Editors and IDEs for Erlang

The aim of this note is to give you an overview of the editors and IDEs available for Erlang.

In order to write Erlang programs you will need a text editor, or an integrated development environment (IDE). The basic functionality that you need is provided by many applications, but typically not (by default) for systems like Microsoft Word, which will pepper a file with formatting markup as well as the text itself. On Mac OS X TextEdit is provided, and on Windows there is Notepad, and similar systems are available on Linux too. If you're happy with this, you can get started right away …

It is possible for systems to provide more support, though. Many "program" editors will support syntax highlighting, autocomplete of keywords and identifiers, and also "compile as you type" in some cases. An IDE will typically provide all these too, but at the cost of providing a whole slew of other stuff which we won't need. This note covers some of the editors with this extra functionality, including the (venerable) emacs and vim, Notepad++ (for Windows), the recent Visual Studio Code, and a variety of other systems.

Visual Studio Code

Despite its name, Visual Studio Code is a freely-available, open source code editor for Mac OS X and Linux as well as windows,

https://code.visualstudio.com

It has extensions for Erlang, too, search for "Erlang" in

https://marketplace.visualstudio.com

I have added these three extensions: Erlang, Erlang/OTP and vscode-linter-erlc

Emacs

The **emacs** editor is probably the standard editor for most Erlang programmers. While it is 'just' a text editor there's a powerful Erlang mode for emacs, with more information at:

http://www.erlang.org/doc/apps/tools/erlang_mode_chapter.html

It also integrates with other tools such as **Wrangler** and **QuickCheck**.

There are different versions of emacs for different platforms: for example **aquamacs** for the mac.

Vim

Vim has an Erlang plugin built in, and there's a more advanced plugin at:

https://github.com/vim-erlang

Installing Erlang mode in notepad++

If you want to add Erlang to the languages in **notepad++** you should follow these steps.
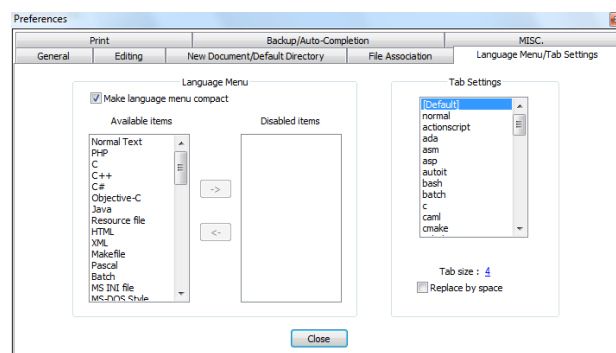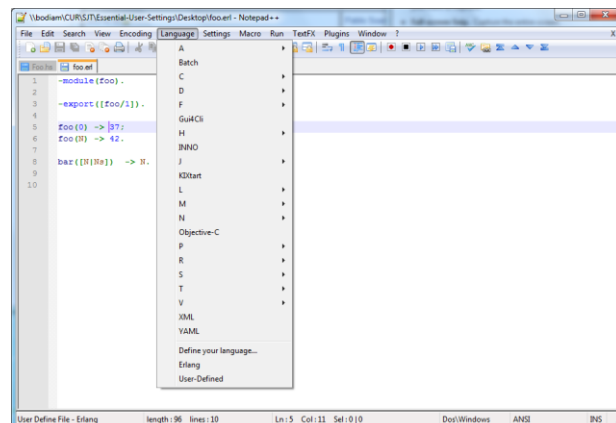
1. In the Settings -> Preferences, select the pane labelled **Language Menu/Tab Settings** and tick the box **Make language menu compact.**

2. Download this file:

http://www.cs.kent.ac.uk/people/ staff/sjt/Erlang/userDefineLang.xml

3. Choose the **Language** menu and select the item Define your language. Select the button Import, and choose the file userDefineLang.xml for import.

4. **When you restart notepad++** the Erlang language should appear in the Language menu as shown.

Other editors

Other editors also have Erlang modes: there's more information about this in **section 7.8** of:

http://www.erlang.org/faq/tools.html

IntelliJ IDEA

IntelliJ IDEA is a multi-language IDE that has some support for Erlang. While IntelliJ is a commercial product, a version is available free for academic users and for use on open source projects. More information at:

https://www.jetbrains.com/idea/download/

ErlIDE

ErlIDE is an Erlang plugin for the Eclipse IDE, available from:

http://erlide.org/index.html