

PAULEX UNIVERSITAS: a web-based management system to create, deliver and assess online language proficiency

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Abstract

The authors will base their discussion on the PAULEX UNIVERSITAS Project; a 3-year project (sept. 2007 - oct. 2010) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation being developed by the CAMILLE Research and Development Group at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain). The project aims to develop an online system to design, deliver and assess the foreign language exam that is an integral part of the Spanish national university entrance examination. The foreign language exam is compulsory for every student wishing to enrol in higher education. They can choose to take one of the following language exams: English, French, German, Italian or Portuguese. Every year, approximately 27000 students take the university entrance exam simultaneously in the Valencian Community (comprised of 3 provinces: Alicante, Castellón and Valencia) and over 25000 of these take the English language exam.

The PAULEX assessment system comprises four modules: the Administration Module to manage users and configure all the system parameters such as control over user access, establishment of user privileges, setting of user deadlines, etc.; the Author Module, an online authoring tool used by language specialists to create exam papers; the Delivery Platform to deliver the online exam controlling student access and learner performance; and lastly, the Assessment Module, used, on the one hand, by the language specialists that belong to a given board of examiners to conduct blind assessment of the students' language exam and, on the other, by the system administrators to publish the marks achieved by students. Because students are entitled to request a revision of their marks by a second and even a third examiner, this module also organises the revision of a given exam by a language specialist from a different board of examiners.

The authors will describe the context in which this university entrance exam takes place and they will refer to the current changes in Spanish ministerial policies. They will also illustrate the platform and discuss issues relating to the system's management tools, data security and user interaction. They will conclude by presenting some of the results obtained from a pilot experience conducted in Valencia with more than 200 students and by addressing a number of difficulties encountered concerning the implementation of the PAULEX online examination platform regionally.