

Procedures for Electronic Meetings

Introduction

These procedures for Electronic Meetings were produced by the SSG “IMT2000 and beyond” in their development of the working procedures in Recommendation A.9. These are provided for information of the other ITU-T Study Groups.

General E-Meeting Requirements

Electronic rapporteurs, editors or other subgroup meetings (e-meetings) may be held. Study group and working party meetings shall be physical meetings. To facilitate progressing the study group work and to minimise the cost (both monetary and time) associated with face-face meetings, electronic meetings are encouraged.

The decision whether to use an electronic meeting or some other form of meeting (face to face, conference call, etc.) should be made with due regard to the nature of the work to be undertaken and should be agreed by the group concerned.

No specific mechanism is prescribed for e-meetings. A variety of technologies and mechanisms may be adopted as available, subject to the needs of the meeting and compliance with the procedures in this Recommendation. However no special requirements should be imposed on e-meeting participants other than having a suitable TIES account to enable access to the meeting documents, Internet access, and a browser or FTP client.

The terms of reference established for a specific e-meeting should be narrow and focused to minimize as far as possible the duration of the meeting and to maximize its efficiency. The terms of reference and dates for e-meetings should be agreed and advertised as for other study group subgroup meetings.

E-meetings shall not overlap with face-to-face meetings in the study group. E-meetings should not normally overlap with other e-meetings within the study group. An effort should be made to avoid overlap with key meetings of related bodies.

As e-meetings taking place over several time zones may create difficulties in coordination of delegation positions, members must have ready on-line access to all e-meeting documentation (including material produced by drafting activity.) To this end, all e-meeting documentation must be hosted on TIES.

To avoid the potential of abortive work and mistaken perception of consensus, e-meetings should be scheduled to allow participants adequate time to analyse the results of the previous meeting and to prepare and obtain approval of inputs for the next meeting. (Four weeks is the recommended minimum interval.)

To avoid the possibility of requiring work on “weekends” due to time zone differences, and to allow time for uploading contributions prior to the meeting, it is recommended that e-meetings either start on a Thursday and end on a Tuesday the second week following, or start on a Tuesday and end on the following Tuesday. This approach facilitates the coordinated establishment of meeting schedules within the study group.

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E-Meeting Duration and Schedule

The duration of e-meetings should not normally exceed fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days.

Due consideration shall be given to scheduling of the electronic discussions when e-meetings straddle weekends, noting the time zones for all the participants. Activities should be scheduled such that the discomfort or other difficulties associated with working outside normal working hours shall be shared as equitably as practicable across all the participants and all the regions involved. Formal interaction during “weekends” should be avoided. Real-time interactive activity should be limited to a maximum duration of two hours. Session start and stop times should be expressed in UTC as a common reference point which participants may use to determine local times for their own participation.

3.1 Preparation for the E-Meeting

Successful e-meetings require that adequate planning and preparation be undertaken prior to each meeting.

All contributions to the meeting should be made available on TIES. A drop box should be available for participants to upload documents for submission. Every effort should be made to minimize the volume of data to be downloaded. Suggestions for reducing the size of files to be downloaded are given in Appendix A

As for other study group sub-group meetings, if the convener, in consultation with the study group Chairman, considers that there are insufficient contributions to start the e-meeting, then the meeting shall be cancelled.

The convener shall produce a list of delegates registered for the e-meeting, and ensure that all registered delegates are informed of appropriate access arrangements such as the TIES address for the e-meeting, usernames and passwords for discussion forum boards, use of drop box, etc.

The e-meeting participants shall sign in at the meeting to indicate their presence. The convenor shall produce a list of who signed in at the e-meeting in the meeting report.

To avoid unnecessary delays in distribution of documents created during the meeting (e.g., working documents and drafting material), and to provide full and unrestricted document access to all participants at all times, such documents should be made immediately available to all participants from TIES.

3.2 E-Meeting Conference Calls

The e-meeting shall start with a conference call (maximum duration two (2) hours) to agree, for example:

- The meeting agenda
- Allocation of contributions and working documents
- Re-affirm the meeting objectives
- Items of procedure (e.g., deadlines to complete specific activities during the meeting)
- Any other urgent matters requiring real-time discussion.

