

A web-based program to target novice driver traffic offenders under the Traffic Offender Intervention Program in New South Wales, Australia

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Abstract

TOP ONLINE is a web-based traffic offender intervention developed for desktop, tablet and smartphone applications. Here, it is shown that online learning can be used to deliver specific messaging for a common category of offenders – novice drivers. The TOP ONLINE: Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit provides a targeted, high fidelity program allowing revision of graduated driver licensing concepts and specific restrictions applicable in NSW as well as more general road safety messaging. Offenders enjoy the online content and the flexibility of self-paced learning. However, only half of novice driver traffic offenders are willing to undertake a web-based learning unit.

Background

The NSW Traffic Offender Intervention Program is a major intervention for drivers (Faulks, Siskind & Sheehan, 2018), offered in face-to-face classes only. TOP ONLINE has been developed to augment and extend the Program, in desktop, tablet and smartphone applications (Faulks, 2018). This paper details the development and pilot testing of the TOP ONLINE: Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit to demonstrate that targeted online messaging is possible to a specific category of offenders.

Description

The unit has three broad components. First, traffic offenders view an introductory video lecture that describes the learning platform and key features. They then view a series of short video lectures on the NSW graduated driver licensing and on general road safety issues, with an emphasis on speeding. A series of assessment questions must be completed during these video lectures. The final component is an optional home study extension to the unit, linking to the Western Australian Office of Road Safety public education resource 'Time With Mum', which portrays the experiences of a young male novice driver as he goes through a three-month period of driver licence suspension (<https://www.rsc.wa.gov.au/Campaigns/Time-with-Mum>, see Kantar Public, 2017).

Pilot testing of the TOP ONLINE: Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit was conducted over June 2017-June 2018. Offenders registered in-class in the week preceding the scheduled road safety presentation, and were asked to complete the online unit prior to the face-to-face class. Otherwise, they had to attend that class as scheduled.

A total pool of 232 novice driver traffic offenders were offered the online program, 132 (57%) registered to participate, and 93 (40%) actually commenced the program (see Figure 1). For those offenders who logged in and started, the trial was highly successful: most (95%) completed (and those who did not complete attended a face-to-face session subsequently).



**TOP ONLINE: Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit
Field trials June 2017 – June 2018**

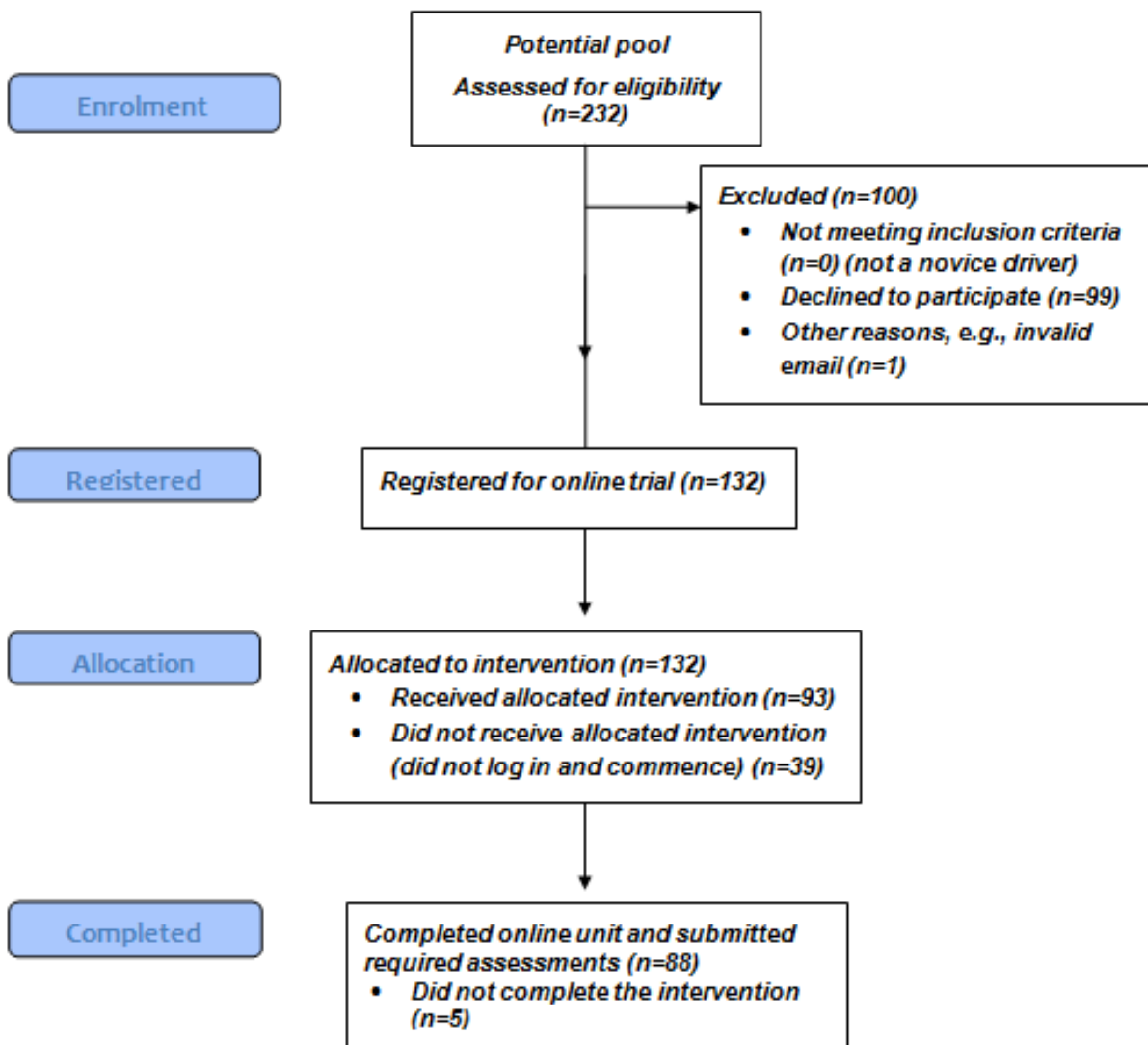


Figure 1. Flow chart for proof-of-concept field testing of the TOP ONLINE Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit, June 2017 to June 2018

As with an earlier study (Faulks, 2018), the reasons for not accessing the online unit were practical: work, family or social activities intervened, or there were problems with accessing the internet. Again, the availability of the face-to-face class as scheduled also influenced the offenders’ decision to access the online unit.

Discussion and Conclusions

An earlier study demonstrated that web-based learning can be integrated into a broader traffic offender intervention program successfully (Faulks, 2018). The development and implementation of the TOP ONLINE: Novice Driver Traffic Offender Unit has shown that providing blended learning opportunities integrating face-to-face, group discussion, home study and online learning can target a specific category of offender (novice drivers); it is anticipated that further types of offences (e.g., driving disqualified or suspended) could also be addressed successfully. But, as the earlier work showed, and this study corroborates, online learning does not suit all offenders.

References

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