **REUSABILITY**

The Campaign is delivered on a purpose built system. If you wish to use the existing The Campaign or investigate re-use, collaborative delivery or other options please contact Sally Young. [s.young@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:s.young@unimelb.edu.au).

### **REFERENCES AND LINKS**

[http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/brisbane05/blogs/proceedings/28\\_Hirst.pdf](http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/brisbane05/blogs/proceedings/28_Hirst.pdf)