



Implementation of effective practices for the development of students' emotional intelligence with particular emphasis on anti-discrimination activities at European universities

IMPROVING
EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE



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EQUNI Game Moderation Guidelines

Introduction: Why the EQUNI Game Requires Facilitation

The EQUNI game addresses complex and sensitive topics such as discrimination, exclusion, and emotions through an experiential, game based learning approach. While the game format encourages active engagement and interaction, it can also evoke emotional reactions, ethical tensions, and moments of personal reflection. For this reason, **the EQUNI game is designed to be used with facilitation.**

Facilitation helps frame the purpose of the game and clarify its metaphorical nature. A moderator supports participants in understanding that discrimination within the game is symbolic and serves as a learning tool rather than a personal judgement. By setting clear intentions, explaining the cooperative and competitive elements of the game, and creating a safe and respectful environment, facilitation supports meaningful participation and shared understanding.

As the game unfolds, participants may experience emotions such as discomfort, frustration, or resistance. **Facilitation is essential to monitor emotional dynamics**, normalise emotional responses as part of learning, and respond appropriately when support is needed.

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Through validation, respect for personal boundaries, and guided reflection during and after gameplay, moderators help turn experience into learning and connect insights to broader academic, professional, or everyday contexts.

We encourage you to approach the game with openness, curiosity, and trust in both the participants and the learning journey. You do not need to have all the answers - your presence, attentiveness, and willingness to respond to the group as it unfolds are what matter most. By creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful space, you help turn the game into a meaningful opportunity for dialogue, connection, and shared reflection on discrimination and empathy.

Moderator Preparation

Whenever possible, moderators should experience the EQUNI game as players before facilitating it, in order to better anticipate emotional reactions, group dynamics, and learning opportunities. This experiential familiarity supports more confident facilitation, greater emotional awareness, and more appropriate responses to unexpected situations during gameplay.

In addition, moderators should familiarise themselves in advance with all game materials, including the **Game Introduction** and the **EQUNI First Aid Kit**, to ensure smooth facilitation and the ability to respond clearly to questions or unexpected situations.

Phase 0: Optional Pre-Game Engagement

If appropriate for your group, you may choose to engage participants before the game session. This phase is **optional** and should be adapted to the group's prior knowledge, experience, and context. It is particularly recommended for groups with limited prior exposure to topics such as discrimination, emotional intelligence, or empathy, and can help build foundational understanding and emotional readiness.

Share Educational Materials

Provide resources such as short articles, videos, or reflective exercises related to discrimination, emotional intelligence, or empathy. These materials can help participants begin thinking about the themes of the game in advance. Short reflection questions or prompts may also be shared before or after the game to encourage deeper learning beyond gameplay.

Invite Participants to Explore the EQUNI App

The EQUNI App is available on **Google Play** and **Apple Store**. It can be used before the game as preparation, during gameplay as a supportive resource, or after the session for reflection and continued learning.





Participants may be encouraged to explore selected features of the App, such as the singleplayer mode, to familiarise themselves with key concepts and the game's themes. During gameplay, the App may also be used to introduce additional sets of questions or tasks that complement the board game, depending on the group's needs.

To use the App effectively, moderators should familiarise themselves with its functions in advance and decide how and when it will be used. App use should always be adapted to the group's profile, learning objectives, and facilitation context.

Phase 1: Before the Game – Preparation & Framing

Set the Purpose

Explain the educational goals of the game: **raising awareness of discrimination, fostering empathy, and developing emotional intelligence.** Before starting, divide participants into two teams and assign pawns. Introduce the metaphor of the Monster of Discrimination as a symbolic challenge to be weakened together, while also explaining the game's friendly competitive element, based on the collection of tokens by each team.

Create a Safe Space

Clarify that **discrimination in the game is symbolic** and not personal. Encourage openness, while making it clear that no participant is ever required to share personal experiences. Be prepared to support participants who may experience discomfort.

To strengthen psychological safety, moderators are encouraged to:

- Co-create simple group agreements (e.g. respectful listening, confidentiality).
- Normalize emotions and mistakes by framing the game as a learning space, not a test.
- Use inclusive, gender-neutral, and culturally respectful language.
- Actively observe group dynamics and balance participation.
- Close the session with care, for example through a brief grounding or positive reflection activity, and share follow-up resources if appropriate.

Prepare the Materials

Ensure all game elements are ready: **board, pawns, avatars, dice, tokens, cards, and First Aid Kits.** Prepare the physical space in advance, including a table with movable chairs and, where possible, a breakout area for teams to discuss tasks before responding. Additional creative materials such as blank paper, pencils, or coloured markers may be required for some activities.





