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Responsibilities, Rights and Respect Online: a Web-based Tutorial for University Students

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Abstract
The Director EED, the Dean of Students and the interactive multimedia team from the Educational Media Laboratory (emlab) within the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong have joined together in a project to create an online tutorial to educate university students in Australia about harassment and discrimination, within the context of a university environment. The program draws from a range of student experiences in a variety of settings to raise awareness of their responsibilities and rights and the types of behaviour, which can be discriminatory or considered as harassment. It is proposed to make the program compulsory for all incoming students.

Background

Students come to university from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, and often bring with them pre-conceived ideas and prejudices about people who are different to themselves. It is important that students understand their responsibilities and rights, in relation to harassment and discrimination, whilst at university to ensure they and their peers have an enjoyable and inclusive university experience where respect for one another is evident.

The University of Wollongong prefers to take a proactive approach to educating students to respect the diversity of our population by providing a compulsory program for incoming students, rather than waiting for an incident to occur and following this with punitive measures.

The University of Wollongong was a key player in a consortium approach to developing an online EEO instructional program for University staff some years ago. Some faculties, that have a work placement component to their degree such as nursing, law and engineering, have built into their program the need for students to complete the staff EEO online tutorial prior to going on their work placement. The success of this staff education program was used to leverage funding form the Vice Chancellor to develop a student resource.

Former Senator Chris Puplick AM, has long been an advocate for students understanding their rights and responsibilities (1997) and in his role as an external advisor on the University of Wollongong student Campus Education and Equity Consultative Committee, heavily supported the development of such a program.

Having secured the funding it was important to ascertain if any similar programs had been developed at other universities nationally or internationally. Our aim was not to replicate other programs but rather to build a unique program that could draw on the nature of student discrimination and harassment issues at the university level. This also required investigating the existence of any discrimination or harassment legal cases involving university students.

A search of the literature demonstrated that there is a great deal written about the problems of discrimination and harassment, particularly bullying in secondary schools (Sengstock: 2006; Kendall and Sidebottom: 2004; Azzopardi: 2003) and some strategies for educating secondary school students about such matters (Ollis: 2002; HREOC). Kendall and Sidebottom particularly look at the duty of care of educating people about discrimination and eliminating ignorance as an excuse for ongoing hostility towards homosexual students in particular.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission has developed a very comprehensive set of resources, which are readily accessible on the education section of their website:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/education/index.html . These are designed for use within primary and secondary schools to assist teachers to work with their students to improve their understanding of discrimination and harassment and the underpinning laws. The project team drew heavily on this material for their initial ideas for educating tertiary students because it is clear from the issues, which arise in the tertiary sector that there is still considerable work to be done in educating our students.

The literature revealed that there are a number of analytical studies surrounding specific issues in the higher education sector. For example Asmar, Proude and Inge, (2004) look at the experiences of Muslim Women in universities and Davey, Davey and Obst (2002) look at the relationship between alcohol and substance abuse, and discrimination and harassment. Goody and de Vries (2002) report of the Rainbow Project established in the University of Western Australia in response to homophobic issues.

A survey of equity practitioners in Australia revealed that the University of Sydney provides thirty-minute sessions during orientation week about harassment and discrimination but this is not compulsory and not all faculties support the inclusion of these sessions in their orientation program. However, in general, training for higher education students about discrimination and harassment is virtually non-existent in Australia other than through some brochures or information on web sites. These resources are excellent but lack the impact of a compulsory online interactive program, such as the one being developed by the University of Wollongong. Response from equity practitioners nationally was very positive after they had viewed the early stages of development at a paper presented by the authors at the EOPHEA conference held recently in Melbourne.

The material, which most significantly influenced the design of our program, was drawn from brochures developed by the University of British Columbia. These were located on the equity section of their web site http://www.equity.ubc.ca/brochures/index.htm. The concept of posing a scenario with some "equity office advice" formed part of the structure of our program. An extract from their Student guide to Discrimination and Harassment is presented below.

