

# ATNF Time Assignment Committee update

Adam Deller (TAC chair), 9 Nov 2022



# TAC overview



- From [https://www.atnf.csiro.au/management/tac/ATNF\\_TAC-procedures.pdf](https://www.atnf.csiro.au/management/tac/ATNF_TAC-procedures.pdf):
  - *“The TAC’s primary responsibility is to review and grade proposals based on their scientific merit and technical feasibility.” (subsequent scheduling of proposals on the facilities is consistent with the scientific priorities determined by the TAC, and is the responsibility of the ATNF Director through the ATNF Head of Science Operations)*
- Process:
  - Proposals are read and assigned grades by a minimum of 4 TAC contributors
  - Then a 2-2.5 day meeting to reconcile grades/feedback and finalise scores
  - TAC is sometimes also asked to provide feedback and/or suggestions on policy
- TAC composition
  - 9 members including A. Deller as chair (written evaluations and then meeting), plus 4 ATNF “ex-officio” staff
  - 11 “readers” (written evaluations only)

# Context: oversubscription rates

Semester	Parkes	ATCA	LBA
2022OCT	1.1	1.3	>1.3
2022APR	0.8	1.7	>1.3
2021OCT	1.1	1.7	>1.7
2021APR	1.6	1.3	>1.2
2020OCT	1.5	1.4	>2.1

LBA projects stay active for two semesters, so the true oversubscription rate is somewhere between 1.0x and 2.0x the number shown

# Current grading approaches



- Each proposal is graded from 0.0 (impossibly bad) to 5.0 (perfect) by each member/reader that is assigned
- Each member/reader's grades are then normalized to a common mean (3.6) and standard deviation (0.6) prior to averaging across assessors
  - Advantage: mitigates against a consistently generous (or grumpy) assessor
  - Disadvantage: cannot account for intrinsic variation in proposal quality assigned to each assessor
- Unconscious bias mitigation:
  - Proposals are reviewed without knowledge of the team members
  - Science justifications must not identify team (large project team capacity by initials): education over enforcement so far, will be policed more strictly now

# Planned changes to the TAC process

- Providing a rubric to readers/members:
  - Not changing the criteria; guidance on formalising the scoring (previously absolute score didn't really matter, only dynamic range)
  - Enables us to do away with normalization
- Changing the feedback to proposers:
  - Still receive a score from 0-5 (how "good" was the proposal)
  - But will now also receive a rank-ordering result (i.e., top quartile, second quartile – reporting quartile/quintile/decile to be decided); how did it compare to other proposals this semester
  - Previously proposers received one number ("the grade"): effectively it was a proxy for the latter quantity, but was presented like it was the former quantity

# What can YOU do?

- Provide feedback on the TAC process via ATUC
  - Particularly on the current and near-future changes
  - And/or what you'd like to see from OPAL
- Volunteer to serve! Many benefits...
  - Read lots of interesting science
  - Learn how to craft an excellent proposal (by reading the good and the bad!)
  - Readers get most of the benefits at a reduced load

