



PETRUS-III PROJECT

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Steering board meeting

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[PETRUS-III]

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Steering Board Meeting – 01 October 2014

Cf. Powerpoint slide: SlidePhDEvent BB-S

Minutes

Participants:

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Bojan Hertl ARAO

Behrooz Bazargan-Sabet

Karsten Pedersen MICANS

(presiding the meeting) UL

Radek Vasicek CTU

Dan Bennett CU

Pedro Dieguez Porras ENEN (joins the

Tommy Claesson Linnaeus

meeting later)

Francisco Javier Elorza Tenreira UPM

Introduction

Behrooz Bazargan-Sabet

There is a need for more students on the Master's course. Currently, there are 10-12 students on average, coming from the three participating universities (UL, UPM, CTU). The number of courses offered should also be increased and the scheduling problem addressed. The objective is that a variety of lectures should be available for different aspects of the course.

Proposals and discussion

The proposed solution is for teachers and professors to record their lectures and create a bank of courses that students would be required to watch at their own pace from September to March. From March to June video conferencing methods would be used to set up live discussions between lecturers and students – these would include a brief course summary, discussion and questions and related activities. The live broadcasts would be scheduled and publicised.

A demonstration follows of the system used at *Mines-Nancy*. The screen is split into two and shows both lecturer and the Powerpoint slides being referred to and displayed in the lecture theatre.

BB-S recommends this format and system.

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Different support systems can be used, including Adobe Connect. Academic partners may record their lectures at the home institution, then transfer the files to BB-S and the *Mines-Nancy* technicians will make any necessary changes to the format and upload the lecture into the PETRUS “box” in the common storage system. A possible alternative would be to wait until June and record the lectures programmed in Nancy. All participating members will obviously be given connection rights and a password.

A complete course may be as long as ten hours, but lectures should be around an hour each in length so as not to make unreasonable demands on concentration levels.

This system has been tried and tested and offers enormous flexibility. Only the live sessions – which lecturers nevertheless schedule themselves – require strict organization. These can also be recorded and then repeated.

BB-S proposes all the necessary recordings be made during this academic year, that tests be subsequently carried out so that the bank of lectures may be ready for the following year.

One issue the project has encountered is that some universities apply fees for their courses, while others do not. This obviously causes problems of parity. The beauty of the system described is that each institution can respect its own policy – as students will choose among the lectures available for different elements of the course.

There is, however, a rule of exchange. Anyone may use these lectures, as long as they contribute. The system relies on reciprocation.

In theory the system is safe and lectures cannot be copied, however, no system is entirely foolproof.

Radek Vasicek explains that there may be a logistics problem with regard to the course at Josef. While the project aims to increase its number of students enrolled, the optimal number of students for the facility to manage is twelve. An additional problem is that so far the project has funded student mobility. If the project is to become sustainable, an alternative has to be found.

He adds that CEG CTU will not be able to organize the course in 2015 without finding financing for related costs at Josef (especially staff and a related portion of the operational cost of the facility).

BB-S suggests this problem could partly be addressed by other institutions providing online courses in return for CTU providing two weeks at Josef. This could be coupled with Erasmus schemes.

He asks **Karsten Pedersen** if he would agree to contribute. His participation in the PhD event would be highly appreciated and could be recorded and subsequently used for the PETRUS PhD programme.

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RV's questionnaire concerning the different systems used the various institutions involved in the project will be extremely useful and comes at an opportune moment. **BB-S** will send the technical information concerning the system he has demonstrated to all present as well as the contact details of the *Mines-Nancy* technicians.

Dan Bennett explains that as a research institution within Cardiff University, they have no Master's courses to offer for the moment, but there is potential. He would prefer this to be presented in person, possibly at Josef. He asks who is responsible for the accreditation of such courses.

BB-S responds that it has been decided that the home institution is responsible for the evaluation of its students. He also reminds those present that a basic rule of thumb regarding the attribution of ECTS is one ECTS/10 hours of lectures.

DB asks if any official paperwork is required.

BB-S outlines the system. He explains that each lecturer may use his or her own assessment system for any course (he requires a paper of around six pages in answer to one question – others may prefer an examination). The objective is to have a variety of lectures/courses to choose from and use as they require. At *Mines-Nancy*, for example, **PETRUS** courses are an option within a Master's course.

