Product Council Structure and Governance

Sakai Product Council Composition and Process

The Qualifications of the Product Council

The council will be made up of a group that brings the different areas of expertise required to effectively fill the product council function. Council members must have:

- Demonstrated ability to work productively on a team
- Involvement in the Sakai community
- Professional work experience with Sakai

The overall composition of the council should represent a broad body of expertise. The following areas of expertise are highly desirable, and selection of council members be made using these criteria. These may not be individual roles, but the collective set of council members should have experience that spans these areas:

- User experience, including accessibility and usability
- Teaching and learning, ideally grounded in current research and theory. Teaching experience valued
- Academic Research
- Software design and architecture
- Software production management
- Broad perspective; international, multi-college or abstract perspective to articulate views beyond a local (personalized or regional) perspective
- Production experience with Sakai, including end user support and operational support
- Learning Technology Industry: broad trends, complementary and competitive environments, and standards (the ecology in which Sakai operates)

Additional expertise on particular topics may be needed from time to time, and can be gained by involving an external expert in a particular area in council discussions. Examples may include security, middleware interoperability, and accessibility.

Product Council Responsibilities/Commitments

Each council member should expect the following commitments:

- He or she should have regular perusal of lists in area of expertise, and should be active in a community of peers
- He or she should be embedded in issues relevant to the area of expertise
- He or she should be available for regular virtual meetings.
- He or she should plan to attend the annual Sakai meeting, as well as potentially an additional face to face retreat each year.
- He or she should be available for up to 4-8 hours per week of email/review/writing/engagement. It is likely that this level of workload would not be constant, but may swell to this level at times.
- A letter of support from the employer acknowledging the commitment is desired.

Initial Council Structure and Ongoing Membership

In an effort to move forward quickly, the initial council is being chosen by a subset of the Sakai Foundation board. We recognize that some aspects of the council’s membership and practices may need to be modified over time. So we are seating this initial council with a term of approximately one year (through the release of Sakai 2.8) and will, in parallel, refine the process for how the council will be seated and will operate.

Council parameters for the initial group of council members:

- Members = seven to nine
- Term for initial members = approximately one year until when 2.8 is released
- Council will select its own chair
- Product manager is one of the seven voting members, and will have a communication responsibility from the council to the community
- Sakai Foundation board members may be considered for the Council. However, Officers of the Board (Chair and Vice Chair) will not serve in order to avoid undue influence.
- Sakai ED will freely participate in council processes and discussions, but is an ex officio non-voting member

Initial Selection Process

1. Selection to be done by board sub-committee (those not themselves nominated)
2. Develop tagging taxonomy. Suggest a tag for area of expertise as noted on the list, a tag for person’s job, e.g., programmer, designer, and a tag for affiliation (name of employer)
3. Tag all nominees & sort based on tagging for comprehensive and objective overview
4. Slate of members developed by board sub-committee
5. Slate offered to full board for comment only (concurrent with step 6)
6. If slate is insufficient, targeted recruitment to fill seats
7. When slate is sufficient, offered to full board for comment
8. Slate is selected by a simple majority vote of non-conflicted board members only.

If we do not have nominees sufficient to fulfill necessary expertise

- targeted recruiting on lists, constituency areas
- target institutions
- wide announcement
- tap on a shoulder, with a consensus that a particular individual is wanted on the council
- decide to use an expert advisor to backfill for missing expertise

Process for changing the composition of the existing council

If a member is detrimental to the process, or is not participating:

- Council chair will have an off list discussion with the person to try to correct problems.
- If unsuccessful, a super-majority (2/3) council vote can remove a member.
- Executive director is charged with generally overseeing council activities, monitoring the council for effectiveness, and initiating, or responding promptly to any council-initiated, process if need be.

Process for adding new people (if a seat is vacant)

- Annually when terms expire, the council will develop a slate of nominees for the Sakai Board. This will include soliciting nominees from the community. The slate will include at least two names for each open seat, and a recommendation from the council about which to select.
- The Board will approve members from the slate presented.

As council progresses, process for bringing in a particular area of needed expertise:

- Bring in an expert to provide guidance and information as a non-voting, limited-time participant
- The formal composition of the council will remain unchanged. Council composition will be addressed in the assessment cycle (see below).

The ongoing process: beyond the first year

Assessment

A subcommittee of the board will collect feedback, if necessary enact course corrections.

- Six month report from the council to the board to include summary of activities and proposed actions for coming six months
- Annual report from the council to the board to include:
  - summary of activities and outcomes
  - proposal for activities and outcomes in the coming year
  - each member’s private assessment of effectiveness; recommendations
- These reports will be made public to the community, with the exception of council member assessments, which will be confidential
- The council (either directly, or through the product manager or executive director) will post monthly updates to the community

Council parameters, subject to the assessment:

- Members = seven to nine
- Term = two years, starting on a staggered basis with three members being asked to serve an additional year, and three member seats up for reappointment. From then on, all seats appointed for two years. PM remains an ongoing council member.
- Council will select its own chair following Sakai board selection process
- Product manager is one of the seven voting members, and will have communication role for council to community
- Sakai Foundation board members may be considered for the Council. However, Officers of the Board (Chair and Vice Chair) will not serve in order to avoid undue influence.
  - Assessment and community input may indicate that there should not be overlap between the board and council. This is to be determined in the assessment process.
- Sakai ED is not one of the seven members; is an ex officio non-voting member

Board interaction:

- The council is chartered and formed by the Board, and can be revised or ended by the Board
- The Executive Director is responsible for an effective council, and is charged with initiating change processes if warranted.
- The Board’s interaction with the Council is through the Executive Director. The ED should report regularly to the Board on the Council’s progress and activities.