

Balancing Life: An alternate reality gaming environment for undergraduate accounting education

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Undergraduate financial accounting education is often criticised for being too abstract and theory driven. In addition, undergraduate students often perceive financial accounting subjects as difficult, formalistic and unattractive. Whilst these concerns are not new, the development of successful solutions has been hampered by the limitations of the traditional classroom teaching approaches. This project aims to overcome these criticisms through the creation of an alternate reality gaming environment in which students interact with academic materials by working through a trimester long interactive story, set in a virtual business. The use of an alternate reality gaming environment for this project has resulted in a shift away from classroom based learning activities towards fully self paced online activities which are integrated into the underlying interactive story, and for which students receive individualised instant feedback. The interactive learning environment also enables the use of targeted early intervention strategies (both automated and manual) as the progress of individual students is monitored continuously. The success of this project will be evaluated through measures related to overall student success (retention and GPA) in this unit as well as in subsequent units in the degree programme, and a qualitative analysis of the extent to which the aims of the project have been achieved (based on formal and informal student feedback). This alternate reality gaming environment is being used for the first time this trimester. As a result, it is difficult to make definitive statements about the project's success. However, feedback from a focus-group of students who tested the functionalities and learning activities of the alternate reality gaming environment has indicated that the project is likely to achieve all intended outcomes.