STScI | SPACE TELESCOPE SCIENCE INSTITUTE

EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF SPACE ASTRONOMY

JWST Cycle 5 External Panelist Orientation

Presenters: Amaya Moro-Martín, Jeff Valenti, and Rebecca Levy
on behalf of the STScI Science Policy Division

November 12, 2025

https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information

Today's Orientation

1. Welcome from the STScI Director's Office (Nancy Levenson)
2. Welcome from the TAC Chairs (Mark Wyatt, Xiaohui Fan)
3. JWST Cycle 5 Observatory Perspective (Jeff Valenti)
4. Time Allocation Committee Orientation (Amaya Moro-Martín)
    - Overview
    - The Review Process
    - Dual Anonymous Peer Review (Rebecca Levy)
    - Policy Issues
    - Personnel and Logistics
5. Questions and Answers

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EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF SPACE ASTRONOMY

JWST Cycle 5 Observatory Briefing

Jeff Valenti
JWST Mission Scientist

JWST continues to exceed expectations

- Telescope
  - Wavefront error is ~67 nm after routine corrections (requirement was 130 nm)
  - Diffraction limited down to 1.1 µm (requirement was down to 2 µm)
- Guider
  - Guiding success rate continues to improve (~98%), especially in crowded fields
  - Aperture locations in the focal plane have been measured more precisely
- Instruments
  - All instruments continue to perform very well
  - MIRI MRS 4C and Imager 25 µm count rate loss is slowing (e.g., Figure 5 in JDox)
- Calibration
  - Many enhancements to the quality of data products. More work to be done

New capabilities for Cycle 5

- NIRISS SOSS "multistripe" (detector mode)
  - Increases bright limit from J ~ 8.4 mag to J ~ 3.5 mag (Table 1 in JDox)
  - Interleaves integrations of different sections of the spectrum (Figure 2 in JDox)
- MIRI WFSS
  - 5 – 14 µm spectra at R ~ 100 over 1.2' x 1.9' FOV
  - First new template in APT since launch (See Figure 1 in JDox)
- NIRSpec IFU Spectroscopy + NIRCam Imaging coordinated parallels
- Moving target "shadow" observations
  - Observe smeared background sources without the foreground moving target
- New MIRI subarray sizes to mitigate 390 Hz EMI noise
- New NIRCam dithers for NIRSpec MSA pre-imaging

NIRCam Grism Time Series with short wavelength (DHS) spectra

- The new NIRCam DHS capability was introduced in Cycle 4
  - First application of the new "multistripe" detector capability
  - DHS is used by two approved Cycle 4 programs
  - Those two programs will execute, but they will start later than planned
- Unexpected detector behavior during first test observation
  - Root cause of the behavior is fully understood and is specific to NIRCam
  - The fix was a simple software change, which has been implemented
  - Testing on the ground is complete, a flight test is imminent
- NIRCam DHS will be working by the start of Cycle 5

New tool to explore pure parallel observing scenarios

- The `jwpure` software package facilitates statistical analysis of JWST pure parallel observing scenarios, based on historical data from previous observing cycles. Proposers do not have to use this software.
- The information and links below may help reviewers understand any jwpure results that appear in proposals.
- The package supports planning and evaluation of future pure parallel programs by quantifying the availability of past observing opportunities under specific constraints needed for a future program.
  - Example constraints: prime instrument, number of required instrument configurations, exposure time, number of dithers, position in the sky
- Documentation on the github wiki describes the algorithm (which is not trivial) and the resulting summary table.

Check that special requirements are scientifically justified

- Timing constraints make scheduling harder for the constrained program and others
  - Explicit timing constraints (e.g., period and phase)
  - Roll angle constraints, which are implicit timing constraints
  - Coordination with other observatories
- Disruptive targets of opportunity are disruptive
  - Operations staff have to build and uplink a new short-term schedule
  - Other observers discover very late that their observations will be delayed
- Coordinated parallels use observatory resources
  - Mechanism usage
  - Recorder space and especially downlink bandwidth
  - Parallel slots can also used by pure parallel programs

Considerations when evaluating GO calibration proposals

- 18 GO calibration programs approved in cycles 1-4
  - 13 observing programs
    - 6 measured observatory behavior (e.g., PSF, fringes, wavelengths, charge migration)
    - 3 tested a new observing mode or strategy (e.g., MRS TSO, hexagonal dithers for coronagraphy)
    - 2 calibrated data ignored by the pipeline (SOSS order 3, NIRCam WFSS order 2)
    - 2 demonstrated a new data analysis techniques (kernel phase imaging, phase retrieval)
  - 5 archival programs
    - 4 measured observatory behavior (e.g., NIRCam wisps, MSA flux calibration, MIRI imaging PSF)
    - 1 measured observatory environment (e.g., Zodiacal and extragalactic background)
- GO calibration programs are not free
  - Some use prime observing time (149 hours, drawn from pool of available hours)
  - Some require STScI software development (delays other new capabilities)
  - All use grant funding
- If the idea is compelling, the opportunity is available

Final thoughts

- Please ask if technical aspects of a proposal are unclear. Otherwise, assume proposals are feasible.
- STScI will review accepted programs and recommend revisions, if appropriate. Proposals do not have to be technically perfect.
- Thank you for contributing to the success of JWST!