> Scenario 1:
> "I work as a research assistant. Whenever I meet with my boss, he tells me I look great and asks about my sex life. I haven't answered his personal questions and have tried to ignore him, but I feel anxious and angry about our meetings. And they seem to be getting more frequent! Am I reading too much into this?"
>
> EQUITY OFFICER ADVICE
> Your supervisor's personal questions do not belong in a professional relationship and are creating a negative work environment for you. His comments are inappropriate, unwelcome and constitute sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination. This conduct violates the University Policy on Discrimination and Harassment so call us for advice and assistance.

Project requirements

University values and codes of conduct

The University of Wollongong is unambiguous in its policies relating to University values and codes of conduct in relation to discrimination and harassment matters. This applies equally to both staff and students. The authors see

the product of this project supporting these polces to the betterment of students and staff. It is on this basis that the project team will move forward to seek approval from the University Education Committee and the Senate to have this online program for students made a compulsory component of all incoming students in their first year of study. The incentive for students to complete the program will be recognition on their academic transcript as having completed an EEO program, which supports the Graduate Qualities (2007) of a University of Wollongong Student.

Diverse audience appeal

The student population at UOW is as diverse as the national population of Australia with over seventy nationalities represented; young and mature aged students, many with carer's responsibilities; gay and lesbian students and students with disabilities. The design and development process we have been through to date has endeavoured to be widely inclusive in support of a conscious attempt to produce a relevant and appealing resource that reflects the diversity of students at UOW.

Attempting to address every one of the possible equity issues in an in-depth manner was beyond the available budget and time so the scope of the project was focussed on addressing the key areas of harassment and discrimination. This was determined through consultation with professionals, a workshop held with UOW staff and students as well as staff from similar units within other universities. The workshop produced a collection of potential scenarios as well as valuable feedback on the visual styles developed at that point in time and the way in which students would enter into the scenarios. The issues surrounding the implementation of a resource such as this were also tabled and discussed.

Within the resource, harassment and discrimination are explored from the perspective of ethnicity, gender, disability, age and sexuality. In some scenarios these perspectives are layered with the issues of excessive drinking, shared living arrangements and various academic environments.

Scenario development

Our development evolution led the project team to consider a few different approaches. Early thoughts were to clearly isolate each issue, for example racial discrimination, making the issues themselves the means by which a student would select and move through the website. As the scenarios developed however, it became evident that it would be more effective to create scenarios that use settings typically familiar to the students such as the tutorial, group work, the bar, student accommodation etc and embed the issues within the scenario itself, allowing the students to uncover the type(s) of discrimination and harassment for themselves.

Allowing students to choose the sequence in which they progress through the scenarios and to engage them in meaningful interaction within the site has continually been an underpinning tenet of the design. The intent of each scenario isn't stated up front thus requiring the student to view each scenario analytically to identify one or more of the embedded issues. The project team has attempted to use scenario titles that may be interesting to students and encourage them to spend time with each one. A clear and consistent structure has been implemented throughout all modules, providing an interaction scaffold for students to explore each scenario.

Scenario Overview
        Scenario 1: "I want my say." – Global issues and responsible behaviour in tutorials.
        Scenario 2: "Getting your act together." – Discrimination in group work situations.
        Scenario 3: "At the bar." – Racial harassment and alcohol.
        Scenario 4: "Space invaders." – Personal space violation at University residences.
        Scenario 5: "All alone." – Exclusion and inclusion in tutorials and lectures.
        Scenario 6: "Behind closed doors." – Student / supervisor relationships at university.
        Scenario 7: "Invisible." – Mental Illness and disability.

Scenario interaction scaffold
1. **The Scenario:** Students first experience a scenario by watching and listening to a fully animated sequence, or viewing an audio-visual slide presentation. They are able to pause and replay the scenario. Any dialogue is captioned to accompany the audio. For each scenario access to a text-only narrative of the scenario is also available.

2. **Reflection:** A set of pertinent points and questions lead the student to reflect on the issues represented within the scenario. There is no attempt to collect responses from students. They are intended to provide an opportunity for personal reflection on the issues embedded in the scenario.

3. **RRR Advice:** This step provides a discussion around Responsibilities, Rights and Respect within the context of the scenario. It is written from the perspective of an Equity Advisor providing a balanced response to the student. This information covers all of the issues embedded within the scenario and matches each point included within the reflection step. The student is able to return to step one and review the scenario from a different perspective if they didn't initially recognise an issue. This step may also contain links to legislation, codes, on campus support and relevant web sites. The challenge in this section is to provide advice when there are not clear black and white answers.

