# Web Advisory Committee

# Domain Name Resolution Subgroup

# Project Charter

### Goals:

* Make recommendations to the Web Advisory Committee on issues related to domain name conflict resolution.
* Identify and document best practices for use of domain names on Waterloo websites.

### Scope:

All University of Waterloo websites and all hosts in the 129.97 domain.

### Specific Objectives:

Provide recommendations on the following:

1. **Domain Name Conflict Resolution.** What process should be used to resolve issues when two organizations on campus want to use the same domain name? E.g., when the Sociology Department wants to use http://soc.uwaterloo.ca and it is already in use by the Student Orientation Committee.
2. **Misleading Domain Names**. What process should be used when an organization is using a domain name that does not reflect its mission? E.g., a student who wants to use http://president.uwaterloo.ca
3. **Domain Name versus Folders** on a website. When should a domain name be used and when should a folder structure be used? E.g., http://www.ahs.uwaterloo.ca/kin or http://kin.uwaterloo.ca
4. **The ‘www’ Prefix.** When should the prefix ‘www’ be used on a web site? E.g., http://www.ist.uwaterloo.ca v. http://ist.uwaterloo.ca
5. **Externally Hosted Domain Names.** Should UW websites be hosted (or appear to be hosted) on external domains (e.g., iqc.ca)? How can external domain names be handled to avoid problems such as ‘askthewarrior.ca’, whose registration was left to lapse and was subsequently acquired by someone who used it to conduct non-university business?

### Members:

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### Recommendations:

1. When a domain name is being used by one organization and another organization wants it or feels they have a legitimate right to it, the Committee recommends the following escalation path: local network administrators, CTSC representatives, Deans, and Associate Provost for Information Systems & Technology. A variety of factors should be considered, including but not limited to: how long the domain name has been in use by the existing organization; how disruptive the change is likely to be; whether there are viable alternatives; whether the domain name more appropriately lies in one unit or another, etc. The Committee hopes that an amicable decision can be made early on in the process but believes that the final decision should rest with the Associate Provost for Information Systems and Technology.
2. Misleading domain names or domains that could easily be misconstrued as referring to some other organization or person should not be allowed within the uwaterloo.ca domain. The same escalation path as noted above in our first recommendation should be used to ensure that misleading domain names are taken down or renamed appropriately.
3. After broad consultation with the Waterloo community, the Committee is not prepared to make a recommendation on this topic at this time. Further investigation into the Web Content Management System’s requirements and migration process are needed.
4. With respect to the ‘www’ prefix, the Committee recognizes that there is a history of the use of ‘www’ in URLs. The prevailing practice is that when a domain name is registered for the purpose of a web site, a corresponding CNAME record with a `www’ prefix is also created. We believe that this practice will have to continue. However, where possible, the `www’ URL should redirect to the non-`www’ URL using a permanent redirect or similar method.
5. The Committee believes that the use of an external domain name leaves the University in a precarious and potentially liable situation. Domain names that are abandoned and not properly dismantled may be picked up by others, who may use them for embarrassing purposes or to masquerade as a Waterloo website for illegitimate purposes. It is important that the University manage and control any external domain names that represent the institution. Our general recommendation is that all web sites should be hosted on internal uwaterloo.ca domain names. However, we do recognize that there are currently exceptions to this general rule, and that future exceptions will be inevitable. To manage these exceptions, the Committee recommends various levels of requirement for external sites as outlined below.
   1. Official UW websites (i.e., those of the institution itself, a faculty, a department or school) should be hosted on a server in the uwaterloo.ca domain. In practice, if the site is displaying the UW crest/word-mark then it should be hosted on a uwaterloo.ca site. Future external domains should be discouraged and all exceptions should require an approval process as prescribed below.
   2. Research groups should be encouraged to use a uwaterloo.ca host. For a variety of reasons (funding affiliations, joint projects, etc.), they may wish to use an external domain name. Just as we do not force them to use the UW Common Look and Feel for their websites, we do not believe that we should force them to use an internal domain name. They should, however, follow the prescribed approval process for the external domain name as outlined below.
   3. Conferences should, where possible, be hosted on a uwaterloo.ca site, rather than off-campus hosting. This is not always practical (e.g., canheit.ca), but such domain names are generally well controlled by the organization and are not a problem. Other “one-off” conferences, if they must use an external domain name, should petition for approval as outlined below.
   4. Other uses, such as marketing campaigns, recruitment campaigns or funding efforts that tend to be temporal in nature are inevitable and difficult to predict. Any use of an external domain for these should follow the approval process below.

**Approval Process for External Domain Names:**

The Committee recommends an approval process for all external domain names. We envision that an individual or group, possibly the UW Web Steering Committee, be charged with approving all external domain names hosted on University servers. Guidelines should be setup outlining appropriate uses of external domain names and a method to petition for one. If approved, the University would purchase and control the name (i.e., be listed as the billing and administrative contacts for the domain in WHOIS). In this way, the University (possibly IST Network Services) could track expiring domain names and take appropriate actions.