

## **Participating in the OSCu-project**

There are several advantages in participating in the OSCu project. The participation increases the number of different courses for students and for a teacher it gives a possibility to get help and expertise for the course development work and also comprehensive feedback from all the universities participating in the course. One of the main idea in the project is to create an interest group to every course. The group is interested in developing the course and therefore it also enables continuous course material updating and progressing. So, part of the teachers development work can be shared with this model. In addition, all the universities and teachers participating in the project have a possibility to participate in the meetings of OSCu executive group, and therefore also develop and plan the future of the project.

However, participating in the project also requires doing some extra work. The university that organizes a distributed course has to - especially in a case of a new course - spend more time in planning and preparing the course than in so called normal courses. Also the universities participating in the OSCu course doesn't get the course for free. The workload in the remote universities may be almost the same as if they would design and implement the course by them selves. The essential benefit in participating in the OSCu project isn't actual saving in the money resources, but in stead, creating well documented and reusable courses which will continuously develop. In addition, the universities participating in a course can offer their students courses which they couldn't have developed by them selves.

The following sections briefly describe the issues that the participation in the OSCu project includes and the issues every participants needs to take into account when joining the project. More information of the OSCu project is found in the OSCu www-pages <http://www.cs.tut.fi/oscu/english.html>.

### **1. Participating in courses and implementing courses**

The university that organizes a course and universities willing to participate to the course makes an agreement of the course participation. In the coordination model used year 2003-2004, the agreement is also made with the OSCu executive group. After all, the organizing university makes the decision which universities it takes to the course. Both the responsible university and the participating universities commit themselves to take care of the preparation, practicality and information of the course according to OSCu instructions and given schedule (more information: <http://www.cs.tut.fi/~oscu/ohjeet/checklist.pdf>).

The responsible university designs and organizes the course, whether by building it on the materials available in the course material bank or creating a new course. The responsible university also takes care of the coordination of the course. The remote universities are responsible for the local organizing issues, tutoring and teaching tasks for their students and local information according to the instructions of the OSCu project and the responsible university. (more information: <http://www.cs.tut.fi/~oscu/ohjeet/tasks.pdf>).

### **2. Coordinating courses**

The aim in the OSCu courses is to keep the courses as a whole in spite of the distributed implementation model. This is done to ensure the same level of quality in teaching in all universities and to be able for example to use the same exam questions as measuring learning in all universities.

In distributed courses, the universities have to pay attention and take extra care of the coordination of the courses. For this reason, there are training and feedback meetings to the course personnel in the beginning of the course and in the end of the course. During the course, there are also weekly meetings via conference call. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the current issues in the course and to clarify the coordination of the course. In addition, coursemaster in every university (that means the person who is responsible for the local arrangements of the course) has to make time to the coordination tasks and taking care of the communication between the course personnel. (more information: <http://www.cs.tut.fi/~oscu/tasks.pdf>).

### **3. Lectures**

The lectures in the OSCu courses are implemented real time via video conference for all the universities participating in a course. Therefore, planning and preparing of the lectures requires more time and investments than in so called normal lectures. The lecturer also has to remember to pay attention to the students who follows the lectures in the remote universities. In the remote universities, the course personnel has to remember that the lectures are teaching situation, so there must be a person responsible for the lectures also in the remote universities.

In some cases, the lectures can be recorded to a video. The recording is contractual and it depends on the lecturers decision. The videos are made only to the use of the course personnel, not for example in common delivery to the internet. The lecturer may use videos to replace teaching situations for example if the video conference connection breaks down. The videos may also be shown to the groups of students who can't follow the lectures real time. If the lecturer agrees, the videos may also be filed with other teaching materials to the course material bank for the use of the next teacher. In this case, the videos still stays only in the use of the course personnel. The common principle is that the videos are used as getting to know the ongoing course or as following the course afterward. The videos can't be used as an independent learning material for students without a special contract with the lecturer.

### **4. Course material**

One of the main ideas in the OSCu project is to document the course materials and the implementation of the courses very carefully so that also other teachers than the original material creator would be able to use the materials and develop them further. The documentation of the materials utilizes also the teacher both in the process of designing the course and planning a new implementation of the course. All the course materials in the project are agreed to be produced according to the GNU Free Documentation License (<http://www.gnu.org/fdl.html>). Up-dated and developed materials are documented in the course material bank which takes care of the version management (the management system of the materials will be completed in the beginning of the year 2004).

The materials are documented regularly (for example weekly) during the course. In addition to actual learning materials, the implementation process of the course and experiences of the course are also documented. Also descriptions and instructions for the material usage is included to the materials. This is done to be able to utilize the materials as good as possible in the future. The documentation is done according to the OSCu instructions.

The careful course documentation requires more work from the lecturer than normally. This is usual especially in a case of new course. However, the comprehensive course materials and the documented experiences really helps the teacher in the next implementation of the course, even if the teacher of the course would remain the same. The responsible university takes care of the documentation but the remote universities also produce the parts of the materials concerning their own course implementation according to given instructions. In practice, the material documentation has been seen to go on the best way if there is a coursemaster in the organizing university who takes care of it. So the lecturer can concentrate mainly on designing the course and preparing the materials.