Telescope Allocation Committee (TAC) Orientation

Reminders

- Review the documentation in the Peer Review Guide.
  - https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/jwst-peer-review-guide
- Check for conflicts, report any to your Panel Support Scientist (PSS) *immediately*
- Report any possible policy violations to your PSS or Science Policy Division (SPD) manager as soon as you notice them! (DAPR, page limits, format, lack of justification of Special Requirements)
- Do not use any generative language AI (e.g., ChatGPT) for assistance in writing or editing comments as this violates Confidentiality (because that information goes into the public domain).
- Schedule enough time in the next couple months to review and grade your assigned proposals by the deadline of January 9, 2026.

JWST Peer Review Guide

Thank you for taking part in the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) science peer review process. We truly value your expertise and your willingness to serve the astronomical community in this important activity. Your contribution plays an important role in maximizing the science return of the mission.

The proposal selection process is organized by the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI). More information on everything listed here can be found on subsequent pages. This page is intended to give a high-level summary of the overall process.

On this page

JWST Telescope Allocation Committee (TAC)

The task of the JWST TAC is to recommend a Science Program to the STScI Director in response to the Call for Proposals. The STScI Director is the Selecting Official for JWST. Based on the TAC recommendations, the Director makes the final allocation of observing time and funding.

Proposals are selected through competitive and dual-anonymous peer review. A broad range of scientists from the international astronomical and planetary science communities evaluates and ranks all submitted proposals using a well-defined set of criteria and paying special attention to any potential conflicts of interest.

Review panelists are chosen by the Science Policy Division (SPD) at STScI based on their scientific expertise in the areas under review by the topical panels. All panels in a given Science Category are assigned an **SPD Panel Manager**. Proposals are assigned by SPD to individual reviewers based on the reviewers' expertise, partly on the keywords given in the proposal, and partly on analysis of the proposal text by STScI-developed tools, while avoiding conflicts of interest.

Depending on their size and type, proposals are reviewed either by the **Executive Committees** (with face-to-face in-person meetings), by the **Discussion** panels (with face-to-face online meetings), or by the **External** panels (which provide asynchronous reviews), described below. All panelists read their assigned proposals, and then grade on an absolute scale against the primary criteria. Panelists also write Proposal Feedback Comments for a subset (**Discussion**) or all (**External**) of their assigned proposals.

There are two **TAC Chairs** overseeing the entire review process.

The Executive Committees

There are two **Executive Committees** (ECs), one for the **Galactic** panels (Solar System; Exoplanet Atmospheres and Habitability; Exoplanetary System Formation and Dynamics; Stars and Stellar Populations; Gas, Dust, and the ISM), and one for the **Extragalactic** panels (Nearby Galaxies to Cosmic Noon; High-Redshift Galaxies and the Distant Universe; Super Massive Black Holes and Active Galaxies).
Each EC is comprised of one **TAC Chair** and the **Chairs** and **Vice Chairs** from all of the corresponding Discussion panels.

External Panelists

Proposals reviewed by the **External** panels are subject to a one-stage review process.

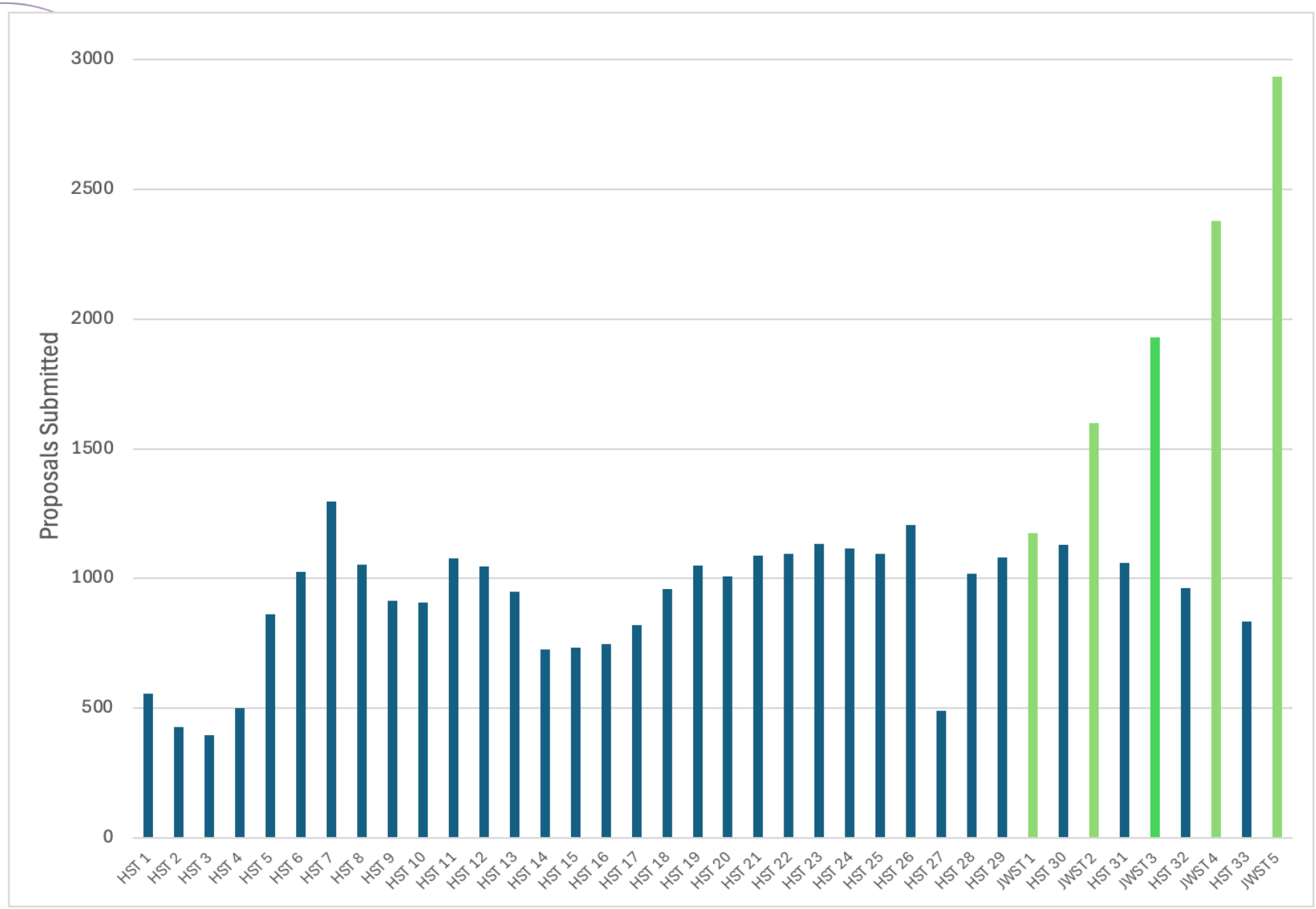
External panelists will read and grade and provide feedback comments for all proposals that they are assigned.

