



Canonical Open Documentation Academy

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What is CODA?

Canonical's initiative to make open source contributions easier through documentation

Blog

Introducing Canonical's Open Documentation Academy

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Tags: [documentation](#)

ldr; Our Open Documentation Academy starts this week with our first weekly **Documentation Office Hours** on Friday 1st March 2024 at 16:00 UTC. Everyone is welcome! Keep reading, or see our [forum post](#) for more details and to leave questions.

Many of us at Canonical wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Linux and open source. Their availability and accessibility helped so many of us to get involved, wherever we were in the world. We didn't need to ask for permission.

Open and inclusive collaboration, and the sharing of ideas, remains the best way to develop software (and to do many other things!), but we also recognise that this "getting involved" step can be difficult. Where do you start? Who do you ask? What needs to be done?

It shouldn't be this difficult. Open source projects should be as open to new contributors as they are to critical bug fixes, because new contributors are the next generation of critical bug fixers.

One of the problems is the lack of an established *Getting involved process*. At Canonical, this is something we can solve, and we want to help solve it together by inviting contributors to write documentation.



How do we do this?

A GitHub repository with a curated list of issues

The screenshot displays a GitHub repository interface. At the top, it shows 40 open issues and 34 closed issues. A list of issues is visible, including:

- Netplan: Improve "How-to contribute to docs" (how-to, size 2, update)
- Ubuntu WSL: write alt text for images (accessibility, edit, media, size 3, wsl)
- Launchpad: group articles of the Explanation section into proper subsections
- Multipass: Add a section for Linux under "How to troubleshoot networking" (code, help wanted, how-to, new, size 5)
- Multipass: Improve documentation for the "multipass mount" command (help wanted, new, reference, size 2)
- Multipass: Split sub how-tos out of "How to set up the driver" (diataxis, edit, help wanted, how-to, size 3)
- Netplan: Create snippet files for single-sourcing repetitive instructions (edit, help wanted, how-to, size 2)
- Netplan: Add guidance on setting up how-to environment (help wanted, how-to, new, size 3)
- Ubuntu Packaging Guide: Fix repo README (edit, good first issue, size 1, update)
- Netplan: Add guidance on testing how-to results (help wanted, how-to, new, size 3)
- Netplan: Add netplan try to Netplan tutorial (help wanted, new, size 2, tutorial)

Below the issues list, there is a section titled "Discover open source through documentation" with the following text:

The Open Documentation Academy combines Canonical's documentation team with documentation newcomers, experts, and those in-between, to help us all improve documentation practice and become better writers. Fill blanks in your resume and paint your GitHub activity tracker golden.

If you're a newcomer, we can provide help, advice, mentorship, and a hundred different tasks to get started on. If you're an expert, we want to create a place to share knowledge, a place to get involved with new developments, and somewhere you can ask for help on your own projects.

A key aim of this initiative is to help lower the barrier into successful open-source software contribution, by making documentation into the gateway.

At the bottom right, there is a "Contributors" section showing 17 contributors and a "Languages" section showing shell at 100.0%.



How do we do this?

The documentation
office hours

Every Friday

[Meeting link](#)

[Recording index](#)

[Schedule](#)

The screenshot shows a YouTube playlist titled "Documentation Academy" on the Ubuntu OnAir channel. The playlist contains 24 videos with 227 views, updated 6 days ago. The main video player shows a video titled "Differences" with a thumbnail of a woman speaking. Below the player are controls for "Play all" and "Shuffle".

The video list on the right includes:

- 1 ODH-021: The differences between a how-to and a tutorial (50:45)
- 2 ODH-020: 10 Ways to document terminal commands (53:02)
- 3 ODH-009: Jira for documentation task management (17:40)
- 4 ODH-019: Open discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and documentation. (57:20)
- 5 ODH-018: Technical author or technical writer (54:00)
- 6 ODH-017: Get hired as a technical writer (or author) (49:10)
- 7 ODH-016: Vale for testing documentation (42:51)



Why are we doing this?

Set a standard for collaboration



Our promise on community engagement



Reduce entry barrier for FOSS contributions





What does this mean for you?



A new model for collaboration



Contribute to tasks and solutions



Recognised experience



Networking opportunities



More documentation skills



What does this mean for the community?



More open source contributions



Meaningful contributions



First contributions to some projects



Continuous improvement



Resources

[GitHub repo](#)

[Office hours playlist](#)

[Discourse](#)

[Additional resources](#)



The story so far ..

We started in Jan 2024

Over 130 issues, from 15 different projects, with ~40 currently open

Issue consumption rate

- within hours
- closed in a day
- closed before assignment!
- open for months

Types of issues

- small changes
- tutorial trials
- new content design
- new functionality with coding





Some interesting experiences

Multiple assignees for a single issue

Multiple TAs for a single issue

Scepticism turning into advocacy

Considerable extra work for us

- not free labour!
- provide guidance about 'why'
- create simpler doc set
- try different approaches

The screenshot shows a GitHub issue thread. At the top right, under 'Assignees', two users are listed: **krzysiekwie** and **maxsaint-festin**. Below that, under 'Labels', there are three labels: **edit**, **good first issue**, and **size 1**. The main thread consists of three messages:

- A comment from **k-dimple** on Mar 12: "Yeah, I think you can go ahead and c @degville would you be able to help" with a smiley face emoji.
- A mention from **activus-d**: "Public cloud: Moved a how canonical/ubuntu-cloud-docs".
- A comment from **degville** on Mar 12: "@degville would you be able to h Yes, of course. I know what the probl".

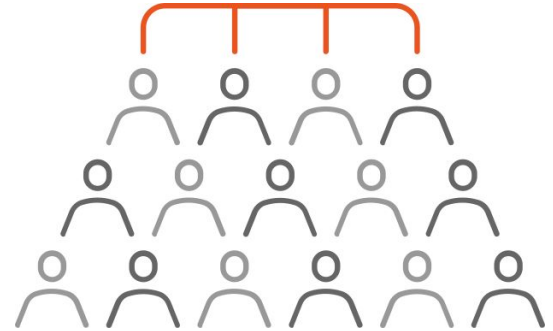


Perceptions and dreams

Genuinely helpful, welcoming & educational

- unlike a lot of open source
- no closed door development
- even small fixes are welcome
- code of conduct
- not a start-up

Similar academies for RedHat, Suse .. resulting in a super academy!





Thank you! Questions?

Email us at docsacademy@canonical.com