

Drive against uni dis

BERNARD LANE

Universities are campaigning to cut back costly and time-consuming disciplinary committees seen as redundant in the new industrial order.

"In this day and age we've got the Fair Work Commission able to deal with such matters if they result in dismissal of the employee," said Stuart Andrews, executive director of the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association.

Curtailed of disciplinary committees has just been agreed at Central Queensland University and the University of Western Australia. It has been raised in talks by University of Melbourne managers, and is expected to feature as other institutions negotiate new enterprise agreements.

"It's true to say in this bargaining round there's been a push to get rid of (committees) based on the argument that there's recourse to unfair dismissal actions," said Sarah Roberts, national industrial

co-ordinator for the National Tertiary Education Union. "We don't view that as adequate because in 99 per cent of cases people don't get reinstated in that jurisdiction."

In many universities a committee makes findings of fact or reviews cases of misconduct, unsatisfactory performance and redundancy. Committee work may be duplicated in the FWC, which has to satisfy itself of the reasons for a dismissal. Committee arrangements often go back more than 20 years.

Mr Andrews said the shift from traditional internal committees did not affect the rights of university staff. "The staff has a right of external review as opposed to internal review previously," he said.

Inquiry by committee by an FWC process prologue for those involved especially for the complainant misconduct case, he said.

Last month at Deakin University a new agreement to removing disciplinary com

Science policy caught out by fishy research

A retracted research paper about microplastics and fish has highlighted shortcomings in *Science* journal's open data policy after the authors explained missing facts and figures with a dog-ate-my-homework excuse.

The paper, published by the journal in June last year, claimed that European perch larvae's taste for tiny polystyrene beads — in preference to natural food — was leaving them stunted and ripe to be eaten themselves. Questions soon arose over the study and its conclusions.

The authors, Oona Lönnstedt and Peter Eklov of Uppsala University, suggested the accusations were driven by professional jealousy. But the paper was retracted in May after a probe by Sweden's Central Ethical Review Board concluded that the authors had committed "scientific dishonesty". The report said it was "remarkable" *Science* had published the paper in the first place.

Much criticism has focused on the lack of original data, in

contravention of *Science's* requirements for authors to include it in published papers or archive it in public repositories. Lönnstedt and Eklov claimed to have lost their only copy of the data after a laptop was stolen from a car.

That excuse beggared belief, according to a letter published this month in *Science*. The author, Swiss marine biologist Dominique Roche, said *Science's* open data policy was riddled with loopholes such as an exemption on archiving "small data sets" before publication.

"Research shows that individual scientists cannot be trusted to reliably preserve their data and share them upon request," the letter says. "Compounding this problem, publishers seldom state the consequences of breaching their policies."

Science editor-in-chief Jeremy Berg told the HES his journal should have retracted the report as soon as the authors failed to provide the raw data.

JOHN ROSS

Gaming injected

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It's a moment of truth for medical graduates. Armed with years of theory but limited experience, they're thrust into the frontline as emergency department interns, forced to make life-and-death decisions with no time to reflect.

Medical schools prepare them as much as possible, arranging practicums and simulated training. But simulation is resource-intensive and practicums can be hard to come by, particularly in pediatric wards where sick kids are easily spooked by lines of white-coated trainees.

Now two Sydney clinician-researchers have entered the breach with that most 21st century of educational tools: gaming. They have created a virtual hospital where doctors respond to emergencies, such as asthma attacks, and see the consequences of their decisions.

Players can administer oxygen or order imaging or blood tests, for example. Each move affects patient vital signs such as heart rate or temperature — helpfully displayed on an animated monitor — and defines the steps to be taken next. Immediate feedback is provided by a virtual professor, whose avatar looks uncannily like Adam Jaffe, head of the University of NSW's school of women's and children's health.

"We've given him a bit more hair," says PlayMed co-developer Keith Ooi, a medicine professor



Co-creator Keith Ooi

staring at their phones. "It

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