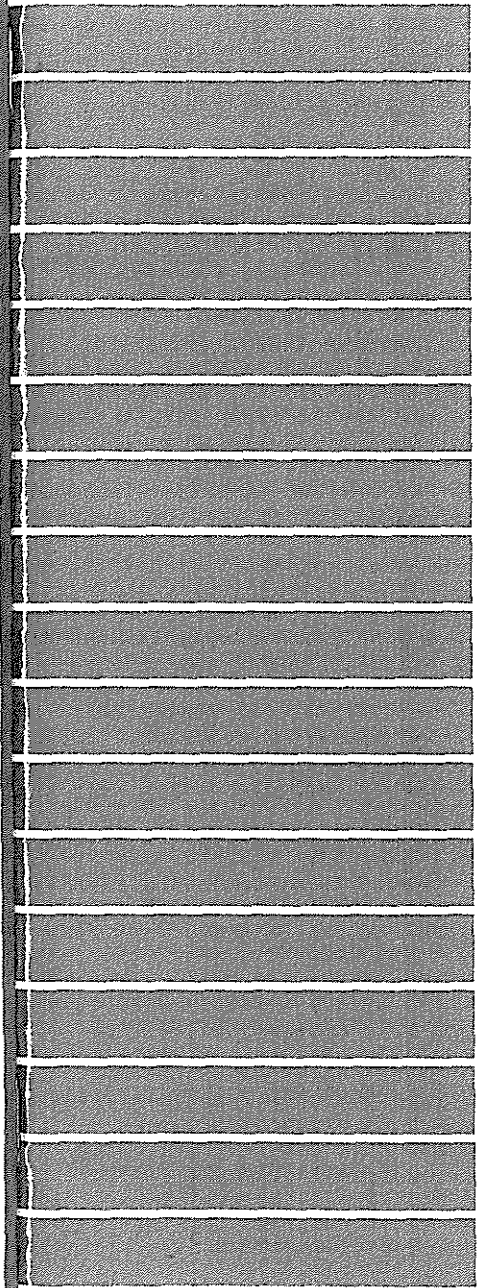


HERDSA



# ROLE-PLAY

Edward Errington

green guide

No 21

## HERDSA GREEN GUIDES

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## FOREWORD

Ingrid Moses posed the following question in her preface to *Higher Education in the Late Twentieth Century: Reflections on a Changing System: A Festschrift for Ernest Roe*:

"Will we be able to influence the higher education system institutions and their management, the curriculum and the teaching in such a way that students will be prepared as educated, cultured and socially aware people to lead the professions, and will be long learners...?" (p xv).

The Green and Gold Guides are intended as a resource that will assist to answer 'yes' to Moses' question. The Guides are relatively short, inexpensive, easy to read manuals which provide pragmatic ideas for immediate use. The Guides also provide brief guidance to further reading. Each Guide has been commissioned by the HERDSA Guides Editorial Committee and is refereed. The content is the responsibility of the particular author(s) and does not necessarily represent the view of the Committee or the Society.

We hope that staff in higher education will find the Guides useful and we welcome comments on individual Guides and on other areas that could be covered by future volumes.

*HERDSA Guides Editorial Committee*

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## INTRODUCTION

This Guide aims to explore current practices and some potential role-play in higher education, to explain how role plays are used, to describe the different approaches, and to offer some advice on how they may be used successfully. It is designed to provide both experienced and inexperienced role-play users with sufficient detail to enable them to plan, operate and evaluate their own individual programmes in higher education settings.

It is hoped that users will feel sufficiently motivated to explore in a practical way, the use of role-play in their teaching, thus promoting their own grounded understanding with this Guide as encouragement beyond the scope of this Guide to provide a fully detailed text. Users are urged to read further in areas where they have concerns. Relevant literature sources are cited within each section of the Guide. A list of references plus suggestions for further reading may be found at the end of the text.

The Guide targets two main audiences. These are academic staff and staff developers who are using role-play for the first time, and those who wish to extend their existing knowledge. For academic staff, the Guide provides an overall educational rationale and focuses on the organisation of role-play. For staff developers, the Guide provides specific models and examples of the use of role-play within academic development.

The structure of the Guide is based on responses to questions commonly asked by teachers about the efficacy of role-play. The questions are: What is role-play? Why is it used in higher education? How is role-play usually organised? How can role-play be used for educational purposes? How can we optimise success in role-play?

## ORGANISATION OF THE GUIDE

This Guide is organised into four main sections designed to address these fundamental questions:

### 1. Role-play in higher education

This first section provides a working definition of role-play, gives a brief overview of the steps involved in its creation, and the rationale for its use within higher education.

### 2. Role-play for specific purposes

This section focuses on four main approaches to role-play in higher education, these are, the skills-based, issues-based, problem-based, and speculative-based approaches respectively.

### 3. The organisation of role-play

This section examines the construction and organisation of role-play into the common stages of:

- Planning and Preparation
- Interaction
- Reflection and Evaluation

Each stage requires particular considerations and involves teachers using specific strategies.

### 4. Optimising role-play success

This section begins by outlining the kind of factors which can inhibit role-play success. It focuses on each of the main players (teacher and student), interpersonal relations between the two, and matters of organisation. This is followed by a brief checklist for using role-play successfully.

## ROLE-PLAY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### WHAT IS ROLE-PLAY?

Role-play is a planned learning activity designed to achieve educational purposes. It is based on three major aspects of experience in everyday life:

- Role-taking:** pressure of social expectations on role holders (eg. according to family relationships (how daughters should be doing), or occupational task (how police-officers should act), in specific circumstances (Goffman, 1976)
- Role-making:** ability of role holders to switch dynamically from one role to another, and to create or modify roles at will (Roberts, 1991)
- Role-negotiation:** the degree to which roles are negotiated between other role holders within the parameters of social constraints of social interactions (Hare,

In role-play, participants negotiate between social expectations of a given role, their dynamic interpretation of the role, and the degree to which others accept their view of the role. As such students with previous role experience in life can usually do role-play.

In the role-play process participants are required to:

- assume a specific role, either as themselves or as someone else;
- enter a simulated situation or scenario, which is chosen on the basis of relevance to the participant's own working knowledge and/or curriculum content;