Request For Proposals

Project Title: *Development of Online Infrastructure for CSCI 1206*

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Completion Date: Before 1 September 2007

Overview

CSCI 1206 (Introduction to Website Creation) is a Faculty of Computer Science (FCS) service course offered to students in other faculties in order to provide them with the opportunity to develop technical skills needed in today's workplaces. The course is highly popular and has a waiting list each term. While it would be desirable to increase the enrollment levels, it is not possible at this time due to the fact that the course has a laboratory component and we are restricted by the size of our largest computer laboratory. Consequently, as a solution to this problem, FCS wishes to develop an online environment so that students can complete the laboratory exercises from home, the Dalhousie library, or any other location with Internet access.

Available Resources

The contact person for this project has taught the course for 3 consecutive years and is highly aware of the course content, the capabilities of its students, and the unique challenges that are an element of a service course. The laboratory exercises, although they change slightly each term to prevent plagiarism, are well developed and do not need significant modification. The Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) has assisted other faculties/departments with the development of online courses and has agreed to provide guidance and support, as requested, for the development of an online environment for CSCI 1206. Senior administrators in FCS have already given their support for this project, thus indicating that FCS technical resources will be made available as needed.

Requirements

It should be noted that these are preliminary requirements and are subject to change as the project matures and becomes more concretely defined.

1. Laboratory exercises must be made available to students on a scheduled basis. There are 7 exercises and 3 assignments that the students must complete each term. Assignments may be simply considered as longer, more difficult, laboratory exercises.
2. Mechanisms must be provided to permit students to obtain help from course staff (i.e., T.A.s, Instructors). An online chat room, manned by course staff for advertised hours is an example of one possible mechanism. The use of MSN messenger is another alternative.

3. Mechanisms must be provided to permit course staff to distribute information to the students. A course bulletin board is one such mechanism. A bulletin board has the advantage that it also permits students to communicate with each other, in a manner that can be observed by course staff.
4. A mechanism must be provided by which course staff can record student marks, with some comments. In conjunction, a mechanism must be provided that permits a student to access their own marks, and only their own marks.
5. The environment must be easily maintainable. The course staff does not have the time to perform complex and time intensive maintenance each term.
6. To facilitate scheduling, the environment should be completed, and ready for trial use, no later than 1 September 2007.

No mechanism is needed for the submission of student work. As this is a course on web design, all student solutions will be posted to their personal website, provided for the course, where it is easily accessed for marking. It would be desirable to use the web for much of this infrastructure in order to provide examples of possible activities that can be performed on the web. While a few technologies were suggested, Wikis, WebCT, as well as other technologies, should be explored.

Possible Future Work

Should the development of an online laboratory section be well received and effective, it is contemplated that the entire course may be turned into a fully online offering of FCS. Thus, developers should consider this fact and be aware that extensions and additions may be planned and implemented in the future.