Technical Committee (TC) Process FAQ

This document provides a non-normative overview of the OASIS TC Process Policy as revised by the OASIS Board of Directors in July 2010. It is offered as a supplemental resource only. For comprehensive information, the normative OASIS TC Process Policy should be referenced. Additional information is provided in the TC Handbook. If inconsistencies between any of these documents are found, the official policies take precedence.

Overview

This is the first major revision to the OASIS TC Process since 2005. In an effort to help our members become familiar with the new rules, a number of resources are available. These include live and recorded webinars, our TC Handbook/help system, and these FAQs which will be updated as questions are received. As always, please feel free to contact the OASIS TC Administrator with any questions or if you need further assistance.

1. When does this new TC Process go into effect, and how does it apply to existing projects?

The new TC Process goes into effect on 15 October 2010 (simultaneous with the new IPR Policy). Specifications that are either out for Public Review or have completed a 60-day Public Review as of 15 October 2010 AND are submitted for OASIS Standard Ballot on or before 15 January 2011 will be subject to the requirements in Section 3.4 in effect on 1 September 2009. Any specifications that have not been submitted for Public Review or have been submitted but the review has not yet been announced on 15 October 2010; or have completed the Public Review process but are not submitted for OASIS Standard Ballot by 13 January 2011, will be subject to the requirements in Section 3.4 in effect on 15 October 2010.

2. What is - and isn't - a Work Product?

"Work Product" is a generic term used to represent the collection of deliverables produced by a Technical Committee. A deliverable is something that is defined in a TC's Charter and is the primary reason a TC exists - to produce a collection of work products, or deliverables, for public consumption. Work Products are broken down into two categories: Standards Track Work Products, which may be advanced to OASIS Standard and submitted to de jure standards bodies for further ratification, and Non-Standards Track Work Products, which are intended to be informative in nature and in support of Standards Track Work Products. All Work Products must meet the requirements as stated in the TC Process Policy.

In contrast, "Administrative Documents" are documents used by a TC in support of internal operations such as minutes, agendas, issues lists, liaison statements, and inter-group communications. They must not use any template designated for either Standards Track or Non-Standards Track Work Products.
Major Changes

Introduction of Non-Standards Track Work Products

The OASIS Board Process Committee has been working for over 2 years to add a "non-standards" TC approval track. This provides a means for TCs to approve as a Committee Note any material that is not intended to become an OASIS Committee Specification or OASIS Standard. These could be primers, explanatory material, presentations and white papers that can now be approved by the TC as representing its views. Non-Standards Track Work Products do not contain Normative Portions (as defined in the IPR Policy).

1. How does a TC determine which track a Work Product should take?

At the time a Working Draft is brought up for approval, the TC must decide whether it is to become a Committee Draft Specification (CDS) or a Committee Draft Note (CDN). The Non-Standards Track is intended to be used for work products that are explanatory or educational in nature and are not implementable in and of themselves. Work Products in the Non-Standards Track are not covered by the patent provisions of the OASIS IPR Policy. Once making this decision the TC should use the appropriate template for the document so that it is clear which type of document it is.

2. Are Non-Standards Track Work Products covered by the OASIS IPR Policy?

Non-Standards Track Work Products are covered by the copyright provisions of the IPR Policy; they are not covered by the patent provisions of the IPR policy.

3. Can a TC publish an early/draft version of a potential standard as a Non-Standards Track Deliverable?

No; Non-Standards Track Work Products are not covered by the patent provisions of the OASIS IPR Policy.

4. Can Non-Standards Track Work Products be submitted for OASIS Standard vote?

No; the highest level of approval for a Non-Standards Track Work Product is Committee Note (equivalent to Committee Specification).

5. Can Non-Standards Track Work Products be submitted to a de jure standards body for further standardization?

No.

6. Is the approval process different for Non-Standards Track Work Products?

No; the process is the same for both tracks (except for the final Standards Track steps to progress to Candidate OASIS Standard and OASIS Standard).