Prep Work & General Info	Grading & Comments
Before November 12, 2025	November 12, 2025 - January 9, 2026
Before getting started, familiarize yourself with the review process, JWST and its instruments, the types of proposals you will be reviewing, and who to ask for help!	During this phase, you will: • Check for and report additional conflicts of interest with your assigned proposals. • Read your assigned proposals (a subset of the proposals assigned to your panel). • Enter numerical scores as grades for each proposal you are assigned. • Write brief proposal feedback comments (strengths and weaknesses) for each proposal you are assigned. **Reviewers are forbidden from uploading proposal content or review materials to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) tools since this violates the confidentiality of the review process.** • STScI will use the grades received by each reviewer assigned to each proposal to rank the proposals in the panel. The top proposals likely to be recommended for acceptance are provided to the panel Chairs of the face-to-face Discussion panels of that same Scientific Category prior to the meeting to identify potential duplications and monitor programmatic balance. • **Report to the Science Policy Division, and as soon as possible, any proposal that you think should be disqualified for violating proposal guidelines (e.g. DAPR, page limits, font size, etc.).** Please remember to remove review materials from your computer after the review.
Learn more about: • Code of Conduct • Confidentiality • Conflicts of Interest • JWST and its Instruments • Proposal Types, Sizes, and Science Areas • Tips for a Smooth Review • Who to Contact for Help	Learn more about: • Accessing and using SPIRIT • Dual-anonymous Review • Selection Criteria and Scoring System • Proposal Feedback Comments • Archive of Orientation Sessions Useful topics from previous phases: • Confidentiality • Reporting additional conflicts • Who to Contact for Help
Important Dates and Deadlines:	Important Dates and Deadlines:

Maximizing the science return from JWST is a community effort

- This peer-review is a community effort that ensures a thoughtful and fair evaluation, and that the science that gets on the telescope is deserving JWST invaluable resources.
- The JWST Cycle 5 TAC is supported by 550 panelists, including
  - Executive Committee members (37)
    - 2 EC Chairs + 34 Panel Chairs and Vice Chairs + 1 At-large member
    - Review Large GO (> 130 hours), Treasury GO, Legacy AR, Pure Parallels.
  - Discussion panelists (191)
    - 114 Galactic panelists (11 panels) + 77 Extragalactic panelists (7 panels)
    - Review Small (> 20 and ≤ 50 hours), Medium (> 50 and ≤ 130 hours), all ToO and Surveys.
    - Provides feedback to Chair/Vice Chair on EC proposals.
  - **External panelists (322)** **You are here**
    - **Review Very Small (≤ 20 hours), Regular AR proposals.**
- **2935** proposals have been submitted in Cycle 5 (2374 in Cycle 4).
  - 8,000 hours available in Cycle 5 (reduced from 8,500 hours in Cycle 4 to continue tuning the program pool to maintain scheduling efficiency while completing programs in a timely manner).

