STAT278: Computer Simulation
Unit Outline

Second Semester 2005
Division of Economic and Financial Studies
Unit Convenor: David Bulger

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 David or Clive.
ABOUT THIS UNIT

STAT278 is a three-credit-point unit offered by the Statistics Department in the Division of Economic and Financial Studies.

Simulation is a powerful investigative tool for understanding and predicting systems and processes of interest in a wide variety of applications, especially where analytical methods are ineffective. In this unit, using the software applications Excel, Extend and Matlab, you will gain an overview of the concepts and practicalities of simulation.

Prior to undertaking STAT278 you must have three prerequisites:

- a "PASS" grade or better in STAT170 or STAT171,
- a "PASS" grade or better in any 100-level COMP or ISYS unit, and
- a GPA of at least 1.5 OR a "PASS" grade or better in STAT175.

TEACHING STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff member</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Consultation time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Bulger</td>
<td>C5C 464</td>
<td>Monday 3-4, Wednesday 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clive Cheong</td>
<td>C5C 467</td>
<td>Tuesday 3-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David Bulger is the 'lecturer-in-charge' of STAT 278 and will do most of the lecturing. David will be absent during Weeks 2 and 3 (Module 2), when Clive Cheong will take over the lecturing and both tutorial classes.

If you wish to send email to David at dbulger@efs.mq.edu.au, you must use your official Macquarie email address. All Macquarie students are issued with an official University email account. It is now University policy that the University issued email account will be used for official University communication in conjunction with existing communication methods. All students are required to access their University account frequently. Alternatively, email can be forwarded to another account but each student is responsible for the information sent to a non-Macquarie account and for managing mailbox size to ensure that the account remains active.

CLASSES

Lectures: Wednesday 3pm–5pm in E7B 264 and Friday 2pm–3pm in E7B 263, beginning 3 August

Tutorials: Thursdays at 2pm or Fridays at 11am, for one hour, in C5C 217, beginning 11 or 12 August

Attendance at the Tutorials is mandatory. Eight percent of your grade will be determined by your attendance at tutorials and completion of tutorial exercises.
STAT278 has no text. Lecture notes will be handed out at the beginning of each module, and are available on the unit website.

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 & Simon'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.

---

**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Lecture dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>3 &amp; 5 Aug</td>
<td>Introduction and overview</td>
<td>No tutorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Clive</td>
<td>10 &amp; 12 Aug</td>
<td>Hypothesis testing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clive</td>
<td>17 &amp; 19 Aug</td>
<td>Hypothesis testing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>24 &amp; 26 Aug</td>
<td>Random variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>31 Aug &amp; 2 Sep</td>
<td>Random variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>7 &amp; 9 Sep</td>
<td>Stochastic processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>14 Sep</td>
<td>Stochastic processes</td>
<td>Test in C5C 213 instead of Friday lecture; no tutorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>5 &amp; 7 Oct</td>
<td>Stochastic processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>12 &amp; 14 Oct</td>
<td>Queue systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>19 &amp; 21 Oct</td>
<td>Queue systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>26 &amp; 28 Oct</td>
<td>Optimisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>2 &amp; 4 Nov</td>
<td>Databases and SQL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>9 &amp; 11 Nov</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Attend tutorial as usual, but don’t hand in the exercise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 two practical tests 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 7) 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%)

On 16 September at 2 p.m. you will sit a fifty-minute practical test in the computer lab C5C 213. 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.

Note that the test will occur instead of Week 7’s Friday lecture. On 16 September, instead
of going to the lecture, go to C5C 213. This is not the room you usually have your tutorials
in—it is nextdoor to that room. Be on time! The test will start at 2:10, by which time you
should all be sitting down in front of a computer, ready to begin. Therefore, aim to arrive
comfortably earlier than 2:10.

Final practical test (48%)

At the end of semester you will sit a longer practical test 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 test.
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


The University Examination period in Second Half Year 2005 is from 16 November to 30 Novem-
ber.

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 ap-
proximately eight weeks before the commencement of the examinations and in Final form
approximately four weeks before the commencement of the examinations—refer to


The only exception to not sitting an examination at the designated time is because of doc-
dumented 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


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 examina-
tions and the granting of supplementary examinations on


- page six of eight -
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](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


---

**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.