E-Learning platform
01 Presentation

01.01 Development

Land of learning is the e-learning platform used to deliver the distance-learning degree program in Applied Computer Science. It has been developed in 2004 by *MEC Informatica srl* (www.mecinformatica.it) in cooperation with the University of Urbino (www.uniurb.it) under the friendly supervision of Massimo Messina.

Land of learning has been designed to provide the best answers to the needs of online academic degree programs. The degree programs of Applied Computer Science and Sociology of the University of Urbino have been used as test cases to provide specifications, debug the platform and test its usability. The design team of MEC Informatica has worked in tight cooperation with the staff of the two pilot degree programs to tailor the e-learning platform on their specific needs.

01.02 Features

Communities

Land of learning provides a customizable hierarchy of *communities*. Each community has a *Mayor* (who owns administrator privileges on the community) and many members. Registered users may be members of more than one communities and play different roles (e.g., *student, instructor, guest, tutor, administrator*) on different communities. Users can only access the communities they belong to.

The top-level community is the *University of Urbino*. Level-2 communities are Faculties, such as the *Faculty of Maths, Physics and Natural Sciences*. Degree programs, such as *Applied Computer Science*, are level-3 communities. All courses belonging to a given degree program are level-4 communities. The membership of a community implies the membership of all parent communities.

Lessons

Courses are organized in *Lessons,* which are the leaves of the hierarchy. Each lesson is used by the instructor to deliver specific contents by publishing lecture notes and handouts, by providing synchronous and asynchronous answers to students' questions, by assigning homework, …

Resources

Each entity (community or lesson) has its own resources. There are three main types of resources that may be associated with a community:
- *Library*, contains downloadable files of any format
- *Forum*, provides a discussion forum
- *Classroom*, provides a virtual classroom based on a textual chat

For the degree program of Applied Computer Science, each course has a Forum and a Library containing the detailed program of the course. Each Lesson has a Calssroom and a Library containing specific learning material. The learning material includes:
- Slides
- Lecture notes (self-contained notes or comments to the slides)
- Assignments
- Self-evaluation test

Slides and Lecture notes guarantee complete coverage of the course topics and are prepared by the instructors according to a common template. The learning material for each lesson will be made available online a week before the date scheduled for the corresponding interactive classroom.

Validity

Entities and resources have a *Validity*, expressed in terms of starting date and ending date. Access and usage are guaranteed during the period of validity, while they can be disabled when the validity expires. At the moment the libraries are always accessible. Forums and classrooms may be used only within their validity periods, but once their validity has expired their traces are still accessible for future reference.

Study points

Students may earn *Study points* by participating to the classrooms. Once the classroom has been closed, instructors and tutors may rank the questions asked by the students by assigning to a each question a rank ranging from -2 to +3. The rank corresponds to the study points earned by the students.

At the moment study points are used only to provide to students a feedback about the quality of their questions. Study points do not affect either the credits associated with each course, or the final exam.

Reports

Reports are provided to each student about the study points earned and the percentage of classrooms attended.