

Developing Management Simulation Software To Promote Learner Autonomy



What are the aims of this project?

The aim of this project is to enhance learner autonomy through the development of a computer simulation game for the management of a sports facility. The main objectives required to achieve this include:

- Update existing sports facility simulation software for undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching activity
- Develop learning, teaching and assessment materials to support the simulation package in such a way as to develop learner autonomy
- Engage and energise students in their learning through the use of a high quality, cutting edge learning environment provided by the simulation activity

The final outcome of this project will be the development of students as autonomous learners through engagement in metacognitive processes facilitated by the simulation activity. In addition to this professional skills (including decision-making, teamwork, communication and performance management) are developed while staff are able to develop their own skills as facilitators of learning using simulation activity.

What is the background / rationale?

One of the concepts we have had difficulty in conveying to students in both sport management and sport development courses has been the challenge of developing a performance management system that is based on sound objectives and appropriate performance indicators, and demonstrating the links between these and decision-making. One way of making this subject area come more to life for students is the development of a tool which engages them in a live project for which they are responsible, and for which they are able to receive immediate feedback on performance.

Often students experience the challenge of managing performance against objectives in the setting of managing an event. However, events are usually finite, one-off occasions in the student experience and this can curtail the student learning experience through a lack of opportunity for reflection on progress and performance across the module - i.e. evaluation often takes place post-event. This limits the opportunity to take that learning into the next event. Our proposal for a computer simulation engages students in an iterative process of setting objectives, performance indicators and targets; managing the simulated facility to these objectives (by inputting a range of management decisions into the simulation software); receiving immediate, software-generated feedback on performance; evaluating performance

and re-evaluating objectives, performance indicators and targets. As such it presents clear opportunities for fostering action-learning. Across a module there would be the opportunity for several iterations of the simulation and the associated benefits of students engaging in continuous evaluation and re-evaluation of individual and group performance and learning.

What are the benefits to student learning?

As part of the dissemination materials a 'Practical Guide to Developing and Using Computer Simulation Games to Promote Learner Autonomy' would be created which would deal with the following areas:

- Developing the right software
- Learning, teaching and assessment strategies using a computer simulation
- Data from the small student trial group on their perceptions of how they developed as learners as a result of taking part in simulation seminars
- Identification of the right context for promoting learner autonomy using computer-based simulation

How will this project be evaluated?

The project would be frequently evaluated by student volunteers, academic staff and industry groups through written feedback forms and debrief sessions following workshops.

Project Leader

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