Sample scenario treatment

	Main heading	**I want my say**
	Sub heading	*Global issues and responsible behaviour in tutorials*
	Brief overview	*Students are sitting in class discussing world politics - listening to a news item about conflict elsewhere in the world.*
Scene intro	*Female voice, clearly spoken, directed at the computer user.*	World politics is being discussed. A current news item about conflict is being watched by the tutor and students.
1	Tutor voice – mature, male reading from newspaper clipping.	*Transcript* "Warplanes battered civilians today, killing at least 26 people, and more rockets hit the city centre, with no sign that diplomacy would halt the ongoing conflict any time soon. A rebel group reported that one of its fighters had been killed, but gave no details. Both sides are blaming the other over the latest deaths and are expected to hit back with more violence. World leaders have warned foreigners to stay away from the area."
2	Female student A	Why is anyone surprised about this? Those people are always fighting over nothing. We should just bomb them all. They just cause trouble wherever they go.
3	(other) male and female students	Yeah…
4	Female student B	Who do you mean by those people? Don't you think that all sorts of different people cause conflict? Do you really think the conflict is one-sided?
5	Male student A	Do you mean that people like me cause trouble? Just because of my beliefs? You're all racist.
6	Female student A	Don't call me a racist, I'm just telling the truth! It's not my fault if you people can't control yourselves.
Reflection	1. Academic debate is about communicating freely and responsibly 2. What should be expected by lecturers /tutors?	

	3. What constitutes a racial discrimination?
RRR Advice	1. Once you realise that tutorials are not about winning the argument but that they really are about sharing, listening and learning your whole approach to communicating with fellow students changes. Anger, raised voices, cutting remarks and all sorts of bad attitude easily creep in when you are focused on point scoring. It's only when you relax and respect the opinions of others that real learning can happen. 2. Your lecturers and tutors have a responsibility to encourage debate and to facilitate a discussion where everyone feels comfortable to be heard, and discriminatory comments are not directed at other students. 3. It is racial discrimination to treat someone less favourably because of his or her race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin than someone of a different race would be treated in a similar situation. The Racial Discrimination Act (hyperlinked to the act), makes racial discrimination unlawful whenever it impairs a person's equal enjoyment of his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms. For example: - being refused rental accommodation because of your race is unlawful. - being excluded from a party because of your race is hurtful but not unlawful.

Visual representation

We have been keenly aware of the potential to unintentionally target specific cultural or gender groups by associating them with an issue. We have developed and sought feedback on a number of different visual designs for the whole website but more specifically the character design has proven challenging.

We have tried to develop a visual representation that was:
- not too simplistic or too cartoon-like, possibly trivialising the importance of the content being treated,
- flexible enough to convey body language often seen within harassment or discrimination situations,
- engaging to the majority of the university student population,
- able to convey gender and cultural diversity when necessary and
- cost-effective in terms of the development time and effort needed to produce the audio/visual material needed to support all of the scenarios.

| Early versions of characterisation proved to be unsuitable mainly because they lacked appeal for the diverse target group. In addition this style would have been very labour intensive in the animation development.	
1. QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.	2. QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Style and process finalised…	
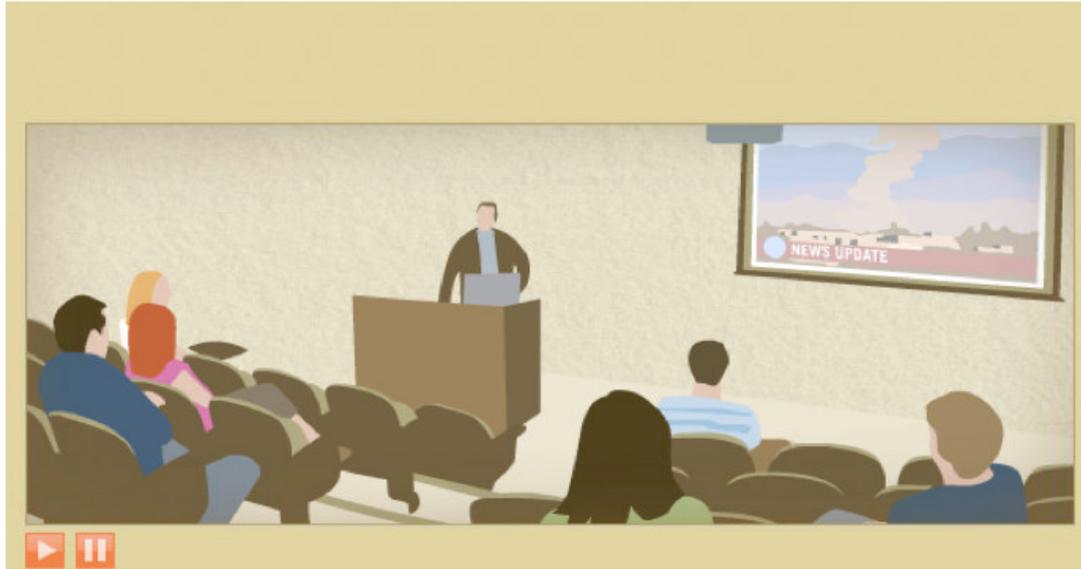
3.	
Fig 1: Character style development	