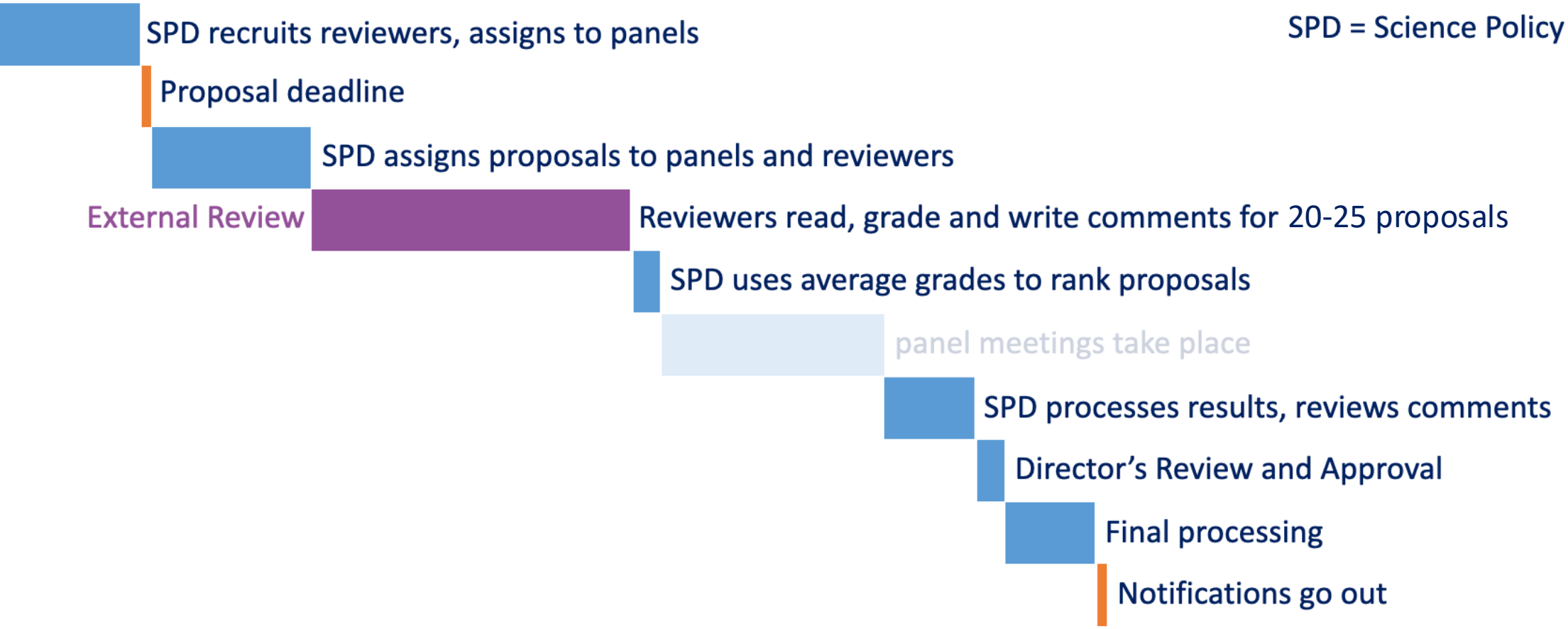
Cycle 5 Proposal Submissions



JWST Cycle 5 represents the largest number of proposals received by any observatory in response to a Call for Proposals!

Overview

Overview of the Review Process



SPD = Science Policy Division

Overview of the Review Process

SPD recruits reviewers, assigns to panels

Proposal deadline

SPD assigns proposals to panels and reviewers

External Review

Reviewers read, grade and write comments for 20-25 proposals by January 9, 2026.

SPD uses average grades to rank proposals

no meeting

SPD processes results, reviews comments

Director's Review and Approval

Final processing

Notifications go out

SPD = Science Policy Division

JWST Cycle 5 Proposal Review Schedule

Your tasks and deadline

Date	Milestone
October 15, 2025	GO/AR Cycle 5 Proposal Deadline
November 12, 2025	Orientation meeting for External panelists
November 12, 2025	**STScI Releases proposals to panelists for review and grading**
January 9, 2026	**Deadline for panelists to submit grades for proposals that they are assigned**
	External panels do not meet
February 2 – February 6, 2026	Telescope Allocation Committee Meetings: Discussion Panels
February 9 – 12, 2026	Telescope Allocation Committee Meetings: Executive Committees Meeting
Early-Mid March 2026	PI notification letters are distributed
July 1, 2026	Beginning of Cycle 5 Observations

There are 8 External panels corresponding to 8 Scientific Categories

Scientific Category	Galactic Panels
Solar System	Observe or analyze data relevant to objects within the Solar System
Exoplanet Atmospheres and Habitability	Atmospheric properties and/or chemical composition of exoplanets or related objects, through direct or indirect observations or data analysis, or theoretical analysis
Exoplanetary System Formation and Dynamics	Planet formation, including investigations of the structure and chemical composition of protoplanetary disks, and dynamical models or simulations
Stars and Stellar Populations	Physics of individual star and star clusters in the Milky Way and nearby galaxies, and investigating the global properties of the resolved stellar populations in nearby galaxies
Gas, Dust, and ISM	Gas, dust and the interstellar medium in nearby galaxies, including the chemical composition and interactions with winds and shocks
Scientific Category	**Extragalactic Panels**
Nearby Galaxies to Cosmic Noon	Galaxy formation and evolution, galaxy clusters and groups, and the galaxy distribution at lower redshifts, extending to the properties of systems at cosmic noon, z~2-3
High-Redshift Galaxies and the Distant Universe	Galaxy formation and evolution, galaxy clusters and groups, and large-scale structure at high redshifts, from z > 3 through z~12 or more
Super Massive Black Holes and Active Galaxies	Active galactic nuclei, QSOs, Seyfert galaxies, super-massive black holes and feedback mechanisms

External Panels

- **Provide asynchronous reviews; do not meet.**
- Review Very Small GO proposals (≤ 20 hours) and regular AR proposals.
- **Provide grades and written feedback by January 9, 2026.**
- **Each proposal is assigned to 5 reviewers.** STScI uses the grades received by all proposals to generate a rank-ordered list of proposals in each of the 8 Scientific Categories.
- The comments from all the reviewers assigned to the proposal are sent verbatim to the proposer (i.e. there is no consensus report).
- Top proposals likely to be recommended to the Director for acceptance are provided to the panel Chairs of the Discussion panels of that same Scientific Category prior to their meeting
  - to allow them to identify potential duplications with the proposals reviewed by their panels
  - to monitor programmatic balance
  - Duplications are adjudicated by the panel Chairs, with feedback from Discussion panels, when required.

