

Checklist comparing platforms for online role plays

	Email only <i>(e.g. using free mail service such as yahoo or hotmail)</i>	Discussion Forum only <i>(e.g. using the asynchronous conferencing commonly available in Learner Management Systems)</i>	Email + Discussion Forum	Self-contained web-based interface and authoring system: UWA Simulation Builder	Self-contained web-based interface and authoring system: Fablusi™
Roles					
Role name	May be difficult to get the required email address	LMS may limit log in to student (or student ID)	See previous two columns	Built-in support for any role name	Built-in support for any role name
Anonymity	Yes if separate email accounts are created for the role play	Not really although can be done with tricky workarounds and guest accounts	Not really (due to limitation of LMS) although can be done with tricky workarounds and guest accounts	Optional on a per-discussion basis	Enforced
Team collaborating on one role	Yes, by sharing the account details between the group	No – sharing account details would be a security risk for students unless guest accounts are allowed to be created	No (due to limitation of LMS)	Built-in support for primary and secondary group allocation	Supported (with "out-of-simulation" collaboration support tool as well)
Creating a separation between real world and simulated world	If existing email of players are used, all role play messages are mixed with real world email. If special email accounts using role name are created, the separation is still not ideal because of the similarity of the environment to the real environment	No	See previous two columns	Each instance of a simulation can be provided with an unique user interface, can be connected to from LMS	Completely separated from real world There is explicit log in and log out to create an entry and boundary for the players
Resources					
Distribution of scenario	Yes, by email	Yes, by posting at the beginning of the forum	Yes	Yes, by posting to discussion forum.	Integrated into the interface as resource links to every role or as specific tasks for every role
Role specific information (information for	Yes, send by individual email to roles	No	Yes (distributed via email)	Role specific information can be provided and made available only to	Integrated into the interface - the role play creator specifies the

Authors: Albert Ip & Sandra Wills, November 2002

You may reproduce and distribute this document provided it is reproduced in full and without any modification.

Please report errors or bugs to albert@DLS.au.com

only one role, other roles cannot read the role specific information)				the person who assumes the role, or to all	information once, no more work needed in subsequent re-runs, (called different "worlds")
Additional learning resources	Yes, distribute by email	Yes, post at the forum	Yes	Yes, customized interface may contain links to additional web resources	Permanently displayed as link
Sharing of role-created resources/writing	Yes, distribute by email	Yes, post at forum	Yes	Yes, post to forum	Integrated into the interface (as a writing task for whole world to read)
Separate role communications and role-created resource/writing	No	Yes, by using a separate thread	See previous two columns	Yes, different discussion topics can be created.	Yes, at different area of the interface
Simulate a social structure within the role play					
Differing access rights to messages for different participants	No	No	No	Yes, each discussion topic can be configured with different privileges. Lots more work could be done here.	Yes, fully supported for each conference as set by role play creator
Additional power gained by the participant by accumulation of items such as money	No	No	No	No	Wealth sub-system allows exchange of wealth types designed by the role play creator
Meeting places					
Multiple meeting places	No	Needs multiple forums (some LMS do not allow this for a course)	See previous two columns	Multiple discussion topics	Fully supported
Asynchronous communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (participate in character)
Confidential asynchronous communication between roles	Yes	No unless guest accounts are enables	Yes	Yes	Yes
"Always on" public chat room for the role play world	No	No	No - but may use other freely available system	No, but have used Digichat	No - but may use other freely available system
Private chat room (by invitation only)	No	No	No	No	Integrated (participate in character)
Private chat room (with "six thinking	No	No	No	No	Selectable if allowed by role play creator

