**Reviewer and program chair guidelines for paper submissions to the Workshop on ns-3**

The following guidelines for reviewing and scoring submissions to Workshop on ns-3, as well as the policy for handling papers with mixed reviews, were discussed and agreed at the 2015 annual meeting of the ns-3 Consortium, where it was agreed that some of the informal policies and procedures that have been used in years past should be written down.

**Paper review process**

*Reviewing criteria.*  Reviewers are requested to score papers according to traditional metrics of overall quality, clarity, and technical correctness, but also keeping in mind that the aim of WNS3 is to disseminate information and results to the ns-3 community, and that workshops in general permit authors to report on results that are still undergoing further work.  We have had instances in the past where different reviewers used different criteria of technical rigor and completeness, leading to greatly different recommendations for acceptance for the same paper.  The technical results should be graded more leniently than they might be for a journal or major conference, where the research results may be expected to be more complete and thorough.  This reviewing discrepancy has, in the past, occurred for some industrial submissions, which are often written in a different style than an academic submission.  However, despite this guidance for leniency in this regard, we emphasize that reviewers should be comfortable from a technical correctness and presentation quality perspective before recommending to accept a paper.

*Conditional acceptance.*  Papers with minor flaws that can likely be corrected during a brief editing cycle with the TPC chairs should not be rejected solely on such correctable flaws.  Papers with flaws that would require significant work (e.g. fixing a model's flaws and regenerating all simulation results) should not be considered to be correctable and should be rejected.  Below we outline a process for the TPC chairs to handle papers for which reviewers request minor corrections.   If a reviewer would like to conditionally accept a paper (with a request to correct minor issues), he or she should communicate that as part of your review.

*Software availability.*  Reproducibility of results (making simulation programs and scripts available) is requested of paper submissions.  This is not a hard requirement, and reviewers should understand that submitters may not be able to comply with this for various reasons.  However, reviewers should consider the availability of such software as a positive artifact of the paper, and are encouraged to check the URLs for themselves to decide whether the submitter is conforming to the spirit of the request for reproducibility.

*Confidentiality.*  Confidentiality of reviewers shall be maintained throughout the process and the reviewer should take care not to make comments that might easily disclose his or her identity.

*Conflict of interest.*  Reviewers should decline to review any paper for which they have a conflict of interest.  Example guidelines for the U.S. National Science Foundation are posted at [https://www.nsf.gov/od/ogc/panelists_conflict_of_interest_training.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/od/ogc/panelists_conflict_of_interest_training.jsp).  In particular, please refrain from reviewing papers in which a co-author has been a collaborator of yours within the past 48 months, for which you have an institutional conflict, or when the general catch-all of "Would a reasonable person with all the relevant facts question your impartiality?" may apply.

*Plagiarism.*  Finally, we have had instances of plagiarism (both self-plagiarism and plagiarism of other's work) in WNS3 submissions in the past, so please be on the watch for such cases.  If you

believe that a submission contains plagiarism, please report it to the TPC chairs. The TPC chairs will follow the ACM guidelines (http://www.acm.org/publications/policies/plagiarism_policy) for handling such cases.

**Paper acceptance process**

*Acceptance.* The TPC chairs are responsible for making final decisions on paper acceptance, and all reject decisions are final and may not be appealed or contested.

*Reviews per submission.* The TPC chairs are responsible for obtaining at least three reviews per paper. In some cases, it may be possible to accept a strongly scoring paper with only two reviews, but the TPC chairs should never reject a paper with fewer than three reviews. The TPC chairs may themselves write one of the three reviews.

*Uniformity of reviews.* The TPC chairs are responsible for making an acceptance decision primarily on the basis of the submitted reviews, but should attempt to examine all of the submissions and reviews to ensure that the reviews have some level of uniformity (i.e., a paper did not unfairly benefit from or suffer from the set of reviewers assigned, in comparison with others). In practical terms, the TPC chairs should try to ensure that authors of a rejected paper would not have a reasonable basis for complaining that some other accepted paper was of demonstrably inferior quality, but that such accepted paper benefited from more lenient reviewers.

*Number of accepted papers.* The TPC chairs have some degree of flexibility in determining the number of papers accepted. Rather than determining in advance that a fixed number of submissions will be accepted, the TPC chairs should instead try to find an appropriate or natural cutoff point, and work with the general chair to develop a program schedule that accommodates this set of papers.

*Accepting papers despite negative reviews.* In general, the TPC chairs should avoid accepting papers for which a reviewer has recommended a reject, unless they believe the reject decision to be inappropriate for some reason, and if so, they should communicate that to the reviewer.

*Shepherding of conditionally accepted papers.* If one or more reviewers requests that a paper be conditionally accepted, and the TPC chairs decide to accept the paper, the TPC chairs should either work directly with the authors or should appoint an impartial 'shepherd' (not one of the original reviewers) to work with the authors to make the requested changes by the requested date. In either case, all reviewers should be notified of this decision and the changes that will be made to the paper to accommodate the conditional acceptance. The confidentiality of the reviewers should not be disclosed by the shepherd; the shepherd will serve as the direct point of contact with the authors.

*Handling disparate reviews.* There have been instances in the past where reviewers strongly disagree about the paper (for instance, reviews of "strong reject", "neutral", and "strong accept"). In such instances, the TPC chairs should assess the paper themselves, including possibly asking a expert on the paper topic for a fourth review. If a decision is made to override the reject decision, the TPC chairs should carefully outline to the reviewer why they would like to override and work with the reviewer on whether there are specific changes that can be made to overcome the reason for rejection. If the paper remains controversial after this attempt, the TPC should probably reject the paper at this point. If, however, there appears to be a path towards revising the paper to overcome the objection, the TPC chairs should appoint a 'shepherd' (not one of the original reviewers) to work with the reviewers and authors on the revisions agreed upon, following the process of conditional acceptance.