

Time Assignment Committee (TAC) assessment

Observatories/telescopes assign time through a competitive process that usually involves ranking by a TAC, with technical input from observatory staff. In this assignment, you will be role-playing a TAC for the Gemini telescope. Seven real telescope proposals have been supplied by Steph Cote at the Canadian Gemini Office (CGO), with the permission of their PIs, plus the technical assessment done by the CGO.

VERY IMPORTANT: These proposals must be treated as confidential. They have been supplied by the PIs on the understanding that they are only to be used for the purpose of this class assignment. Please treat them in the highest confidence (as you would have to in a real TAC situation).

Your task:

1) **Read all of the proposals ahead of time**, and with the help of the technical reports provided by the CGO consider the following points (make notes ready for the in-class discussion):

- Is the science case clear and compelling?
- Is the science case original and likely to lead to impactful results?
- Is the project feasible with the observations proposed?
- Is the instrument/set-up choice appropriate?
- Are the observing condition choices appropriate?
- Is the choice of classical/queue appropriate?
- Is the need for Gemini (as opposed to another telescope) justified?
- Are the targets well justified? E.g. sample size, night sky position etc.

If you have questions about the technical reviews from the CGO, please email Steph directly: Stephanie.Cote@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca.

2) **In class (April 5)**, the mock TAC will proceed as follows.

- The first reader on each proposal (see below) gives a verbal overview of the proposal: context, science goals, objectives, experimental design etc. This should take 3-4 minutes (untimed, just as a guide).
- The second reader adds any additional information (or difference of opinion) to the first reader's summary (1-2 minutes, approximately).
- Everyone discusses the proposal.

Each proposal should take no more than about 10 minutes each.

- 3) **By 5pm April 6 (day after class!)** you must submit to Sara by email:
- A grade for every proposal: grades should range from 1 (terrible proposal – should definitely not get time) to 5 (fantastic proposal – should be at the head of the queue).
 - A short description of your motivation for the grade given (no more than half a page per proposal).
 - Only for the proposals on which you are first reader: Feedback letter to the PI.

Feedback letters: These should be written in a professional and courteous way that conveys to the PI the things that the TAC did/did not like about the proposal, and hence how the proposal could be improved next time. I suggest a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) each on the strengths and weaknesses. However, if the proposal is great, it is fine to say that there were no weaknesses!

Your grade for this assignment will take into account:

- Quality and completeness of first/second reader summaries as presented in the TAC meeting (30%)
- Your participation in the group discussion (20%)
- Rationale of final grade (30%)
- Feedback letters to PI (20%)

The short timeline for your final materials is designed to replicate a real life TAC (members are often not allowed to leave the site until they have submitted all their reviews)! I suggest that you write a first draft of your grade rationales and letters to the PI (first readers only) in advance of the TAC, so you can just tweak it based on discussions in class.

First/second reader allocations:

Proposal #	PI name	1 st reader	2 nd reader
GEMC2	Chene	Clare	Brittany
GEMC5	Spekkens	Brittany	Mallory
GEMC6	Davidge	Mallory	Spencer
GEMC19	McConnell	Brittany	Spencer
GEMC37	Gagne	Spencer	Brittany
GEMC40	Sanchez-Janssen	Mallory	Clare
GEMC49	Blakeslee	Spencer	Mallory

NB – 2 first/second reader allocations each, apart from Clare who is just participating for fun!