Proposal Categories reviewed by External Panels

More info: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-call-for-proposals-for-cycle-5/jwst-proposal-categories

- **Regular General Observer (GO):** Regular observing proposals.
- **Archival (AR)**: Archival research proposals; US PI's and co-I's can request funding. Data-based AR proposals must be primarily based on JWST data.
- **AR Theory proposals**: results should enhance the value of JWST observational programs through their broad interpretation (in the context of new models or theories) or by refining the knowledge needed to interpret specific observational results.
- **GO-Archival proposals:** research programs where substantial effort (>10%) will be devoted analyzing JWST archival data and where new JWST observations are required. GO-Archival proposals should include an Analysis Plan for the archival data.
- **Archival Data Science Software:** Proposals requesting financial support to develop software products available to the community for the purpose of analyzing JWST data.
- **Archival Cloud Computing**: Proposals requesting funding to use Amazon Web Services (AWS) for data analysis, as all non-exclusive access JWST data is available via AWS.

Proposal Categories reviewed by External Panels

- **Joint Proposals**: JWST science is the prime science, but multi-wavelength observations from one or more partner observatory (HST, Chandra, XMM-Newton, NOIRLab, NASA-Keck, ALMA, NRAO, TESS) are critical for the science goals. Proposers may request simultaneous observations but there is no guarantee they can be executed.
- **Calibration Proposals**: not linked explicitly to a specific science program; provide a calibration or calibration software that can be used by the community for existing or future programs. Can be GO or Archival.
- **Future Cycles Proposals**: requesting time in more than one cycle (generally up to three cycles but can be up to five cycles under the new Long-Term Monitoring initiative). A clear scientific case must be provided for the need to allocate time beyond Cycle 5.

Observation Types

More info: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-call-for-proposals-for-cycle-5/jwst-observation-types

- **Parallel Observations**: while these observations do not count toward a panel's hour allocation, **they do require resources** for both STScI support (including consideration of data rate), and US investigators can request funding for their analysis. Thus, any **parallel observations must be well-justified scientifically and approved by the TAC and they** can be rejected, even if the primary observations are approved.

Special Requirements

- **Special requirements must be justified and approved by the TAC. Failure to list special requirements or to justify them may lead to those requests not being met.**
- Proposals may have Special Requirements that include, but are not limited to:
  - Aperture Position Angle (orientation) constraints
  - Target of Opportunity observations (these proposals go to the Discussion panels)
  - Specific dates or ranges of specific dates for time-constrained observations
  - Coordinated Parallel observations
  - Links between observations, including non-interruptible sequences
  - Requests for low background or background-limited observations
- If a proposal includes a Special Requirement
  - Check that it is described in the “Special Requirements” section of the proposals.
  - Consider whether or not it is scientifically justified in the proposal.

Dual Anonymous Peer Review

Presenter: Rebecca Levy (Science Policy Division)

The Review Process

General Guidelines

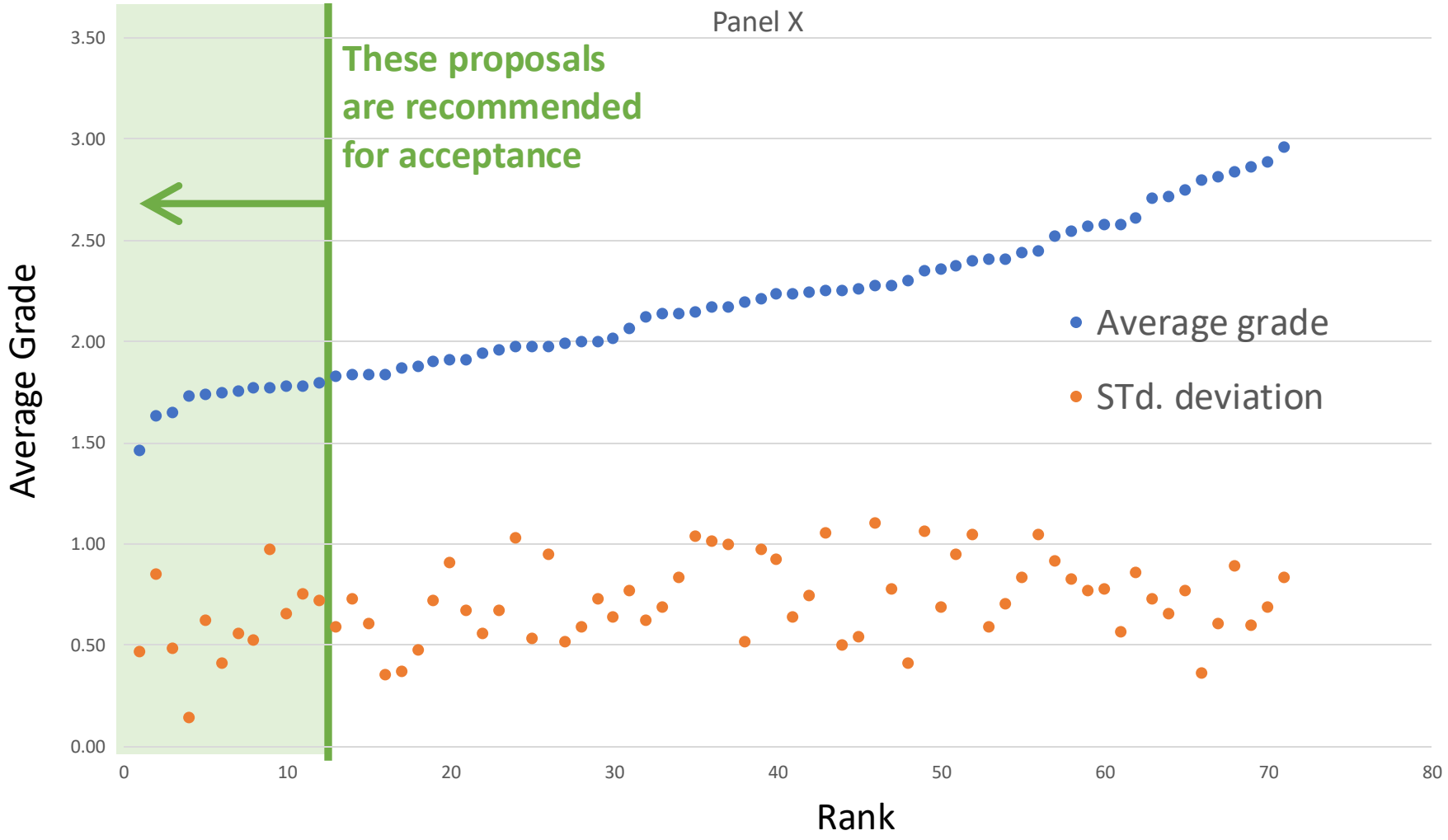
- Access proposals at https://spirit.stsci.edu/. All grades and comments will be entered through this portal. See https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/reviews-grades-and-comments/spirit-webreviewer-tool-guide (and your email) for full instructions.
- Anticipate how much time it will take to review proposals based on your own experience. There are ten weeks between now and the deadline (Friday, January 9, 2026). Plan accordingly and budget your time; doing a few proposals a day is a *lot* less stressful than all in few days —and leads to better reviews and comments for the proposers.
- We encourage you to start by reading all of the abstracts for your assigned proposals, instead of digging straight into individual proposals. This will help you get an overview of the task, and it is good for finding conflicts of interest early (e.g., competing proposals), which helps everyone.
- Report any possible policy violations to your PSS or Science Policy Division (SPD) manager as soon as you notice them! (this can include DAPR, page limits, format, lack of justification of Special Requirements)

