Role Play on Interviewing leads to Teaching Social Skills

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1.   Introduction

The course that gives rise to this poster is a second year degree course (Project Planning and Control), in the Bachelor of Computing Systems at UNITEC. The classes are a mix of second and third year students along with a mix of age and ethnicity. This course is a prerequisite for the compulsory 36 credit paper, Project (final year three paper).

One of the main objectives of this course is to teach students the planning that must go on prior to the work on any project commencing. They are also taught not to assume anything and to ask relevant questions.

1.   What Happened

In order to reinforce the teaching, the assignment requires the students to take part in a role play scenario which involves:

1. students are given a reasonably detailed list of what the client requires.
2. students make an appointment with their client (aka their tutor) in order to clarify, or get more, information.
3. students send a list of questions to the client at least two working days prior to the interview.
4. students attend interview, (set in an office which is not the tutor's) ask questions, get answers, and establish some rapport with their client.
5. any follow up questions are to be sent by e-mail.

The interviews did not go very well. There were a number of problems associated with all the different areas the students were involved in. The posters show the different parts of the process and the main problems for each part.

The biggest problem area was the interview itself and it was interesting to note that the problems were not confined to any age, gender or ethnicity.

There were five students (out of forty-four) who turned in an excellent process.

2.   Feedback

It was important to show students the main problems in a way they could all understand and also to hopefully see themselves and be able to correct the problems.

A role play scenario was chosen with another tutor taking on the role of the client while the tutor taking the classes took the role of the student(s). The role play included dress, attitude, actions and questioning. The students had to critique each role play (eight).

3.   Results

As a group the students successfully pointed out the good and bad parts of each role play and each was then discussed in further detail. There was a lot of laughter at some of the role plays.

Students were then asked for feedback on the process. The student feedback was: "the process and the feedback session were very important to ensure they did not go into industry and make similar mistakes".

Some changes in teaching have been made to accommodate this and changes to the prescription may also be proposed.