

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 newsletter May 2005

PDP Solutions

SPIDER is increasingly expanding its remit beyond the Faculty of Science. This is particularly the case with respect to faculties and departments wishing to provide an online solution in order to meet the requirement of PDP, to which all undergraduate students will have an entitlement from 2005-06. SPIDER provides an ideal platform for electronic PDP due to its flexible and customisable nature, allowing different subject disciplines to tailor the ePDP to their own needs, within their own cluster. This is encouraging numerous departments to investigate SPIDER as their ePDP solution. As SPIDER has been developed entirely in-house, it has been possible to maintain a rapid development cycle, enabling development, implementation and testing to take place in a matter of days for smaller projects. This allows new innovations, such as modified ePDPs, to be incorporated into the live system on a relatively short time scale. A postgraduate ePDP tool is also being developed based on the undergraduate tools.

Mathematics

The Maths-STAMS cluster are investigating alternative assessment tools that are better able to handle mathematical display and user input than the default SPIDER assessment system.

Earlier this year, a trial version of Maple TA was installed on the SPIDER server. The package offered excellent support for mathematics, but no "API" (Application Program Interface), so linking the tool into SPIDER to share data and authentication wasn't possible. This may be addressed in a future release of Maple TA, but alternative solutions are being looked into.

MyMathLab and the open source AIM project are two possible systems that may provide a suitable means of integrating high quality mathematical assessments into SPIDER, and there is always the possibility of creating a home-grown solution.



The SPIDER Awards

The first annual SPIDER Awards (the "SPIDEEs") are now at the voting stage. These "virtual" awards will be given to users who have made significant contributions to the SPIDER environment and/ or community in categories ranging from "Best Class" and "Best Staff User" to the coveted "Jester Award" and "Golden SPIDEE". Any user on

SPIDER can vote - just click the link on the home page under "Questionnaires and Feedback" to have your say.

Focus on...

The *Focus on...* section will now be a regular monthly feature used to highlight some of SPIDER's many tools.

Groups

The SPIDER groups tools allows staff and student users to create & manage "groups" that have their own private discussion, chat room and "info" page for sharing files. SPIDER has 3 different types of group:

Class groups: are assigned to a class and used to create sub-groupings of students within a class, for example laboratory or tutorial groups. Any number of groups can be automatically generated from the class list.

Department groups: are linked to a department and can be used to create representations of department groupings such as committees and teams on SPIDER.

Personal groups can be created by anyone, and can be used for any purpose (friends, teams, shared project work etc.).

groups help back

admin training

discussion 0 new (10 post(s))

chat [0]

info

| Group Members | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------|
| Carol | Carol Barnett | [icon] |
| jbrittin | Jane Brittin | [icon] |
| tom.han | Tom Han | [icon] |
| smackay | Simon Mackay | [icon] |
| cprior | Chris Prior | [icon] |
| marc | Marc Roper | [icon] |
| CMSpickett | Corinne Spickett | [icon] |
| nwatson | Nigel Watson | [icon] |
| willison | Debbie Willison | [icon] |
| murray | Murray Wood | [icon] |

edit group

Student users can be members of any of these groups, but are only able to create and manage personal groups. Staff users can create and manage any group type.

SPIDER groups are currently being used for a variety of purposes, ranging from automating the creation of class sub-groups for labs and projects, for research groups sharing their data, through to exercises involving "closed" discussions and team project work.

A SPIDER group can be thought of as a "mini-class" and used for a variety of academic and administrative purposes where small or large groups of users wish to share online information and files outwith the normal cluster and class boundaries.

SPIDER Status

Page visits

May 2005: 1,028,573

Monthly 2005

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| January | 1,109,057 |
| February | 1,012,323 |
| March | 1,110,545 |
| April | 1,026,083 |

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 went live mid-July 2003

Users

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Total registered | 8407 |
| Staff | 632 |
| Students | 7345 |
| Alumni | 430 |

Classes

Total: 523

per cluster

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| applied-phys | 38 |
| bioscience | 144 |
| business | 21 |
| CAS | 10 |
| chemeng | 1 |
| chemistry | 49 |
| computing | 15 |
| economics | 28 |
| education | 25 |
| maths-stams | 56 |
| pharmacy | 49 |
| physics | 87 |

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 stats

Ever wondered what materials in your class were the most popular? SPIDER records every user action on the system in its logs, but generally makes this information only available to admin level users.