Selection of Proposals Reviewed by External Panels

- **External panels** grade proposals between now and January 9.
- Each proposals is evaluated by 5 reviewers.
- Each reviewer give 3 different grades to each proposals. Final grade is the average.
  - In-field
  - Out-of-field
  - Suitability and Feasibility
- Reviewers grade on an absolute system ([1] excellent → [5] poor).
- All proposals should be graded using the same scale.
- Grades are collected, averaged, and a ranked list is compiled for that Scientific Category.
- Hour allocation is done by Scientific Category, based on demand (hour pressure).
- **Comments from each reviewer for externally reviewed proposals are returned to the proposers verbatim (there is no consensus report).**

Selection of Proposals Reviewed by External Panels

STScI averages grades & marks highest ranked proposals as recommended for acceptance.



Selection Criteria

(A) In-field Impact:

- *The scientific merit of the program within its immediate sub-field, and its contribution to advancement of knowledge.*
- The immediate sub-field of the proposal is the niche area of the program, not the whole broad science area (e.g., Trans-Neptunian Objects, not Solar System Astronomy).
- Will the proposed program improve our understanding of the objects, classes of object, or specialist topics under study in the proposal? By how much? Is the work relevant and timely?
- The evaluation should be based on what is written in the proposal, not on the reviewer's broader knowledge, even if the reviewer is an expert in the sub-field. Though, in most cases, the reviewer will *not* be an expert in the sub-field of the proposal, and the proposal should have been written accordingly.

Selection Criteria

(B) Out-of-field Impact:

- *The program's impact outside of its immediate sub-field.*
- A proposal does **not** have to impact **all** of astronomy. The out-of-field impacts could be in other sub-fields within the broader science area of the proposal, or in other broad science areas (e.g., in the case of a TNO proposal, this could be solar system formation or planet formation in general, among others).
- Proposals should discuss implications for other fields or sub-fields, and their breadth, significance, and timeliness. Are there implications for other science areas and/or insights into larger-scale questions? Will the proposed program improve our understanding of science areas beyond the immediate sub-field of the proposal? How broad and how significant is this new understanding?
- This evaluation should be based on what is written in the proposal, not on the reviewer's broader knowledge.

Selection Criteria

(C) Suitability & Feasibility:

- *The suitability of JWST observations or datasets, or relevance to JWST science. The necessity of special requirements. The feasibility of the science program.*
- Proposals should demonstrate that the capabilities of JWST are required to achieve the scientific goals or demonstrate the relevance of the work to JWST science. Technical issues will be adjudicated by STScI instrument scientists.
- **For GO programs:** Has the proposed program demonstrated that the unique capabilities of JWST are required to achieve the science goals? How much of an advantage does JWST data offer over other facilities? Has the time request been well justified? Have any special requirements been well justified? Have parallel observations been well justified? Have any duplications been well justified? If joint time was requested, have those additional observations been well justified? Does the observing plan make efficient use of resources? Is there a clear path to science?

