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Teaching grid to the masses: the SURFsara & EGI InSpire grid computing MOOC

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Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) allow people from various backgrounds to receive education on almost any topic, and have recently become very popular because of this. In this EGI InSpire project, a MOOC was created to teach grid computing to a wider audience. For this purpose, lectures were recorded, animations were created and grid users were given the opportunity to demonstrate how grid computing impacts their science. Participants were given the opportunity to test their new knowledge using both quizzes, which were mandatory to complete the course, and practical assignments. At the end of the course a final assignment needed to be handed in.
The MOOC itself was hosted on a platform developed by the University of Amsterdam, the videos were made available on YouTube. The course attracted around 300 participants, of which 10% managed to finish the course.

Wider impact and conclusions

Organizing a MOOC is very time consuming and requires a dedicated team to deal with the various issues that arise when teaching a diverse group of people. Teaching grid computing presents some unique challenges: handing out certificates to unknown people and getting them to join a virtual organization, but also distributing virtual machines which allow users to test most of the software on their own machines. The format of a MOOC is suited to teach grid computing, though for future runs of this course we should be looking for collaborations with universities and universities of applied sciences, and integrate the practical assignments in the online course platform.

URL(s) for further info

mooc.uva.nl

Description of work

For this project, we created all the teaching materials: we recorded lectures, developed interactive animations and created the quiz questions and practical assignments.
The MOOC has been running from the 18th of November 2013 until the end of January 2014. About 300 people participated of which about 10% finished the course successfully, which is on par with other MOOCs.

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