



STAT278: Computer Simulation

Unit Outline

First Semester 2008

Division of Economic and Financial Studies

Lecturer-in-charge: Malcolm Hudson

Students should read this outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains important information about STAT278. If anything in it is unclear, please consult the lecturer.

A little further reading will be necessary: in particular, you will need to do a little research on the internet, and you will also at times need to refer to the on-line help provided with *Excel*, *Matlab*, *Extend* and *Access*.

If you wish to do extra reading on simulation and modelling, the library has many relevant books. There are dozens of books with call numbers beginning QA76.9.C65 describing simulation and modelling from a mathematical or computer-scientific viewpoint—many of these are quite introductory and easy to read. Books with call numbers beginning T57.62 describe the same topic, but from a more managerial or business viewpoint. Gilbert & Doran's *Simulating Societies* addresses the topic from the sociologists' perspective, but is probably a bit erudite; this book will mainly be of interest in the applications it describes. Also possibly of interest are Emshoff & Sisson's *Design and Use of Computer Simulation Models*, Naylor & al.'s *Computer Simulation Techniques* and Gordon's *System Simulation*. Many of these books are surprisingly old—just ignore all the talk of *FORTRAN* and so forth; the basic concepts of computer simulation haven't really changed.

Computer labs are used for tutorial work. Support is available from ITSU, see http://www.efs.mq.edu.au/student_support/student_resources/student_computing_labs

UNIT WEB PAGE

The web page for this unit can be found at

<http://www.stat.mq.edu.au/units/stat278/>

and is an important part of this unit. It contains the hyperlink to the *WebCT* online discussion facility. Lecture notes, assignments, tutorial exercises and solutions can be downloaded from the web page. Unit information appears there too, including this unit outline. During the semester, you should visit the web page and the discussion facility at least weekly.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After STAT278, you should be able to

- decompose a system into simple elements for modelling and simulation purposes,
- implement models in *Excel*, *Matlab* and *Extend*,
- interpret the results of a single simulation run,
- use multiple simulations *systematically* to make inferences,
- organise and summarise simulation data graphically and numerically,
- analyse data, using confidence intervals and basic hypothesis testing where appropriate,
- draw conclusions from the results of data analysis,
- optimise stochastic system parameters by simulation,
- understand and simulate discrete event processes such as queues,
- understand and apply the concepts of correlation, time series and random walks,
- use basic SQL commands to interrogate databases.

Moreover, like any unit at Macquarie, STAT278 will extend your “generic” skills, for instance in problem-solving, communication, teamwork, use of the information technology, time management, taking responsibility for your own learning and so forth.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

STAT278’s lectures will be complemented by several other learning opportunities.

In the tutorials you will use specialised software to solve exercises in simulation and related topics. You will be given an exercise sheet at each tutorial. During the tutorial you will work on this exercise. You may submit your solution to the exercise at the tutorial, or if you need longer than an hour, you have until the following tutorial to submit it to your tutor.

In both the tutorials and the *WebCT* online discussion facility, you will be able to discuss the unit content with your classmates and tutor.

Furthermore, the unit includes a group project, in which you and a few of your classmates will pretend to be a consulting team. You will apply the unit’s simulation and analysis techniques to an invented problem, and compose a report to submit to your fictional client.

An **approximate** schedule of the topics covered each week is as follows:

Week	Lecture date	Topic	Remarks
1	26 February	Intro, overview, hyp. testing	No tutorial
2	4 March	Hypothesis testing	
3	11 March	Random variables	Assignment 1 set; Online Task due Tuesday 11 March; Project Groups assigned Friday 14 March
4	18 March	Stochastic processes	Assignment 1 due Thursday 20 March
5	25 March	Queue systems	Group Project Stage I due Friday 28 March
6	1 April	Queues/Optimisation	
7	8 April		Test instead of lecture; no tutorial
8	29 April	Optimisation	Assignment 2 set
9	6 May	Databases and <i>SQL</i>	Group Project Stage II due Friday 9 May
10	13 May	Practice problems	Assignment 2 due Friday 16 May
11	20 May	Practice problems	
12	27 May	Practice problems	Group Project Stage III due Friday 30 May
13	3 June	Practice problems	Attend tutorial as usual, but don’t hand in the exercise

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Because STAT278 is a practically-oriented unit, you will sit a practical exam in the computer lab at the end of the semester, rather than a traditional paper-based exam. Your total assessment will be on the basis of your performance of a variety of practical exercises and projects. Your final raw mark (see UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING, below) for STAT278 will be a weighted average of marks for tutorial participation, *WebCT* contribution, your Group Project, two individual assignments, and the practical test and exam in the computer labs.