Selection Criteria

(C) Suitability & Feasibility (continuation):

- **For AR programs:** Has the proposed program demonstrated that the unique capabilities of JWST are required to achieve the science goals? How much of an advantage does JWST data offer over other facilities? Is JWST the predominant source of data for the program? If data from other facilities will be used, has its use been well justified. Is there a clear path to science?
- **For Theory programs:** Has the proposed program demonstrated a broad applicability to JWST observational programs or data products? Will the proposed program provide results that assist in planning future JWST observations, improve analysis of JWST data or data products, or improve interpretation of JWST data or data products? Is there a clear path to science?

Selection Criteria

- The final grade is the straight average of these values.
  (A) In-field Impact:
  (B) Out-of-field Impact
  (C) Suitability & Feasibility
- AR and GO calibration proposals are required to provide an analysis plan; reviewers should also consider the strength of the analysis plan in assessing the first two criteria.
- Descriptions of additional criteria by type of proposal are given in the Proposal Selection Procedures section of the Call for Proposals.

The evaluation should be based on what is written in the proposal, not on the reviewer's broader knowledge. Reviewers must ensure that the comments address some or all of these primary criteria.

https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/reviews-grades-and-comments/selection-criteria-and-scoring-system

We use a "Stellar Magnitude" Scoring System: 1 is BEST

Grade	Impact within the sub-field	Out-of-field impact	Suitability
1	Potential for transformative results	Transformative implications for one or more other sub-fields	Science goals can only be achieved with JWST
2	Potential for major advancement	Major implications for one or more other sub-fields	Major advantages in using JWST over other facilities
3	Potential for moderate advancement	Some implications for one or more other sub-fields	Some advantages in using JWST over other facilities
4	Potential for minor advancement	Minor impacts on other sub-fields	Minor advantages in using JWST over other facilities
5	Limited potential for advancing the field	Little or no impact for other sub-fields	JWST offers little or no advantage over other facilities or the advantages of using JWST are unclear.

Longer descriptions, more details and examples at: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/reviews-grades-and-comments/selection-criteria-and-scoring-system

Proposal Comments

- Comments are required for all proposals.
- The deadline for you to enter ALL of your comments is Friday, January 9, 2026.
- Don't make up reasons for rejection – if a proposal was good, but not great, then say so.
- Have your comments reflect your grades: you will not know whether or not a proposal is recommended for acceptance.
- All comments go back to the proposers verbatim, e.g.,

  Strengths:

  Reviewer #1: The proposed observations will revolutionize our understanding of space krakens.

  Reviewer #2: Only JWST can get IR observations of space krakens, and the proposal makes a strong case for why the IR is important for determining how long space krakens live.

  Weaknesses:

  Reviewer #1: It is not clear from this proposal what implications the proposed data and analyses will have for other classes of space creatures.

  Reviewer #2: The target signal-to-noise of ten zillion is not well justified in the proposal.

Proposal Comments: Practical Instructions

See the Spirit documentation for where to enter your own personal "notes".

Proposal Comments: Detailed Instructions

- Proposal feedback comments should be concise.
- Please avoid asking questions in the comments.
    - For example, “the proposal did not sufficiently motivate the number of requested targets” instead of “why have 6 targets instead of 5?”
- The reports should focus on the scientific content and not the reviewer: do not reference yourself. If it was not clear *to you*, then it was simply not clear.
    - For example, "The proposal did not sufficiently explain why these targets were chosen" instead of "It is not clear to me why these targets were chosen”
- Do not refer to the proposer, instead refer to the the proposal.
- Avoid any comments that may be perceived as derogatory.
- You cannot be sure at the time of writing feedback comments whether the proposal will be accepted. The comments should be phrased in such a way that they are sensible and meaningful regardless of the final outcome.

Proposal Comments: Detailed Instructions

- Avoid statements that create the impression that the low ranking of a proposal is due to a minor mistake.
- JWST is *heavily oversubscribed*. Many unsuccessful proposals do not have obvious weaknesses but are just less compelling than others: in such a case, acknowledge that the considered proposal is good but that it had limitations.
- Never include in the report an explicit reference to another proposal, such as the proposal ID.
- Whenever possible, make suggestions for possible improvements, but avoid giving the impression that following those suggestions guarantees that the proposal will be more successful in next cycle.
- JWST is a shared resource, and we receive proposals from all over the world, many from non-native English speakers. The proposal should be understandable, but please take care to judge the science in the proposal, not the quality of the language or the grammar.

For more information: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/reviews-grades-and-comments/proposal-feedback-comments

Policy Issues

Code of Conduct

All participants in the proposal review process are expected to:

- Be respectful in any written or verbal communications you have as part of the review process.
- Step in to address abusive or bullying behavior.
- Be respectful of all regardless of differences (professional or otherwise).
- Actively help create an environment free of harassment.
- Be polite and professional in your written feedback comments, *especially* when providing critical comments.

Please report any violations of the code of conduct to your SPD manager or your PSS.

Confidentiality

DO NOT USE ANY LANGUAGE GENERATIVE AI (e.g., ChatGPT) for assistance in writing or editing comments as this violates Confidentiality (because that information goes into the public domain).

- Remember that you should not discuss the outcome or process of the panel evaluations – now, or in the future.
- Do not post comments to Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, etc. regarding the content or your participation in the proposal selection.
- Confidentiality carries from prior years: Do not discuss/compare prior years proposals in this review.
- Please purge any review files from your computer after the review.
- Panelist names will be shared in the STScI Newsletter after the selections are public; **only then** should you feel free to update your c.v., etc.

