Peer Review Process

For Policy Development Workshop Participants

Document notes

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Overview

A subsidiary exercise in most future versions of the Policy Development Workshop will be a peer review mechanism, intended to encourage several things: (a) to assist institutions engaged in policy development by providing a view from a disinterested observer; (b) to encourage dissemination of ideas an approaches by making it possible for people to evaluate processes at other institutions; and (c) to provide a stimulus for institutions to keep their policy development processes on track.

Mechanism

Participating institutions will each volunteer one staff member to act as a reviewer. The workshop organisers will arrange pairings of institutions, or, if the number of reviewers is not even, some other assignment of one reviewer to one institution. This nomination should be done in advance of the workshop, so that working relationships can be established at the workshop itself. Four months after the workshop the organisers will notify both institution and reviewer that a review will take place at the six-month mark. The organisers will facilitate travel and accommodation arrangements for each review process.

Responsibilities of the reviewee

The institution under review must make arrangements for the visit of the reviewer. This will normally include setting up all appointments as described below, and briefing interviewees on the impending visit and on what is expected of them. The institution should assign a senior person on the day/s of the interviews to conduct the reviewer around the campus and to take care of logistics such as lunch and transport.

Responsibilities of the reviewer

The reviewer must conduct all scheduled interviews and must satisfy himself or herself that an adequate insight has been gained into the reviewed institution’s processes. The reviewer must write a structured report, on the lines detailed below, and assign a score according to the checklist in 5.1. The completed document must then be submitted to the workshop organisers. The document will be made confidentially available, through the offices of the workshop organisers, to the reviewed institution.

The process

The reviewer will assess progress by means of a checklist and a structured interviewing process.

Checklist

For each of the following questions, the reviewer must establish a yes/no answer. Scores for each yes are given in square brackets.

* Is there an acceptable use policy or similar document in use? [2]
* Is the document readily available? [1]
* Does the document have the approval of the institution’s highest decision-making body? [2]
* Does the document clearly specify the objectives that it seeks to achieve? [2]
* Does the document relate these objectives to the institution’s mission, vision and values? [1]
* Is there evidence that the document forms part of the institution’s rules for student discipline? [1]
* Is there evidence that the document forms part of the institution’s conditions of staff service? [1]
* Are the expectations set out in the document clear? [1]
* Are users of the network confronted on a regular basis with the terms of the policy? [1]
* Is the process by which the document was formulated clear from the document itself? [2]
* Are there mechanisms for detecting violations of the policy?
* Is there evidence that the document is enforced? [2]
* Do the five people interviewed each express satisfaction that the policy helps them to achieve their objectives at the institution? [1 point for each]

Interviews

Vice-Chancellor or other senior member of the Executive

This interview is designed to assess whether the leadership of the institution properly understands the importance of adequate bandwidth in the life of the institution and whether they are willing to commit resources to protect it, and whether they have in fact done so.

Librarian

An assumption here is that the library is critically dependent upon adequate bandwidth, and that its management understands this dependency. This interview is designed to assess whether the library’s leadership: (a) has adequately emphasised the importance of bandwidth to the success of its mission; (b) has participated in the process of policy development to its own satisfaction; and (c) is satisfied with the outcome. The interviewer should seek to establish how much money is spent annually, directly or by donors, on digital scholarly resources.

Senior Academic

The reviewee institution should select a senior academic who plays an important leadership role in the research life of the university. A dean would be a good example. The purpose of this interview is to determine whether the academic community (a) adequately understands the sources of bandwidth congestion; (b) appreciates the range of approaches to managing it; (c) is satisfied that it has had an adequate voice in the development of policy; and (d) is satisfied with the outcome.

Senior IT management

This interview may be with the IT director alone but should preferably include network management or even senior network staff. The objective is to determine what role the IT department has played in the establishment of policy, whether they are capable of the monitoring necessary both to manage the network and to enforce policy, and whether they are satisfied with the outcome. The interviewer should probe to establish what supplementary plans, if any, there are to conserve or otherwise manage bandwidth. The interviewer should also try to establish key benchmarks: bandwidth per connected PC and users per connected PC, as well as TCP concurrency on the proxy/cache. The interviewer should note for the report what the institution’s bandwidth resources are, what they cost annually, and their extent of use. Graphs should be sampled for use in the report. If there are no graphs available this should be noted.

Student

The student can be selected at random from a student lab. The objective is to establish whether there is a good understanding of the sources of bandwidth congestion, of the possible solutions to it, and whether students are satisfied that their interests – however defined – are being protected. The interviewer should probe to establish a sense of the culture of student lab use: is it primarily academic or recreational? Is policy enforcement real or not?

Report

The reviewer should write a report briefly summarising each interview and then assessing the overall response of the institution to the bandwidth management problem, and the institution’s view of the role of policy. The reviewer should produce a one-sentence assessment of how effective the institution’s approach has been, and assign a numeric score based upon the checklist above.