Development process summary

To achieve the final style displayed above the project team has been able to combine available local talent with outsourced professional expertise to our best advantage. The refined process:

- Various drafts of each scenario script developed with feedback from a consultative group of professionals and students leads to the final copy with due attention given to equity balance across the scenarios.
- A storyboard is created for each scenario planning the scene, positioning of actors, sequencing of actions and attention to the point of view needed to convey the perspectives that play out in the scene.
- Professional voicing of each scenario is outsourced and returned as separate voice elements for synchronisation with animated sequences.
- Student volunteers are engaged to rehearse and finally videoed 'performing' each scenario in sync with the scenario audio track. Over emphasis of actions and close attention to clothing etc that will be visually obvious is required in some instances to support the story.
- The video footage is digitally captured and then edited to select specific sequences using a minimal number of frames.
- Individual frames are then processed to produce the flat coloured characters shown above. This enables the project team to control the colouration of the characters completely.
- The supporting backgrounds are drawn and rendered and then integrated with the characters, underlying audio track, which will have sound effects added as needed and full captioning for the characters and the textual narrative.
- The completed animated sequence is then processed to produce a web-friendly animation. It is then integrated with other support information. The mix of media and information is designed to cater for a diverse range of student needs or disabilities, essential for a program designed to engender respect for diversity.

Storyboard for 'I want my say' scenario

Fig 2: Sample Storyboard

Where to next?

As we have fully scripted each scenario with the characterisation and voice work in production we intend to roll out the seven scenarios in batches. As each scenario emerges there will be opportunity for further refinement or extension of the reflection and 'RRR' advice sections that accompany the scenario on the web. This will ensure that when the final project is released for student access we can be confident that students will receive appropriate guidance as well as relevant and adequate support should they be in a circumstance similar to that portrayed within a scenario.

The issues treated within the scenarios are extremely relevant to the student population. We believe that being in possession of knowledge that may assist in dealing with a discrimination or harassment situation before the event occurs would be a desirable outcome. For this reason we will be pursuing avenues to make this material a compulsory component of the UOW student experience as previously mentioned. To support this stance we will integrate a process where students will need to authenticate using their UOW username and password to gain access.

We don't intend to 'test' the students in any way but will inform them that their movement through the scenarios will be noted. The site will provide an opportunity for users to make comments on the website and scenarios through a structured exit screen designed to gauge the level of satisfaction felt and to collect possible thoughts on ways of improving the site. The online environment will not be seeking disclosure of real events that students may be aware of although there will be clear contact information for students to use if they feel the need to discuss a discrimination or harassment situation.

Ideally we envisage the situation where students entering UOW would complete RRR online and just prior to exiting the University would undertake the staff EO online program preparing them for entrance to the workplace.

We are developing these materials in the knowledge that other Australian Universities may wish to integrate 'RRR Online' into the experience of their own students with information about support resources and policies being tailored to local situations. We also see the potential and in fact the need to further build upon this resource by expanding it to encompass other issues relevant to the student population. Any funds accumulated through the licensing of the program will be channelled back into further development of this resource.

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