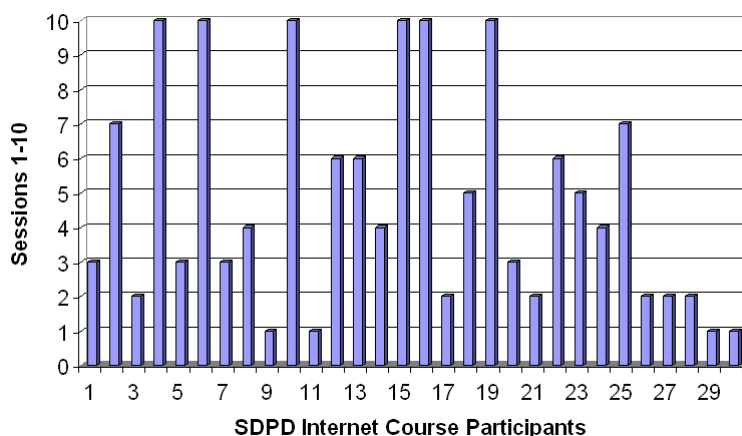


## The SDPD Internet Course in its Fourth Year - Overview

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The Structure Determination by Powder Diffractometry (SDPD) Internet Course [1-3] is a distance teaching/learning service which started in September 1999 at the Le Mans University (France). A total number of 30 PhD-level participants have subscribed (12 in 2000, 6 in 2001 as well as in 2002 and 2003). They come from 18 countries : Algeria (1), Belgium (1), Canada (1), China (1), Cuba (1), England (2), France (1), Germany (1), Greece (1), India (2), Israel (1), Italy (1), Japan (1), Korea (3), Portugal (1), Spain (2), Sweden (2) and USA (7), and five more have declared a recent interest, which could increase the participant number to 35, if confirmed. The english content of the course (in 10 sessions) mainly covers : phase identification, indexing, intensity extraction, structure solution using conventional (Patterson and direct methods) and direct-space techniques, structure completion and refinement by the Rietveld method. Participants are guided (instructions and documents sent by email) through lectures and solved exercises and are provided with a list of software to download. At the end of every session, they have to solve exercises by themselves. The course is asynchronous (every participant going at his own speed), and registration is open all the year. The minimum duration for the course is 3 months (10 sessions of one week and a final examination of two weeks consisting in a complete SDPD), but there is no maximum limit. As can be seen on the figure giving the last session attained by participants listed according to their registration order, only 3 among the 12 subscribers in 2000, 2 among 6 in 2001 and one among 6 in 2002 have completed the course. This does not mean that all the others have given up ; only a few really have and for some of them very soon after session 1 or 2. This is slightly better than usual results for a distance learning course (80% quit). However, a change was recently made in the registration way : participants are now invited to pay the fees only if they decide to continue after the completion of the first two sessions. Another change is the new fees values for groups of subscribers coming from an unique university or company.



A part of the course is also taught in the face to face mode to a few local first year PhD (6 students since 3 years), but the allocated time (15 hours) does not allow us to ensure more than half of the Internet course content. Completing that course requires very high motivations and willing, since SDPD is far from being yet a routine task, as shown by the recent round robin [4].

[1] SDPD Internet Course, <http://sdpd.univ-lemans.fr/course/>

[2] A. Le Bail, Y. Laligant and A. Jouanneaux, *Mat. Sci. Forum*, **378-381** (2001) 47-52.

[3] SDPD Internet Course, ECM-20 Krakow proceedings, <http://sdpd.univ-lemans.fr/ecm20/sdpd.html>

[4] SDPD Round Robin 2002, <http://www.cristal.org/sdpdrr2/>