Approximately halfway through the e-meeting, a conference call (checkpoint) may be arranged (maximum duration two (2) hours) with the meeting participants. The purpose of this call is to briefly review progress so far and the organisation for the remainder of the meeting.

The e-meeting may be closed by a conference call (maximum duration two (2) hours) to agree:
The conclusions and agreements of the meeting
Further work

3.3 E-Meeting Documentation

All contributions to the meeting should be made available on TIES as indicated in clause 3.5. Documents generated during the meeting shall be made available to all participants in an expeditious manner with the assistance of the TSB, the e-meeting convener or other e-meeting participants who have write privileges on TIES.

All interim meeting documentation (including working draft material created at the request of the meeting chairman in the course of drafting activity) shall be “ Working Documents” (WDs) which exist for the duration of the meeting only in accordance with normal ITU-T procedures.

3.4 E-Meeting Drafting Activities

Establishment of drafting activities must be agreed by meeting participants. A leader of the drafting activity should be identified. Drafting activities should take place during the course of the e-meeting using any means agreed by those involved in the drafting activity. Results of a drafting activity are to be submitted for approval to the e-meeting before closure of the e-meeting. When a drafting group concludes its work and submits its results to the e-meeting for approval, that drafting activity ceases.

A suggested approach for e-mail activities as a means to conduct a drafting activity is given in Appendix B.

3.5 Conclusion of the Meeting

The substance of the report shall be agreed before the conclusion of the meeting. The report of the meeting should be made available to the Study Group within a short time of the completion of the meeting, with an objective of one week after the end of the meeting. The availability of the report should be announced using a suitable email reflector maintained by the TSB. It is the responsibility of the e-meeting convener to do this.

Appendix A

Suggestions for Reducing the Size of Files to be Downloaded

The following suggestions should be considered to assist delegates in minimizing the time and effort needed to download files for e-meetings:

- When using Microsoft Word, do not use the “Fast Save” option. This reduces file size by consolidating changes into the main part of the file instead of appending a list of changes to the text which are processed when the file is displayed.
- Manage Microsoft Word style sheets associated with a document to avoid style proliferation that may result from consolidating documents from multiple sources.
- When documents include diagrams that exist elsewhere and are unchanged, do not include them but insert a brief text reference to where the existing unchanged diagram may be found. This minimizes repetitive downloading of often significant data volume associated with diagrams.
- When diagrams or graphics need to be inserted, create the diagram or graphic in a separate file and then use “Insert/Picture/From File...” instead of “Edit/Copy” followed by “Edit/Paste” or “Edit/Paste Special...” The latter approach may result in file size changes on the order of ten times the size of the graphic compared to the former approach.
- Use ellipses (...) or other descriptive means to indicate skipped text to avoid repeating unchanged text when proposing text changes.
- Avoid including multiple proposals in one document; these should be handled in multiple documents in order to minimize the amount of information in each document and therefore to minimize the time needed to download any one document.
- Consider using commonly available compression tools to minimize the file size.
- When creating pdf files, select options to avoid unnecessarily high levels of resolution and the associated file size impacts from graphics included in these documents.

Appendix B

Suggested approach for e-mail activities as a means to conduct a drafting activity

Where drafting requires it, e-mail discussion may be held during the meeting; considering that all participants in the e-meeting agree. These e-mail discussions shall be open to all e-meeting participants, and be specific based on a single thread of discussion. The Discussion Thread shall be indicated at the beginning of the e-mail title, in the e-mail header, to allow ease of e-mail management and tracing of the discussion thread in common e-mail clients. The syntax of the Discussion Thread shall be indicated by [abcde] (where abcde = text string). The abcde text string Discussion Thread indicator shall be chosen by the E-meeting drafting activity contact point in liaison with the E-meeting chairman. The Discussion Thread shall be closed before the closure of the E-meeting drafting activity. The results of these E-mail activities shall report to the E-meeting Drafting Activity contact point.

Several Discussion (more than one) threads may take place in one E-meeting drafting activity, however these should be minimised as too many threads will make participation very difficult and nearly impossible (the suggested limit is (X) where X=5). It is not recommended to hold complete e-meetings (rapporteurs, working party or study group) by e-mail as the number of Discussion Threads will become too many and it will become extremely difficult to draw clear conclusions afterwards.