7. Do Non-Standards Track Work Products use the same template required for Standards Track Work Products?

No.
No; a different set of templates must be used. Templates are provided at http://docs.oasis-open.org/templates/ [1]

8. Can a Work Product change tracks?

Yes; a TC can choose to switch tracks by conforming to the appropriate template, approving the work as a committee draft (either a Committee Specification Draft or Committee Note Draft) and proceeding through the normal lifecycle progression. If a TC anticipates a deliverable might become an OASIS Standard they should initially choose the Standards Track so that IPR obligations are incurred throughout the stages of the process.

9. Are there other differences between Standards Track and Non-Standards Track Work Products?

Yes; Section 2.18 Specification Quality has been expanded to note the different requirements, including those for Computer Language Definitions and Conformance Clauses. Also, a new Restrictions and Disclaimers section has been added.

10. If a TC is preparing a slide presentation for a public event, does the presentation really have to be classified and approved as a Non-Standards Work Product, including the requirements to list all contributors, have a statement about patents on every slide, require public review, etc.?

Yes; however, a member of a TC may present material related to TC activities that has been approved as a Committee Note Draft as long as the status is properly conveyed and quality requirements in section 2.18 of the TC Process Policy have been met.

11. Can a TC Member make a presentation on the work of the TC to an external group without submitting the presentation through the TC approval process?

Yes, provided you do not use the OASIS templates and it is made clear that you are speaking on your own (or your employer's) behalf rather than on behalf of the TC.

12. Why do we need this if all the main work of OASIS is standards and specifications?

A number of TCs need clarity in how they can approve and deliver non-standards track deliverables. This change is also to anticipate additional work on adoption and education type activities.

13. What impact does the process change have on collaboration with non-TC members, in particular for non-standards document?

None, non-TC members will still need to provide feedback via the TC's comment list which requires acceptance of the OASIS feedback license. Work on all Work Products must be done within the TC, since ideas may be transferred between Standards Track and Non-Standards Track Work Products.

14. Can a TC specify in its charter that it will produce only Non-Standards Track documents, and then put "N/A" for the IPR Mode in the Charter?

A TC can specify that it will only produce Non-Standards Track Work Products. It must, however, still declare a particular IPR Mode in accordance with the TC Process and IPR Policies.
15. Do the rules about Contributions (from both the TC Process and IPR Policy) apply to Non-Standards Track documents as well as Standards Track documents?

Yes.

16. Why can't non-members participate in non-standards track work?

They can, in the same way they participate in standards track work; that is by submitting their feedback through the TC's comment list. OASIS is supported by membership dues. Unlike other organizations we do not charge for our Standards and other deliverables; they are freely available to anyone. While transparent, the work of OASIS needs to be driven by members and the OASIS dues structure is designed to enable potential participants to join OASIS. OASIS welcomes new members.

New Stage Identifiers

With the introduction of the Non-Standards Track come new stage identifiers. The Standards Track Work Product stages are Committee Specification Draft (CSD), Committee Specification Public Review Draft (CSPRD), and Committee Specification (CS). The Non-Standards Track Work Product stages are Committee Note Draft (CND), Committee Note Public Review Draft (CNPRD), and Committee Note (CN). Note that committee draft refers to either a CSD or CND; similarly, public review draft refers to either a CSPRD or CNPRD.

Public Review Requirements

The Public Review requirements for TC-level approvals have been simplified and streamlined, partially to accommodate the addition of the Non-Standards Track.

1. What is the minimum length of time for an initial Public Review?

The minimum length of time has been reduced to 30 days, with subsequent reviews staying at a minimum of 15 days.

2. If a TC has a specification currently out for public review, will the review period be shortened?

No; all public review drafts processed and announced prior to 15 October will complete the 60-day public review period. If, however, changes are made to the Work Product following the Public Review, an additional 15-day review will be required.

3. Is a Work Product exempt from additional review if it has been changed since the last public review, but where the TC has deemed that no substantive changes have been introduced?
Any changes to a Work Product (other than those explicitly allowed in Section 2.18) will now require an additional review before being submitted for Committee Specification or Committee Note ballot. However, if a TC has already conducted a public review, and following the public review approved a further Committee Draft acknowledging in the meeting minutes or ballot that no substantive changes were made, as long as that new Committee Draft has been uploaded to docs.oasis-open.org or a valid request to upload such CD has been submitted to TC Administration on or before 14 October 2010, no public review will be required of that Committee Draft if submitted for Committee Specification ballot.