For the moment there are no overlapping courses, but, hopefully, in the future this will be the case.

RV requires cooperation from specialists to check students' learning/knowledge on courses that are not his areas of expertise.

BB-S says the lecturer providing the course should provide help in the form of a test, plus its correction and grading system.

Tommy Claesson asks how students will know of the courses available.

BB-S explains that the database of courses will be made available to the participating members, who will then offer them to their students. At the same time, other methods of advertising can be used, such as **ENEN** and the **PETRUS** website.

He reminds everyone that every university that becomes part of the system will enjoy joint ownership of all that it contains provided that they contribute.

TC asks if he should decide on the courses his students should follow or whether **PETRUS** has a committee for this.

BB-S suggests this may be one of the tasks handled by the Steering Board.

RV explains that due to local law in the Czech Republic, **PETRUS** is still an additional voluntary course for students following a Master's – an added extra (similar to the situation at *Mines-Nancy*) – it cannot take the place of other courses within the accredited Master's programme.

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TC suggests it would be a good idea for **PETRUS** to have its own complete programme in the long term.

RV (returning to the subject of recording lectures) believes this provides a perfect solution to the current scheduling problem.

The next issue to tackle, in his opinion, is that of motivating students to take part. It is clear this relies on certification. This should be provided by the project's end-users, as this means something to students; agencies recognizing what they have done has concrete value.

In response to **TC**'s question regarding student communication on courses available, **RV** proposes a simple contact page including the **PETRUS** website link, thus allowing students to visit the site and consult the list of courses.

However, he repeats and underlines the fact that he is not, personally, qualified to evaluate or examine some of these courses.

BB-S returns to the issue of certification raised by **RV**. One possibility would be a "label" – a seal of quality awarded to those students who successfully complete the whole **PETRUS** course. This could be done with the help of **ENEN**. He insists on the "the complete course". He disagrees with any splitting up of the course and awarding points to separate parts. He believes this would also encourage further study, to PhD level, for example.

RV voices his agreement and stresses the fact it is therefore necessary for students to have access to clear and complete information including such elements as:

- the timeframe (in order to complete the course)
- pre-requisites/course requirements
- a detailed description of course content
- a reading list.

BB-S asks for all this to be ready by September 2015.

RV points out students need this information well in advance of this date, as they their decisions are made prior to the course commencement date.

BB-S says the *Mines-Nancy* students make their study choices from September-October.

RV insists that **PETRUS** is optional and extra. They need to be aware of the "plus" **PETRUS** is offering in advance. This is a question of planning.

BB-S does not feel it is realistic to believe this will be ready and available to students before September 2015. The lectures first need to be recorded and only then can the above list be prepared.

RV says he has two or possibly three students in mind for this course, but the information needs to be available before September 2015.

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Walter Ambrosini explains how ENEN can help with the quality label. He firmly reminds members that this is not accreditation and has no legal standing.

He uses the example of an existing European Master's degree in the medical field. Legal certification is provided by the university releasing the course. One of the PETRUS partner universities could possibly take on this responsibility.

The idea that ENEN may legally certify a qualification is still in the dim and distant future.

BB-S understands this and reminds members that the proposed solution is a quality label. A student must fulfil all the university requirements before graduating officially. He feels a discussion on this topic should be held with IGD-TP to know whether the quality label would be sufficient.

WA asks if this is at Master's or PhD level.

BB-S replies emphatically Master's level. He gives two non-negotiable requirements for a student to be awarded the PETRUS quality label:

1. He/she must be registered on a regular Master's degree course.
2. He/she must have followed the complete PETRUS course.

WA agrees that ENEN can add value and this is their objective. He once again quotes an example of an existing European Master's that enjoys added recognition. The students in question must satisfactorily complete their own university's course requirements, then by following an additional programme in a specific area, he/she is awarded a quality label entitled a European Master of Science – but the latter is NOT a legal, university qualification.

Pedro Dieguez Porras adds the example of IAEA. As in the former example, students follow degree courses and the qualification is awarded by the university, however, if a student also follows an additional programme stipulated by IAEA, then he/she receives an additional label – this would be the format PETRUS could follow.

BB-S agrees, adding that ideally this PETRUS label should be supported by IDG-TP, providing the Master's degree graduate with a PETRUS quality label endorsed by IDG-TP.

Minutes compiled by

Petra Norroy,
October 2014.