At the start of the game, consider asking teams to place 30 tokens inside the Monster and divide the remaining tokens equally between teams. This helps make the power of the Monster visible and tangible.

Set the Game Time

Agree on a timekeeper and overall timing. In practice, allow approximately **60 minutes for gameplay, plus an additional 20–30 minutes for introduction and final reflection.**

Card Selection Strategy

To foster psychological safety and group cohesion, pre-arrange each pile of cards (**Red: Victim, Pink: Rules, Yellow: Fight**) in a thoughtful progression.

Top of the pile: Easy, fun tasks that build trust and curiosity.

Middle: Moderately challenging tasks requiring teamwork and emotional engagement.

Bottom: More reflective or emotionally intense tasks that may touch on ethical or personal issues.

Always adapt card selection and order to your participants. This may include removing cards with references that are not relevant to the group (e.g. specific professions), or tasks that require more participants than are available. Moderators may also adapt card content or create new tasks using the EQUINI card template.

Adapting cards is part of facilitation and does not undermine the integrity of the game.

Phase 2: During the Game – Facilitation & Engagement

Foster Group Bonding

Begin with light interactions, such as avatar introductions. Celebrate small successes and encourage laughter and cooperation. Reinforce that both teams are ultimately working together to weaken the Monster.

Facilitate Gameplay & Emotional Safety

Monitor emotional dynamics throughout the game and intervene gently if needed. Emotional reactions such as discomfort, sadness, or frustration are a natural part of the learning process. Normalize these emotions, offer pauses or short breaks when necessary, and respect personal boundaries.

Encourage use of the EQUINI First Aid Kit to help identify emotions and needs, and avoid forcing personal disclosure.





Moments of reflection or voluntary sharing may also arise during gameplay. Gently acknowledge these when appropriate, while respecting participants' boundaries and keeping the game flow intact.

Throughout gameplay, validate all contributions, acknowledge different perspectives, and reinforce the importance of confidentiality within the group.

Ensure fair play, especially in relation to the discrimination dice rules, while remaining flexible. If players propose creative rule adaptations that support collaboration, emotional safety, or engagement, welcome these as part of co-creation rather than enforcing rigid rules.

For very small groups, or in situations where the outcome of the dice would exclude all or most players from an activity, the moderator may decide to invite all participants to take part in the task. This flexibility helps preserve collaboration and supports emotional intelligence development.

Support Learning

Help participants connect game tasks to real-life experiences.

Encourage empathy and perspective-taking, and use the EQUIN First Aid Kit to deepen understanding of emotions, needs, and discrimination-related concepts.

Manage Time and Flow

Keep the game moving while allowing space for meaningful discussion.

Be aware that the first part of the game may feel slower due to the novelty of the game and the time needed for participants to understand its rules, roles, and symbolic elements. Emotional engagement and participation often increase as the session progresses.

Phase 3: After the Game – Reflection & Integration

Facilitate Reflection

Guide a closing discussion using questions such as:

- What emotions did you experience?
- What did you learn about discrimination?
- What actions can you take to confront it?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Encourage Sharing Without Pressure

Allow participants to share personal experiences voluntarily. Validate all contributions and reinforce confidentiality.





Connect to Broader Learning

Link insights from the game to academic, professional, or everyday contexts (e.g. inclusive teaching, teamwork, student support). Suggest follow-up activities or discussions to continue the learning journey.

Reflect on Your Own Experience as a Moderator

After the session, reflect on your facilitation practice. Consider group dynamics, moments of emotional engagement or resistance, your responses to unexpected situations, and what you might adjust next time.





Printable Checklist for EQUNI Game Moderators

Before the Game

- ☐ Understand the game's purpose and metaphor.
- ☐ Create a safe and inclusive environment.
- ☐ Organise the physical space (**tables, chairs, breakout areas if possible**).
- ☐ Prepare all game materials (**board, pawns, avatars, dice, tokens, cards, First Aid Kits**).
- ☐ Prepare all creative supplies (**blank paper, pencils, or coloured markers**).
- ☐ Decide whether and how to use the **EQUNI App**.
- ☐ Tailor card selection and sequence to the group.
- ☐ Assign a timekeeper and agree on duration.

During the Game

- ☐ Facilitate group bonding and engagement.
- ☐ Monitor emotional dynamics and psychological safety.
- ☐ Ensure fair play while remaining flexible.
- ☐ Support learning and emotional reflection.
- ☐ Manage time and flow.

After the Game

- ☐ Guide reflective discussion.
- ☐ Encourage voluntary sharing.
- ☐ Connect insights to broader learning.
- ☐ Suggest follow-up activities.
- ☐ Reflect on your own experience as a moderator.