However, class editor users are able to view a series of stats relating to the monthly usage of their class. This gives information on which files have been downloaded and how often, how busy the class discussion board has been, quiz usage and overall class "page visits". To access this information, just click the "stats" link on the class home page.

Class Page Visit Report

| Class usage for 57305(April 2005) | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Home page | 1087 |
| Total Category views | 1649 |
| File Downloads | |
| 57305_class_test_3_04.pdf | 218 |
| sprm.shtml | 167 |
| nspmn.shtml | 165 |
| 57305_class_test_3_2001.pdf | 130 |
| 57305_mrcq_2000_model_answers.pdf | 45 |
| UVEX02.pdf | 2 |
| AEAnswers2.pdf | 2 |
| 57305_tut_S03.pps | 1 |
| Total | 1248 |
| Quizzes | |
| Q_ID:151 | 15 |
| Q_ID:152 | 13 |
| Discussion views | |
| Total Page Visits for 57305 | 4331 |
| Total Page Visits for SPIDER | 1026083 |

General Updates

myExam Results

The student view of exam marks has been updated to use the same colour scheme as the staff view – red for poor marks, green for high marks and yellow for absences and medical certificates. Students will also be able to see a new "notes" box next to marks, which staff can optionally use to include short comments.

Staff Tools

myCounselees/ PDP progress

The PDP progress tool in myCounselees allowed staff to view a quick summary of student completion of the ePDP. This has been modified to allow staff to simply view their own counselees rather than the entire class' progress. The tool also now indicates whether files are in the coursework area and if they are visible to the counsellor ("public") or not ("private").

| User | Name | Diary | Skills | Files | Credit gained |
|---------|-----------|---|--|--|-----------------------|
| Demo | | | | | |
| 2 | 199154141 | Ian Thompson | Entry ✓ of Creativity & Innovation ✓ of skills | Review ✓ of 01/02/2005 ✓ of 24/05/2005 | ✓ (4) Year 1 ✓ (3) |
| General | | | | | |
| 3 | | No entries | | | ✓ (0) ✓ (0) |
| 4 | | Entry ✓ of Analytical and Numerical skills ✓ of Communication & Presentation skills | Review ✓ of 25/02/2005 ✓ of 25/02/2005 | ✓ (4) Year 1 ✓ (4) Year 2 | |
| 5 | | No entries | | | ✓ (0) ✓ (0) |

EEL

The Electronic Examination Listings (EEL) is the tool used to upload exam and test marks onto SPIDER. The tool now allows class editor users to add a comment or note to each students mark set for a particular class.

A bug in the marking colour scheme has also been fixed.

Questionnaires

This tool allows staff to generate questionnaires using a range of question types, that can be targeted at various user groups. The tool allows the author to determine who can see the results of any questionnaire, which can be presented either online or exported for further analysis. At the request of users, the online view now includes % values for responses in addition to the existing absolute values.

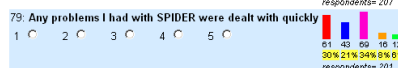
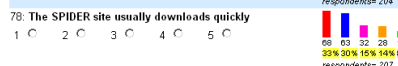
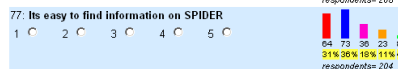
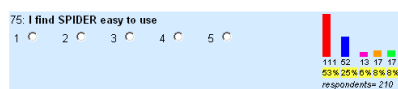
Questionnaire/ feedback

SPIDER feedback

Please answer the following questions. Where a range is given, 1=strongly agree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly disagree.

Go to section: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)

56: General questions about SPIDER



[next](#)

New Clusters

The Faculty of Education are already piloting online questionnaires using SPIDER. Further interest has been shown by the departments of Sports, Culture and the Arts and Childhood & Primary Studies, who are keen to implement PDP using SPIDER.

In development

Plans are afoot to redevelop the SPIDER interface. The main interface on SPIDER hasn't changed much since v2, which was released back in 2001, and has been need of an update for a long time. We intend to create a system that allows users to select different interfaces or "skins", while retaining the option to customise the look and feel via the mySettings "screen Prefs" tool.

Other developments include a redevelopment of the "Blog" tool (which was available on SPIDER-Dev in the past, but never made it to the "live" system), a glossary tool and updates to the questionnaire system.

As always, anyone wishing to suggest new features or any other improvements to SPIDER, or to submit anything for the newsletter, just contact us at spider-vie@strath.ac.uk