

Online Role Play

A collection of thoughts about the key decision points in designing an online roleplay from three online role-play designers: Rob McLaughlan (UTS), Denise Kirkpatrick (UNE) and Elizabeth Devonshire (USyd).

Design Decision Points**What do we want students to learn about?**

More about their field of expertise? Then let them choose (or allocate) roles that reinforce what they already know.

Other people's perspectives? Then allocate or force choice that has students taking on roles that challenge them (develop new knowledge, different skills, different beliefs and perspectives).

Letting students use their skills and knowledge (valuing experience) vs building on what they know vs forcing students to develop new knowledge and/or skills.

Where's the focus? Is the purpose of the role-play modeling and experiencing a process or developing knowledge and understandings?

Watch out for the dilemma that relates to the overlap between educational experience crossing over into (inter-) personal dimensions. How to manage this? Keep clear boundaries but you need to know this clearly yourself.

Really important through the whole design process is knowing and not losing sight of what the purpose of the role-play is - maintaining the "match". You need to have mechanism for monitoring this.

Where is the learning going to happen? In the events? In the role/persona research? In the activity? In the debrief?

For more detail on learning objectives look up the Designer's Guide.

Scenarios:

Providing enough information to progress the events without constraining.

Is the focus finding out about the character and what she knows and does or about being able to participate and contribute to the events and action?

For more detail on scenario design look up the Designer's Guide.

How to allocate roles:

Let students choose or teacher allocation? By design? Or random allocation? By teacher knowledge of students' strengths, group dynamics (do you want to match student characteristics to role characteristics?) Volunteers and self selection?

Do any roles have particular needs? i.e. special knowledge, skills, personality traits?

Some roles may be too confrontational.

For more detail on role assignment look up the Moderator's Guide.

Assessment:

What's assessed and what it tells students about what's important? Allocation and weighting of assessment

(directs student attention). Ensuring comparability of marking across multiple markers.

For more detail on assessment look up the Designer's Guide.

Moderators:

Will there be a moderator? What's the moderator's role?

Is there an authentic role for the moderator that will allow him/her to step in?

Need for clear group rules, operating principles, guidelines for participant behaviour in the role-play.

Nature of the context, action, scenario will affect the type of interactions and potential for conflict. This will have implications for need for moderator and role of moderator.

Difficulty of translating nuances of content expertise into clearer positions and rules to develop interactions within the role-play. Need for simplification of complexities of action and thought.

Importance of debriefing - need for teacher to have debriefing skills and be clear about the focus of debriefing. Whether to debrief online or face-to-face?

Tip: Shadowing to assist in the development of debrief skills.

Sensitivity of debriefing – need for skilled practitioner.

For more detail on the moderator role look up the Moderator's Guide.

Remember the purpose!!!!!!!!!!

Denise, Elizabeth and Rob