

# Using simulations to foster activism and advocacy in healthcare education

## About

Phil Gurnett has worked with Dr Lydia Mainey from Central Queensland University as well as Dr Ryan Essex from the University of Greenwich to focus on empowering students to see themselves as active participants in political processes that shape healthcare systems. Through their research on advocacy and activism, they emphasise the role of simulations as a teaching tool to inspire professional political action.



Phil Gurnett

## Work

In these simulations, students take on the roles of healthcare advocates, policymakers and activists, navigating the complex dynamics of political action in real-world contexts. This hands-on approach not only helps students understand the intricacies of healthcare policy but also demonstrates the importance of professions taking political stances to achieve societal improvements.

What makes Lydia, Phil and Ryan's research particularly impactful is its longitudinal design. By following up with students three months after the simulation, he assesses the lasting effects of the experience on their understanding of political advocacy and activism. Preliminary findings suggest that many students develop a deeper sense of responsibility toward contributing to societal change, often identifying themselves as future advocates for healthcare reform.

This case study provides valuable insights into how education can prepare the next generation of professionals to engage in meaningful political action, contributing to healthcare improvements that align with the global agenda for sustainability and justice. The focus on long-term reflection also highlights how experiential learning can lead to sustained changes in professional attitudes toward activism.

This work has significant implications for healthcare education, encouraging students and future professionals to not only focus on clinical skills but also on their role as advocates for broader societal and healthcare improvements. It underscores the need for professions to engage politically and push for changes that enhance equity and access to healthcare, aligning with the climate and social justice challenges addressed in global forums like COP29.

## SDGs