Tutorials (8%)

This mark is based on tutorial attendance and performance in the weekly tutorial exercises. There will be 11 tutorials (no tutorials in Weeks 1 or 6) and 10 tutorial exercises (no exercise to be handed in from the Week 13 tutorial). For each exercise you hand in on time, you'll receive a mark of 1 or 2, and also you'll receive one mark for each tutorial you attend. This makes for a maximum possible total of 31; your total will be multiplied by 8/31 to give your tutorial mark out of 8.

WebCT (2%)

This mark is based on your contribution to the unit's online discussion forum. In particular, these marks are gained by completing the 'online task', assigned in the first lecture.

Group Project (10%)

The group project will be completed in groups of about four. The focus is more on learning than assessment. Every group ought to be able to get a high mark here; group members who pull their weight will have a much easier time with the remainder of the unit. (Let's disprove the words of William Lowe Bryan: "Education is one of the few things a person is willing to pay for and not get.")

Individual assignments (10% + 10%)

You will be issued two assignments during the semester to be completed individually.

Mid-semester practical test (12%)

In Week 6 you will sit a fifty-minute practical test in one of the computer labs. The test will be conducted under exam conditions, that is, silently and with no communication between students. It is, however, an open-book test; you may bring in your lecture notes, crib sheets, calculator and so forth, as you see fit. You should **not** bring a cellphone to the test.

Details of the exact time and location of the test will be announced to students within the first few weeks of semester.

Final practical exam (48%)

At the end of semester you will sit a three-hour practical exam in the computer labs. The second half of the semester will be more emphasised (because the first half will have been tested in the mid-semester test), but the entire unit will be considered examinable in this exam. The conditions will be the same as for the mid-semester test, that is, open-book and exam conditions. The date and location of this test will be announced.

Illness or Misadventure: If illness or misadventure prevents you from completing an assessment task during semester you should contact the lecturer as soon as possible, and submit your documentation with the “Advice of Absence or Other Circumstances” form to the Student Centre as soon as possible, and no later than the last teaching day of Semester. This form is available from

<http://www.reg.mq.edu.au/Forms/USSAbsence.pdf>.

The University Examination period in First Half Year 2007 is from 13 June to 29 June.

You are expected to present yourself for examination at the time and place designated in the University Examination Timetable. The timetable will be available in Draft form approximately eight weeks before the commencement of the examinations and in final form approximately four weeks before the commencement of the examinations—refer to

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/exam>.

The only exception to sitting an examination at the designated time is because of documented illness or unavoidable disruption. In these circumstances you may wish to consider applying for Special Consideration. Information about unavoidable disruption and the special consideration process is available at

<http://www.reg.mq.edu.au/Forms/APSCon.pdf>.

Please note that this form and the appropriate documentation must be submitted before the end of the examination period.

Note that there is a Division policy regarding requests for special consideration for examinations and the granting of supplementary examinations on

<http://www.efs.mq.edu.au/supexams.htm>.

Please be aware that you will not be contacted to be advised that you have been granted a supplementary examination—you will need to consult the website for this information.

You are advised that it is Macquarie University policy not to set early examinations for individuals or groups of students. All students are expected to ensure that they are available until the end of the teaching semester, that is the final day of the official examination period.

PLAGIARISM

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: “Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one’s own.” Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University’s rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University’s practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the Handbook of Undergraduate Studies or on the web at

<http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism>.

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and referral to the University Discipline Committee.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines on the distribution of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Your final result will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG).

On occasion your raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of your marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG which you receive. Under the Senate guidelines, results may be scaled to ensure that there is a degree of comparability across the university, so that units with the same past performances of their students should achieve similar results.

It is important that you realise that the policy does not require that a minimum number of students are to be failed in any unit. In fact it does something like the opposite, in requiring examiners to explain their actions if more than 20% of students fail in a unit.

The process of scaling does not change the order of marks among students. A student who receives a higher raw mark than another will also receive a higher final scaled mark.

For an explanation of the policy see

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/Guidelines2003.doc> or
<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/detailedguidelines.doc>.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can accessed at

<http://www.student.mq.edu.au>.

Other information for Macquarie students is available from the Student Portal

<https://my.mq.edu.au>.

This includes access to your official university email.

The Numeracy Centre (C5A 225) may also be able to offer assistance.