Dual Anonymous Review

- The goal of Dual Anonymous Review is to put the focus on the science and remove the focus from the proposing team.
- In a Dual Anonymous Review, the identifications and expertise of the proposal teams have been removed from the proposals.
- During all stages of the panel review process, reviewers grade and rank proposals without knowing the identities of the proposal teams.
- Panelists should flag any proposals they identify as not compliant with the posted Dual Anonymous Review guidelines and bring them to the attention of the Science Policy Division (SPD) by emailing your Panel Support Scientist and your SPD Panel Manager (you will be emailed these names, and they are at the end of this presentation). SPD will review and then provide guidance for how to proceed.

REPORT POSSIBE VIOLATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Conflict of Interest

- Our goal is informed, impartial discussion of each proposal. Reviewers should have neither direct nor indirect interest vested in the outcome of the review.
- Anonymizing proposals simplifies conflicts.
- We only consider personal conflicts:
  - Direct involvement in the proposal
  - Involvement of close collaborators/competitors/family members based on names supplied by individual panelists
  - On directly competing proposals (this can only be identified after you get your review packaged).
- Institutional conflicts are **not** considered
- Panelists may flag additional conflicts after they get the proposals.
  - Please raise any such concerns with PSS and SPD members.

Conflict of Interest

If you have not yet identified your conflicts of interest, please do so IMMEDIATELY.

General Guidelines

- Reviewers should assume that all instruments will be performing nominally in Cycle 5.
- Reviewers should *not* downgrade proposals based on technical considerations without concurrence by STScI.
    - STScI will perform a technical review on all accepted proposals and will work with successful PIs to make programs flight ready. If technical questions arise during grading, please ask your PSS to request input from a relevant expert.
- Reviewers should *not* take scheduling considerations into account in grading proposals, but any scheduling constraints *must* be clearly stated *and* scientifically justified in the "Special Requirements" section of the PDF.

Concentrate on recommending the best science… **but recognize that it will not be possible to award all strong and compelling programs.**

Personnel & Logistics

Relevant STScI Personnel

- **Jennifer Lotz** – STScI Director
- **Nancy Levenson** – STScI Deputy Director
- **Mercedes Lopez-Morales -** Associate Director for Science
- **Neill Reid** – Multi-mission Project Scientist
- **Laura Watkins** – Science Policy Division Head
- **Amaya Moro-Martin** – JWST Science Policies Lead
- **Molly Peeples** – Cross-mission Policy Scientist
- **Dan D'Orazio, Amy Jones, Nimisha Kumari, Claus Leitherer, Becca Levy , Nikolay Nikolov, Linda Smith, Dave Stark, Lou Strolger**– Science Policy Division members

- **Aleksandra Hamanowicz** – TAC Technical Manager
- **Brett Blacker** – TAC Technical Manager
- **Amber Armstrong** – Deputy TAC Technical Manager
- **Tom Brown** – JWST Mission Office Head
- **Jeff Valenti** – JWST Mission Office Mission Scientist
- **Macarena Garcia Marin** – JWST Mission Office Project Scientist
- **Stacey Bright -** – JWST Mission Office Deputy Project Scientist
- **Beth Perriello** – Observations Planning Branch
- **Sherita Hanna** – Events Planning Group Lead
- **Kevin Flinn** – IT Technologist (in charge of all things A/V, Webex, etc.)

Where (or Who) to Go To for Help

- Call for proposals: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-call-for-proposals-for-cycle-5
- Full online documentation for the review process: https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information

- Questions? When in doubt, email your Panel Support Scientist (PSS)!
- Potential conflict of interest? Email your PSS.
- Problems accessing Spirit? Email wasabi@stsci.edu and/or Alex Hamanowicz (ahamanowicz@stsci.edu)
- Questions about JWST instruments and their capabilities, or technical feasibility of a proposed program? Email your PSS and SPD Manager.

Panel Personnel

Panel	SPD Manager	Panel Support Scientist
Solar System	Molly Peeples	Tony Roman
Exoplanet Atmospheres	Amy Jones	Alison Vick
Planetary Systems	Linda Smith	Alison Vick
Stars and Stellar Populations	Becca Levy	Brian York
Dust and Gas	Nimisha Kumari	Mariarosa Marinelli
Galaxy Ecosystems	David Stark	Tony Roman
Galaxy Frontiers	Nikolay Nikolov	Brian York
SMBH	Lou Strolger	Mariarosa Marinelli

After the TAC …

- As always, we welcome feedback on the TAC process
  - How did the grading process work?
  - Can we improve it?
  - What were the main shortcomings?

- We will email all reviewers with a survey requesting your views of the process. Please fill it out!
- Many of the process improvements this year were in a direct response to last year's survey: we can't do this without you and we value your input!!

Reminders

- Review the documentation in the Peer Review Guide.
  - https://jwst-docs.stsci.edu/jwst-opportunities-and-policies/jwst-peer-review-information/jwst-peer-review-guide
- Check for conflicts, report any to your Panel Support Scientist (PSS) *immediately*
- Report any possible policy violations to your PSS or Science Policy Division (SPD) manager as soon as you notice them! (DAPR, page limits, format, lack of justification of Special Requirements)
- Do not use any generative language AI (e.g., ChatGPT) for assistance in writing or editing comments as this violates Confidentiality (because that information goes into the public domain).
- Schedule enough time in the next couple months to review and grade your assigned proposals by the deadline of January 9, 2026.

Thank you!

The JWST TAC would not be possible without your critical support and contributions!