

Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the Gemini Observatory Science and Technology Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference:

The Gemini Science and Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) is established as an advisory committee under the responsibility of the Gemini Board and reporting to the Gemini Board. The Gemini STAC shall:

1. Advise the Gemini Board on policy matters of long-range scientific and technical importance related to the planning and operation of the Gemini Observatory.
2. Advise the Gemini Board on scientific priorities for projects and programs, instrumentation and other major equipment, maintenance, upgrade and operations of Gemini facilities as requested by the Board, the Gemini Director or on its own initiative.
3. Keep the Gemini Board informed of the long-term scientific plans and priorities of the Gemini partner state communities.
4. Assist the Board and the Director, through the National Gemini Offices, in keeping partner state communities well informed as to the status, background and motivation for the Gemini Observatory's scientific and technical planning.
5. Assist the Gemini Observatory in planning and executing specific scientific programs by collaborating with the Director in appointing specialist Instrument Science Teams who will monitor and report on progress to the Gemini STAC. The role and composition of the instrument team is detailed further below.
6. Propose to the Gemini Board and Director the creation of ad-hoc subcommittees for specific topics as required by the Gemini planning process.

Structure and Membership:

1. The committee will consist of at least one member from each Gemini Partner Country and host. Partner shares will be reflected in the make-up of the STAC, with a distribution equivalent to that used by the Board. Partners with one member may designate an alternate. Members and alternates will be nominated by the partner countries. The Gemini Board will appoint members with consideration of their scientific and technical expertise.
2. Members should be appointed for three year, renewable terms appropriately staggered to ensure continuity.
3. The membership should ensure a good coverage of relevant astronomical disciplines and techniques.
4. The Gemini STAC chair is appointed annually by the Gemini Board for a period of no more than three consecutive years.
5. The Gemini STAC will elect from its members a deputy chair to replace the chair when he/she is unavailable.

Functioning:

1. The Gemini STAC will normally meet twice a year or more frequently at the request of the Board
2. The STAC is convened by its Chair who sets the Draft Agenda in consultation with the Gemini Director and the Gemini Board Chair.
3. The Director and members of the Management Team will attend all STAC meetings and provide reports and input as required.
4. Following STAC meetings, draft recommendations to the Gemini Board will be finalized via discussions between the STAC Chair and the Director.
5. The STAC provides recommendations and conclusions to the Board through the STAC Chair and, where required by legal agreements, through the Gemini Director
6. The STAC can set up standing or ad-hoc subcommittees in consultation and agreement with the Gemini Director and the Board Chair. These subcommittees will contain a core STAC member and external experts as required. These committees will be chaired by a STAC member and would also normally involve members of the Gemini Management Team (or delegates) as required.

Instrument science teams:

An Instrument Science Team (IST) should be formed for each new instrument project to ensure there is a good connection between the desires of the Gemini user community for a given instrument and the performance of the delivered instrument. The IST would consist of one STAC member and invited members from the user community. The IST would work with the Observatory to define and confirm the science requirements for the instrument in its design phase. The IST would follow the development of the instrument via receiving regular reports on progress as part of the normal STAC reporting process. The IST would also define and execute (in coordination with the Observatory) a science verification program for the instrument to be executed following the Observatory commissioning of the instrument and before the instrument is offered in regular operations. The data resulting from the science verification program would be made public immediately following the completion of the program and appropriate reductions by the IST. The IST would then report on the outcomes of the science verification program to the next available STAC and, at that point, would formally conclude its work.