

Donna at University

Donna is a first year student doing a three-year Bachelor of Information Technology (IT) degree at a large New Zealand University. The program is a professional IT degree course providing technical education in four specialty areas: artificial intelligence, computer science, information systems and software engineering. Donna is popular amongst her peers and is one of only ten female students in a class of 250. She doesn't feel that she is the smartest person in her class, but she is very social and works very hard in all of her courses.

Donna finds university very exciting. She has a mixture of courses; some are fairly easily for her, such as the communications courses. She is also studying two Java programming courses, which she doesn't enjoy as much, but she enjoys the challenge of getting her program to work. She feels excitement and a sense of achievement each time she hands in a completed assignment. For programming, they have weekly tasks and the lecturer shows practical examples in the lectures; the tutorial classes are for students to discuss their individual difficulties.

Donna is good friends with Alistair and Brad. They do everything at uni together. Together, they plan their classes, complete their group work and study for exams. They also socialise outside of the university, discussing anything and everything; their social lives, their assignments and their dreams. Donna often gives them advice about girls. All three are very close yet they also strive to beat each other in their courses.

Donna's Daily Log

8.00 am	The alarm goes off. Hit snooze.
8.10 am	The alarm goes off again. Realises she is now late. Gets up.
8.25 am – 8.35 am	Shower
8.35 am - 8.45 am	Chooses what to wear to uni. Now realises she is now very late.
8.45 am – 8.55 am	Drive to university. Pick up breakfast at Macca's drive-thru.
8.55 am – 8.58 am	Find a car park.
9.01 am	Run into Brad and Alistair waiting outside the programming lecture theatre. Sit at the back of the lecture theatre with Brad and Alistair
9.02 am – 11.05 am	Programming lecture with Dr Nikki Schwandt
11.05 am	Donna goes with Brad and Alistair to the uni pub to discuss the programming lecture and their new assignment
12.00 pm – 1.00 pm	Go with Brad and Alistair to the weekly programming tutorial class (their 2 nd (new) programming assignment is due on Friday). Dr Schwandt checks the progress of her Java program. Donna asks a question about her program and Dr Schwandt changes the code herself; Donna's program is now fully functional.
1.00 pm	Brad and Alistair invite her to the pub to play pool. She decides to stay back in the computer lab to do some touch up work for her programming assignment. Eat sandwich lunch in lab.
2.58 pm	Donna arrives early at the room for her communication lecture to get the best seat up the front.
3.01 pm – 5.00 pm	Communication lecture with Dr Rod Belise.
5.00 pm – 5.10 pm	Speak to Dr Belise after the lecture about the next assignment
5.10 pm	Buy red frog sweets from the campus shop before it closes, to eat during the group meeting

5.15 pm – 6.30 pm	Group meeting for communication assignment. Brad and Alistair arrived on time, however Toby and Samuel are late. Brad asks for a look at her programming assignment, in order to help him with the line of code he is stuck on. Donna says no
6.35 pm	Find where car is parked. Drive home
6.45 pm	Arrive home and help mum prepare dinner
7.00 pm	Sit down for dinner with family
7.30 pm	Clean up after dinner. Do the dishes
7.30 pm – 9.30 pm	Watch T.V. on the couch with her Mum
9.30 pm	Shower and get ready for bed
10.00 pm	Sign on to MSN and chat to various people from uni
10.02 pm – 12.36 am	Brad asks about her programming assignment and how she did complete various parts.
12.40 am	Sign off MSN and go to sleep

On Monday morning, Donna gets an email from Dr Schwandt with the subject line: “Meeting about Cheating”. Donna is shocked and confused and knows she hasn’t cheated on anything. Programming isn’t her best course and she had spent more hours on the last assignment than Brad and Alistair. She also attended all extra tutorials to get help with her programs.

Donna rang Brad and Alistair straight away to see if they got an email from Dr Schwandt. They did and it said that they had done very well in their assignment, and now they have enough marks to pass the course. They now only need to sit the final exam as a formality. That was very different to Donna’s email. She didn’t understand and worried all afternoon till her meeting. She didn’t get any of the work done that she planned to do that day.

At 3 pm, Donna knocks on Dr Schwandt’s office door but there is no answer. The email said to meet her at her office at 3 pm Donna sits in the corridor outside Dr Schwandt’s office waiting for her. After waiting for 5 minutes, one of the girls in her class, Jasmine, walks by Donna and knocks on Dr Schwandt’s door. Donna tells Jasmine that Dr Schwandt isn’t there and she is waiting for her too. Jasmine tells Donna that she got an email about cheating and that she is to meet with her at 3.10 pm Donna said she was there for the same reason. The girls wait outside Dr Schwandt’s office until 3.25 pm when Dr Schwandt arrives; she calls Donna in first.

Dr Schwandt flatly tells Donna she knows that she cheated on the last assignment. She could tell because her assignment had the same variable names, structure and syntax as other people in her class, particularly Brad and Alistair. Donna told Dr Schwandt that Brad and Alistair were her friends, and they did discuss ways of doing their assignment, but they would never share code. Dr Schwandt replies “c’mon girl, tell the truth, girls can’t program so you have been getting the boys to do it for you”. Donna is horrified that Dr Schwandt would say such as thing; she thought that because her lecturer was female, she would be more understanding.

Donna tries to explain to Dr Schwandt that she has attended all lectures, all tutorials and even some extra help tutorials. She also explains that she got 18/20 for her programming exam; 2 marks better than Brad and 6 marks better than Alistair. Dr Schwandt says she needs a stronger argument to convince her and if none was forthcoming, she might have to repeat the course as there is a good possibility that she would fail. To avoid this, Donna would have to work very hard to pass this course, doing even more work. Donna feels she is bombing out of the course even though she has tried so hard. She is so confused, worried and disappointed.

Before she leaves uni for the day, Donna checks her email in the lab. She walks past the common room (where lecturers and students eat, drink and socialise) and finds herself in earshot of Dr Schwandt talking to Professor David Jackson, and hears her name. Donna doesn't listen long but hears Dr Schwandt telling her male colleague how disappointed she is in Donna's cheating behaviour but she isn't surprised as "most girls can't program anyway". Donna is very upset and thinks is very unprofessional of her lecturer to be discussing her in public.

Walking to her car, many questions filled Donna's head. She doesn't understand why Brad and Alistair were not asked to explain their assignment; she received better marks than both of them in her assessments so far; why weren't they being punished? Was it because she was a girl? What would she do now? How could she do even more work than she was already doing? How could she get Dr Schwandt to understand her point of view?

But most of all, what will she do next? Should she confront Dr Schwandt again? Or should she seek advice from other people in the university?

Check the assignment guidelines to guide your discussion and analysis.

The roles (adopt in order):

1. Donna
2. Dr Schwandt
3. Brad
4. Professor Jackson
5. Alistair