OASIS Standard Approval Process

The process for OASIS Standard approval has been modified. There is now a new stage, Candidate OASIS Standard, which falls between Committee Specification and OASIS Standard. This new stage requires a minimum 60-day public review. The process and timeline has also been changed.

1. Why is a minimum 60-day review required at this stage?

   The initial public review period has been shortened to a minimum of 30 days, speeding the process for those work products that are not intended to be submitted for OASIS Standard ballot. The 60 day review ensures that OASIS Standards meet the requirements to be submitted to international de jure standards bodies.

2. Is the 15-day familiarization period still required before an OASIS Standard ballot begins?

   No; there is no longer a familiarization period.

3. Can OASIS Standard submission requests be submitted at any time?

   Yes; there is no longer a fixed timeline requiring submissions to be made by the 15th of the month. Submissions may be made at any time; TC Administration must complete processing and start the Candidate OASIS Standard Public Review within 15 days of receipt of a request that meets the requirements.

4. What happens if comments are received during the Candidate OASIS Standard review?

   The TC Process defines the specific steps to be taken given the possible outcomes of the public review (no comments, comments but no changes made, and resulting changes). If there are no changes to be made, the TC Chair will notify the TC Administrator to begin the ballot.

5. Will OASIS Standard ballots still begin on the 16th of the month?

   No; ballots may begin at any time and will run for 14 days.

6. Do these changes extend the amount of time it takes to gain OASIS Standard status?

   The amount of time it takes from working draft to OASIS Standard has always been dependent on a number of factors; however, the reduction of the first public review from 60 days to 30 days and the elimination of the fixed timeline for OASIS Standard submission effectively cancel out the additional 30 days of public review.

7. If a specification has already completed a 60-day Public Review (or is/will be in progress on 15 October
2010), will another 60-day review be required?

No; the TC Process defines a 90-day transition period. Any Work Products that have either completed a 60-day Public Review or are out for Public Review on 15 October, and are submitted for OASIS Standard ballot on or before 13 January 2011 will continue to follow the TC Process that went into effect on 1 September 2009.

Miscellaneous

1. What is the difference between Approved Errata and Maintenance Activity?

A Maintenance Activity is a Standards Track approval process that produces a new version of a CS/OS, scoped to maintenance changes, for which specific IPR rules apply. Maintenance work can be undertaken by either the TC that originally created the specification or by a new TC if the original TC has closed. Approved errata is a way to produce/update an existing OASIS Standard (produced by the same TC) which makes no substantive changes (changes that could cause a previously conforming implementation to not conform, or vice versa), i.e. it can fix only minor errors. Errata can only be undertaken by the TC that originally created the specification.

2. Approved Errata seems to apply only to an OASIS Standard; is there any quick method for making minor changes to a Committee Note once it's been published?

Changes to any Work Product other than an OASIS Standard are simply revised, approved as a new CDS or CDN, submitted for a 15-day Public Review, and approved as a CS or CN.

3. Can a person file an appeal of a TC action even if he or she is not a TC Member?

Yes, as long as you are an OASIS Member.

4. What do you mean "must begin with step 1..." in Section 3.0?

The steps outline the progression of approvals from the first approval level (Committee Draft) all the way through OASIS Standard. Any time a Work Product is changed (as a working draft) it must be approved as a new Committee Draft before progressing further.

KNOWN PROBLEMS:

The following known problems have been identified by the Board Process Committee and will be corrected with the next release.

3.1 Approval of a Committee Draft

The TC may at any stage during development of a Work Product approve the Work Product as a Committee Specification Draft or Committee Note Draft, as appropriate. Approval of these drafts shall require a Full Majority Vote of the TC. The TC may approve a Work Product, revise it, and re-approve it any number of times as a Committee Specification Draft or Committee Note Draft.

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Related links:
TC Process [2]
TC Handbook [3]
Naming Directives [4]
Related Resources [1]

Links: