



STScI | SPACE TELESCOPE
SCIENCE INSTITUTE

Space Telescope Users Committee: Charter, Activities, and HST Policy

**Space Telescope
Users Committee
Meeting
October 20, 2022**

Thank you, Space Telescope Users Committee!!

- What is the STUC? Why do we need a STUC? How are STUC members selected? To whom does the STUC report?
- Good Reading: the STUC Charter!



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“...a committee of users, which advises, from the users perspective, on the normal operations of the observatory, and recommends changes and improvements to both instrumentation and procedures in order to maximize scientific productivity.”

“This observatory differs from the national observatories in that responsibilities for many aspects of the operation which may affect scientific productivity are divided between the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) and the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC). Therefore, the STScI and GSFC have agreed to establish a joint Users Committee (STUC) to provide user advice to the observatory as a whole.”

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- The STUC is established in the NASA Contract “Statement of Work” (SOW) for AURA/STScI:

3.3.3.16 The contractor shall establish and fund an HST Users Committee (STUC) to provide the STScI and the HSTP* with assessments of user support, science operations, ground system operation, archival system operation, and other mission items (as deemed appropriate by the HSTP) from the user's viewpoint. The STUC shall meet, at a minimum, two times per year. The size and make-up of the STUC requires HSTP approval. Logistics for this group, including travel, shall be funded from the science operations budget.

*HSTP = NASA Hubble Space Telescope Project at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC)

STUC Composition and Charter

It has been found valuable for national observatories to constitute a committee of users, which advises, from the users perspective, on the normal operations of the observatory, and recommends changes and improvements to both instrumentation and procedures in order to maximize scientific productivity. Such a group is needed to play a like role for Hubble Space Telescope (HST). However, the traditional structure requires modification to be utilized with HST. This observatory differs from the national observatories in that responsibilities for many aspects of the operation which may affect scientific productivity are divided between the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) and the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC). Therefore, the STScI and GSFC have agreed to establish a joint Users Committee (STUC) to provide user advice to the observatory as a whole. The formation of the STUC is not intended to restrict either organization's independence or freedom of action in seeking expert advice. Rather it is a practical way of ensuring that the observatory operations proceed in a coordinated manner in order to maximize its scientific performance.

The STUC has a membership of approximately twelve scientists, chosen jointly by the STScI Director and HST Project Scientist. STUC membership is drawn from the HST user community in the USA and ESA member countries. To allow for balance between continuity and new input, members will be appointed for a three-year term starting on the date of the first meeting attended. The Director can ask a member to serve for one more year if mutually agreeable. At least two of the twelve members will be astronomers from ESA nations and will be appointed with ESA concurrence.

The chair will be nominated and appointed by the Director and Project Scientist for a one year period. The Director can ask the Chair to serve for additional one year periods. The STScI Director, the Head of Science Mission Office, the NASA Project Scientist, the NASA Program Scientist, and an ESA representative attend meetings of the group ex-officio. The Head of the Science Mission Office is the Executive Secretary of the STUC.


The scope of the Users Committee is quite broad: the STUC can set its own agenda and if necessary can establish an ad-hoc subcommittee structure to perform in-depth studies of relevant subjects. The committee will be assured of reasonable support from STScI and GSFC staff for information and clarification.

The product of the Space Telescope Users Committee deliberations consists of written reports addressed to the STScI Director and the HST Project Scientist. These reports (together with a STScI or Project response, if warranted) are made available to STIC and the Institute Visiting Committee, as well as to NASA and ESA. Shorter versions of these reports are published in the STScI Newsletter.

The STUC welcomes the comments of HST users.

May 2022 STUC Meeting

The STUC met on May 19-20, 2022. Topics discussed included HST status, ULLYSES Director's Discretionary Time program, Cycle 29 Mid-cycle and Cycle 30 status, ESA updates, and transitioning to a default zero exclusive access period for Hubble.

[Read the report](#) 

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- How are HST Policies made and revised?

HST Policy

NAS5-26555 STScI SOW Revision F June 2020

1.4 HST POLICY DEVELOPMENT

“NASA Headquarters (HQ) is responsible for the approval of HST science policy. The HSTP* with input from STScI is responsible for developing recommendations for changes in policy in response to changing mission needs, scientific priorities, or resources. The STScI is to represent the interests of the HST scientific user community in this process...”

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With HSTP concurrence, the STScI shall constitute and lead committees chartered to develop specific science program strategies for HST. Normally this shall be done through existing committees such as the Space Telescope Users Committee (STUC). Developing recommended changes to HSTP policy will often involve representatives from some or all of the following: existing scientific advisory boards, the European Space Agency (ESA), HSTP, GSFC, and the scientific community. The STScI shall, in support of and with the concurrence of the HSTP, establish the charters, ground rules, and membership for the committees or panels that are tasked to develop science strategy or policy recommendations.

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- Examples of Policy issues:
 - Dual-anonymous proposal review process
 - Changes in Exclusive Access Periods
 - Major grant management issues



Thank you, Space Telescope Users Committee!!

Thank you for playing a key role in advising STScI and NASA/GSFC!

