

SPIDER

spider.science.strath.ac.uk

SPIDER is a bespoke VLE delivering learning material, providing online support and departmental management tools to a wide sector of the university community.

This newsletter outlines recent innovations, updates and changes made to the system

More information on current SPIDER development is available via the "development diary" link on SPIDER-DEV at spider-dev.pharmacy.strath.ac.uk/

Feel free to email comments or suggestions about SPIDER or this newsletter.

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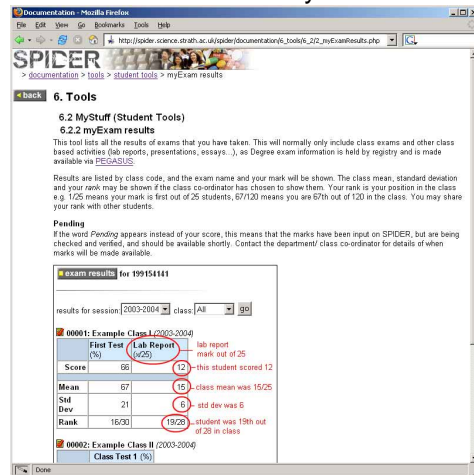
SPIDER in Prism

The "SPIDER millions" story from the November SPIDER newsletter has been printed in the Jan/ Feb edition of Prism. Although the figures are already out of date, this should provide some good publicity for the system, highlighting SPIDER's essential role in a significant proportion of teaching at the University.

General Updates

Documentation

The SPIDER documentation is currently undergoing an update to include all the new features and changes that have been made over the last year or so.



The documentation is available from links on the login page or via SPIDER's help pages

File storage

In response to user requests, the space available in the myAssignments and myFiles tools has been increased. Storage is now 10Mb (was 5Mb) allowing student users to upload and store a larger number of files.

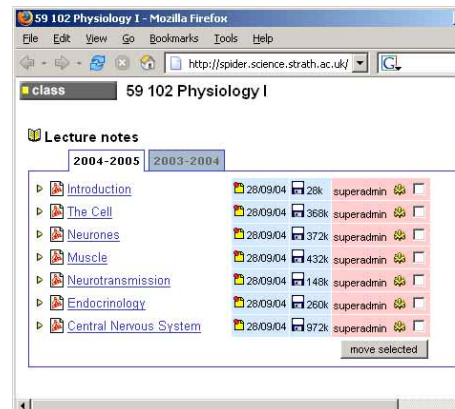
Groups

The groups tool allows staff (and student) users to create groups that have their own private discussion, chat room and "info" page. The layout of the tool has been improved and the listing of "myGroups" now indicates the type of group (class, department or personal) and whether the individual is the owner or just a member of the group.

Staff tools

Class content

Class content is displayed under "session" tabs indicating which academic session the material belongs to. When editors view content, they can now see an option to enable them to quickly move any number of uploaded files between session tabs, or assign it to all tabs.

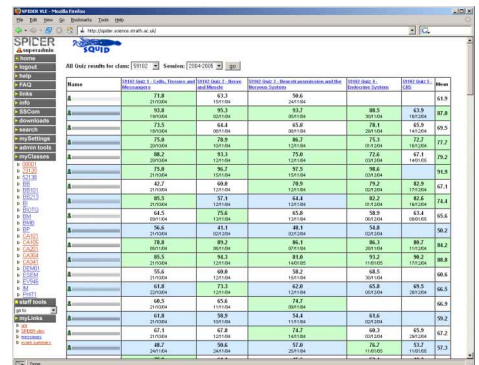


Class lists

SPIDER allows class editors and admins to get class list information directly from the Oracle database used by PEGASUS. A new feature has been added to allow the option of merging the Oracle list with the current SPIDER list or to simply replace it.

Squid

The Student Quiz Information Database is the SPIDER tool that allows staff to view student progress and achievement in SPIDER's online quizzes and assessments.



The tool now gives the option of viewing all results for all quizzes assigned to one

SPIDER Status

Page visits

January 2005: 1,109,057

Monthly 2004

January	670,745
February	700,745
March	921,142
April	702,324
May	638,881
June	167,310
July	124,638
August	167,754
September	285,340
October	1,325,512
November	1,701,827
December	1,194,879

Monthly 2003

July*	25,593
August	111,082
September	147,304
October	822,565
November	910,088
December	897,199

Busiest day

Dec 13th 2004: 95,221 visits

*SPIDER faculty went live mid-July 2003

Users

Total registered	8142
Staff	602
Students	7126
Alumni	414

Classes

Total: 474

per cluster

applied-phys	36
bioscience	143
business	21
CAS	5
chemeng	1
chemistry	47
computing	13
economics	28
maths-stams	55
pharmacy	49
physics	76

SPIDER uses Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP aka "LAMP"

all code developed in house by Ian Thompson, Tim Plumridge, Ian Thurlbeck and Fraser Murray

class, allowing staff to quickly assess student performance for all the quizzes. "Distinction" and "fail" marks are highlighted, and the limits for these can be specified by the user. As with all the SQuID tools, the results can be downloaded in a csv (comma delimited text) format file for viewing off line, e.g. in a spreadsheet such as MS Excel.

Databases

SPIDER provides a number of databases ranging from safety and radiation through to an asset register and an online image repository. The radiation database in use by the Dept. Physiology and Pharmacology has had numerous alterations made in response to user feedback, improving its features and usability. The image database now supports the upload and viewing of Macromedia Flash and Director shockwave movies as well as an improved search facility.

EEL

The EEL is the electronic examination listings, a tool that allows staff to view and manage examination marks on SPIDER.

#	Registration	Surname	Name	Registered	Essay (%)	Action
1	A			✓	53	edit
2	A			✓	54	edit
3	A			✓	58	edit
4	A			✓	53	edit
5	A			✓	55	edit
6	A			✓	25	edit
7	A			✓	40	edit

The tool has been modified to give the option of a manual input of marks as well as the current cut/paste method.

Results can now be locked by admins and class editors which prevents non-admins from making any further edits.

The results view page now indicates to non-editor/ admins the status of the results (live/ pending), whether a student is registered on SPIDER, and the names of non-registered users are now pulled from the class list (if available).

A summary status of all exams for the classes on the cluster (live, locked, stats

etc) is available via admin tools to sub admin and admin users.

Web Manager

SPIDER provides a basic Content Management System (CMS) that allows staff to manage their departmental website. The Immunology Department website joins Physiology and Pharmacology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and the Centre for Biophotonics in using SPIDER's web manager to maintain their departmental web site.

In development

The next month will see various minor changes to the SPIDER system. I've yet to complete the changes to allow the upload of zip archives to allow multiple files to be uploaded at once, and several other feature requests are awaiting the attention of myself, Tim and anyone else willing to put in some coding time.