hats")					(participate in character)
Support					
Send specific task or information to a particular role by moderator	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Allows "out-of-simulation" confidential communication between role and moderator	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes - special send button to support this
Debriefing support					
Allow players to see all previous "confidential" messages at conclusion of role play	Difficult to do (by forwarding all messages to other players)	Yes - no confidential message anyway	See previous two columns	Yes, but depends on configuration of topic	Yes - change the right of the roles or ask them to log in as a guest account
New debrief forum	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administration Support					
Allow students to nominate role via online forms	Not really	Not really	Not really	No, roles are allocated by moderator	Integrated
Allow students to nominate their own username and password for the role play (easier for students to remember)	Yes, but need a way to know the student's password for moderating purposes	No	See previous two columns	No	Integrated (Moderator does not need to know students' usernames and passwords for moderating purposes)
Assigning students to role	Not really	Not really	Not really	Integrated	Integrated
Communication to players using their real email	Yes (separate email anyway - the difficulty is linking the roleplay email to the real email address)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Clear distinction is made between sim-mail and email. Moderator can send email to players (out-of-simulation communication).
Moderation Support					
Read all asynchronous communication	Yes, but need to log in to each email address separately	Yes	See previous two columns	Yes	Integrated
Read	No	Yes by disabling role to	See previous two columns	Role cannot delete	Deleted messages

communication even if role deleted the message		delete message		message	disappear in the role's interface, but moderator can still read the message
Modification of episode "on the fly"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Modification of role structure (adding or removing role) after role play begins	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Assessment Support					
Writing Tasks assessment	No	No	No	No	In version 2 of Fablusi™, an assessment assistant is displayed automatically for moderators to code the score of each writing task.
Activity assessment	No	Some forum supports the reporting of number of messages sent per user account	See last column	No	In version 2 of Fablusi™ a graphical display of the activity of each roles is available to the moderator. The weighting of level of activity can be set.
Reporting	No	No	No	No	In version 2 of Fablusi™ a final score for each role can be generated based on different weightings assigned to different writing tasks, activity level and quality of activity.
Reuse support					
Running multiple groups of the same role play to cater for different class sizes at the same time	Yes - but difficult to keep track of the large number of similar email addresses	Need to create several forums within the same course (some LMS do not allow this)	See previous two columns	Yes, supported via allocating students to different primary groups	Supported
Running multiple groups of the same role play with slightly different scenarios for each group	Yes, each group is a new role play and everything has to be done again anyway.	See previous column and note the limitation of some LMS	See previous two columns	No	Supported, each world can have its own customisation although the role structure is fixed
Use of same role	Yes, need to use "cut-and-	Yes, need to use "cut-and-	See previous two columns	Yes	Yes, create another

play for different groups in the future	paste" and repeat most tasks again	paste" and repeat most tasks again			"world"
Customisation for reuse	Yes, need to use "cut-and-paste-and-edit" and repeat most tasks again	Yes, need to use "cut-and-paste-and-edit" and repeat most tasks again	See previous two columns	Yes, but requires quite a lot of work and has not been requested by the academic staff – requires technical support to set up	Supported, each world can have its own customisation although the role structure is fixed
Archiving outcomes of role plays	For web-based email, the emails are usually saved on the server side. For normal POP3 email, once the email is downloaded to the email client, it is deleted from the server. So it depends on how the roles are set up to use email.	Yes usually	See previous two columns	Yes this is important, but it is not supported in simulation builder.	Saved on the server
Costs	free	free	free	available upon request	available upon request
Contact	http://au.groups.yahoo.com/ or http://login.passport.net/ui/login.srf?id=2	Your central IT department	See last two columns	Michael Fardon Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences University of Western Australia michael.fardon@uwa.edu.au www.artsmmc.uwa.edu.au	Albert Ip Digital Learning Systems albert@DLS.au.com www.Fablusi.com

Acknowledgement:

This document benefited greatly from review by Shirley Agostinho, Mike Fardon and Maureen Bell of UoW and benefited in general from the numerous comments and examples provided by the members of our Online Role Play Expert Reference Group:

John Shepherd (UNSW); Andrew Vincent (Mq); Raphael Veit, (Mq); Gary Breirley (Mq); Mike Hillman (Mq); Roni Linser (UMelb); Manjula Waniganayake (UMelb); Mark Freeman (UTS); Michael Adams (UTS); Tanja Golja (UTS); Rob McLaughlan (UTS); Denise Kirkpatrick (UNE); Mike Fardon (UWA); Liz Devonshire (USyd); Simon O'Mallon (DMIT); Marie Jasinski (DMIT); Maureen Bell (UoW); Rohan Miller (UoW)