Languages and Statistics: Solutions for the support of online learning.

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The University Online Teaching Facility is used across all disciplines to support both on- and off-campus students. The facility incorporates both WebCT and locally written software including an online evaluation service. This poster/demonstration will outline how the University has used the facility to provide solutions for three educational problems: the support of foreign language teaching in distance mode; using the quiz module to provide an accessible assessment facility for Introductory Statistics; and collecting and evaluating survey data.

WebCT allows the foreign language instructor to use diacritic characters (French and German), 2-byte characters (Japanese) and audio in most tools using the target language. Problems with using Internet-based communication that does not preserve diacritics are overcome by using WebCT. Japanese 2-byte characters are handled by software that works in conjunction with WebCT and audio can be embedded in the quizzes to allow automatic correction of listening exercises.

A network-based statistics quiz assessment package used weekly by some 2000 students could only be accessed in two laboratories. Access in both terms of location and time has been expanded by using WebCT. Solutions were also developed to cope with handling the large numbers of students in the WebCT student management database.

Online evaluation tools are used to survey students as part of the formative and summative evaluation process incorporated into many of the online courses. Unit convenors can select from banks of questions covering areas such as access, assessment and feedback, communication, flexibility, resources, learning and understanding, usability, guidance and training, and also add their own questions to the survey module. The results are presented in three different ways: by individual question, by respondent and by question type. A special feature is hyperlinking between the different formats which allows for easy cross-matching of information.

Units in other disciplines and programs such as Geography, Creative Arts, and Early Childhood will also be available for demonstration.