Research - Live Chat Function

# Introduction

StackBook is intended to allow an easy interface for students to share problems and support each-other in a user-friendly style, ensuring that students studying the same subjects are able to communicate and share solutions. StackBook is not intended for students to do work for one another, but share possible solutions with explanations to help others learn from their own mistakes or improve their abilities in various subjects.

# Inspiration

This project is inspired by sites such as StackOverflow. Although sharing a similar base function to StackOverflow StackBook promises to be much more. StackOverflow acts as a forum base for developers and programmers to share their experience or problems with others who may be more experienced. StackBook aims to help a general audience of students who are struggling and helps to put them in contact with others from around the world who may be able to shed light on the situation.

Unilearn is a secondary from of inspiration for this project. Unilearn does offer a forum/support feature, however this is mostly to ask tutors for support. Our research indicates that some students do not feel as comfortable asking tutor’s certain things, and therefore asking peers or even industry professionals/hobbyists with more experience, to them, appears to be a simpler path.

# Live Chat

After thorough research into Live Chat functions looking at various implementations including Facebooks own Messenger, Microsofts Hotmail IM and Pidgen Messenger, the path for implementation of a Live Chat has been determined possible within the set timescale.

## Possible Issues

Possible issues with a Live Chat implementation begin with the obvious one, security, how do you keep your users safe, and prevent spam in the local chat?

In order to do this moderation is needed, just as it will be in the forums.

In an attempt to combat the possibility of spam in a local chat, a moderator will need to be stationed, this could be a human in the chat ensuring conversation is kept on-track, or an implementation of some form of “keyword” checker to “detect” when users go off-track or use inappropriate language, code could also be implemented to check how many messages a user has sent in a short amount of time (say ten seconds) and ensure they can only send a maximum of three consecutive messages in that period, moderators would also need the abilities to “ban” users and “delete” messages.

Users could also be made to agree to a “Terms and Conditions” page on sign-up, this could include an acknowledgement of what the service is to be used for, and what it is not to be used for, with penalties in place to discourage unauthorized behaviour, moderators will then be needed to ensure that content posted is relevant, the user has evidence to trying to solve the issue themselves and that they are not just looking for somebody to complete the task for them, but are asking for help in understanding the solution to the issue.

### Prevention of Misleading or Incorrect information

Forums are commonly known as a place for trolls, or even just misinformed individuals to congregate. Some users may think that they know best, even if the information they provide is incorrect, on a help service this can be a major issue as it can lead the person requiring assistance into more confusion.

Many forum sites have some sort of system to combat this, and StackBook is intended to adopt a “Trust Rating” system, whereas users rate an individual’s comment, or post, with a star rating depending on how helpful the comment was, if the information provided was relevant and correct.  
Each time a user’s comments gain popularity the users overall account will gain “Trust” within the community, making their posts appear higher on the page, and letting others know that this person does provide correct information, as for those who have a low rating, their account will have an indicator to show they are not a trusted user and posts will appear further down the page.

### Encouraging Students to Support Each Other

In order for the site/application to achieve it’s goals, students will need to be willing to offer support to one another and those asking for help will need to feel comfortable that their posts will be respected, no matter how simple the problem may be to the person responding.   
This would have to be another implementation in the “Terms and Conditions” for the users to provide helpful criticism but also be respectful to other users who may not have as much experience as they do, however, in this section we are focusing on how we can encourage those students to help others.

#### Ranking/Levelling System

A simple implementation to encourage students to help each other on a very basic level would be to implement a Ranking or “Prestige” system into the current idea of a “Rating System”. This could be done using the current Rating to give users so much “XP”, each level contains a maximum “XP” level to reach and is directly affected by your ranking. Once you hit the Soft-Cap (for instance level 20) you could earn “prestige” awarding you titles on forums, or even display pictures per level etc.  
This is a broad overview of the idea, as it would be a simple form of encouraging users to provide more help, and also provide more relevant information, a loss system could also further discourage dis-respectful or misleading posts.

### Security

Having a validation system is important to keep user-accounts unique, however password authentication is also a form of security. Security is important in order to keep your users safe in an online environment, it can be everything from keeping users data safe, to trying your best to ensure they are talking to other students. One idea is to use University Emails to validate the user-accounts, this at least ensure that they are, or have been a student at university, accounts should also contain a profile including what the user has studied, their professional experience (if any) and what they specialise in.