

ExoPAG Operating Procedures

Introduction

The ExoPAG is an open, interdisciplinary forum that provides a conduit for community input into NASA's Exoplanet Exploration Program (ExEP) and NASA's Astrophysics Division (APD). It also provides an environment for soliciting and coordinating community analysis and input in support of ExEP objectives and their implications for architecture planning and activity prioritization and for future exploration.

The ExoPAG is led by a Chairperson and a volunteer Executive Committee, whose membership is chosen to reflect the broad range of scientific disciplines and interests represented in the field of exoplanet exploration. Together, the ExoPAG Chair and Executive Committee are responsible for capturing and organizing community input, overseeing ExoPAG analyses, reporting ExoPAG findings and inputs to the Astrophysics Division Director, and keeping the scientific community apprised of ongoing activities and opportunities within NASA's ExEP.

This document outlines the governing procedures for the ExoPAG Executive Committee (EC). It provides guidelines for the selection of new EC members, the appointment process, and the term duration. Additionally, it describes the chair selection process and how monthly EC teleconferences are conducted. The document also covers the socialization of findings and voting procedures within the EC and the ExoPAG community. Furthermore, it explains the review and disposition of suggestions from the scientific community. Lastly, it provides guidance on the formation of Science Interest Groups (SIGs) and Study Analysis Groups (SAGs), as well as the process for leadership changes within them.

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1. Selection of New EC Members

The EC serves to coordinate between NASA and the wider exoplanet community represented by the ExoPAG itself. They support planning and conducting activities of the ExoPAG. Membership is chosen to reflect the broad range of scientific disciplines and interests represented in the field of exoplanet exploration. The selection of new EC members is of utmost importance to maintain a diverse and qualified committee. The selected members are then announced via the ExoPAG mailing list.

1.1 Selection Process

The selection process emphasizes the consideration of qualifications, expertise, and commitment to the goals of the ExoPAG EC. The selection committee assesses the nominations based on these criteria, ensuring that the membership is chosen to reflect the broad range of scientific disciplines and interests represented in the field of exoplanet exploration.

NASA Headquarters (HQ) initiates the selection process by issuing a Dear Colleague letter, inviting nominations from the scientific community. Nominations are only accepted (via email to the ExoPAG Secretary) for scientists who reside at a U.S. institution for the period of the service (nominal term being three years). There are no citizenship restrictions. Nominations are thoroughly reviewed and appointments are made by the Astrophysics Division Director following consultation with the ExoPAG Chair ensuring expertise and representation across relevant scientific disciplines.

1.2 Appointments and Term Duration

EC members serve a term of three years, with appointments made annually to replace rotating members. The transition between outgoing and incoming members is carefully managed to ensure the smooth continuity of the committee's work. The term duration provides a balance between stability and the infusion of fresh perspectives within the EC.

2. Chair Selection Process

The ExoPAG Chair is usually appointed to a three year term by the Astrophysics Division Director following consultation with the Associate Administrator (AA) for the Science Mission Directorate (SMD). The Chair is assisted by an Astrophysics Division staff member who serves as Executive Secretary of the ExoPAG EC. The chair of the EC plays a pivotal role in leading and coordinating the committee's activities, therefore the selection of the chair takes into account the individual's qualifications, leadership abilities, and experience in the field.

3. Conducting Monthly EC Teleconferences

To facilitate communication and decision-making, monthly EC teleconferences are held. These teleconferences serve as a platform for committee members to discuss ongoing matters, share updates, and make necessary decisions. It is at the discretion of the Chair to decide if a sufficient number of EC members are present to constitute a quorum to conduct *regular business*. The Chair or a designated member leads the teleconferences, ensuring an organized

and productive discussion. Meeting agendas are prepared and circulated in advance to allow members to prepare and contribute effectively.

3.1. Executive Committee (EC) Voting

Within the EC, it is understood that voting will primarily be reserved for major decisions, while routine or minor matters will be addressed through consensus or at the discretion of the chair. It is required that more than 50% of the EC members be present to establish a quorum for a valid vote. The Chair or a designated member oversees the voting process and ensures accurate recording of votes and decisions. Members can express their votes either verbally, by raising their (virtual) hand, or through another predetermined method, and a simple majority rule is typically followed, where more than half of the votes cast determines the outcome of the decision. This ensures that decisions reflect the consensus of the majority of participating EC members and facilitates the efficient progress of the committee's work.

4. Socialization of Findings and Voting with the ExoPAG

The EC recognizes the importance of engaging the ExoPAG community in its decision-making process. This engagement allows community members to provide feedback through suggestions to the EC and collectively vote on the proposed findings to ensure transparency and enable input from the wider scientific community.

4.1. Socialization of Findings with the ExoPAG community

The EC socializes proposed findings and recommendations with the ExoPAG community through official communication channels, such as email, in advance of the biannual meetings. This allows members to review and provide feedback on the findings, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process.

4.2. Voting Process within the ExoPAG

Advocates or authors are encouraged to present their proposed finding(s) during the business meeting portion of the biannual meetings. However, recognizing individual preferences, if an advocate or author feels uncomfortable presenting their finding(s), an EC member will step in to effectively communicate the proposed finding(s). ExoPAG meeting attendees have the opportunity to ask questions of clarification or express concerns before casting their vote. Attendees reserve the right to abstain from the vote for any reason. The Chair typically oversees the voting process and ensures accurate recording of votes and decisions. In cases where the Chair is conflicted, the Chair appoints a designated EC member to oversee these responsibilities. Members can express their votes either verbally, by raising their (virtual) hand, or through another predetermined method, and a simple majority rule is typically followed, where more than half of the votes cast determines the outcome of the decision. All approved findings are provided to NASA Headquarters via a written memo from the ExoPAG EC. All findings, regardless of voting outcome are captured in a contiguous document for posterity. ExoPAG findings can be found at this website:

<https://exoplanets.nasa.gov/exep/exopag/exopagFoundingDocuments/exopag-findings/>

5. Review and Disposition of Suggestions from the Scientific Community

The EC welcomes suggestions and input from the wider scientific community. Suggestions received are carefully reviewed, evaluated, and considered by the EC. Suggestions are captured in a contiguous confidential document for posterity. When appropriate, the committee provides feedback and takes necessary actions based on the merit and feasibility of the suggestions. This iterative process ensures that the committee remains responsive to the needs and concerns of the scientific community it serves.

6. Formation of Science Interest Groups (SIGs) and Study Analysis Groups (SAGs)

SIGs and SAGs may be formed adjacent to the ExoPAG to address specific scientific topics of interest or goals. Nominations for new SIGs or SAGs are submitted to the EC for evaluation and approval. Once recognized, SIGs and SAGs contribute to the ExoPAG's overall mission and objectives through their specialized focus and expertise. The following steps should be taken to form a new SIG or SAG:

1. A potential lead briefs the EC on the overall scope of the SIG or SAG
2. The EC provides inputs and suggestions for the potential group to iterate on
3. The prospective SIG or SAG lead(s) present a description of the objectives and goals of the proposed activity at a biannual ExoPAG meeting to get community feedback
4. NASA APD reviews and approves the activity
5. Once approved, the SIG or SAG will be added to the list of activities on the ExoPAG website and the group can begin conducting official business.

7. Leadership Change in SIGs and SAGs

SIGs and SAGs have leadership positions, typically including a lead and co-lead and possibly a steering committee responsible for guiding their group. Leadership positions within SIGs and SAGs may undergo changes for various reasons. Should a change of leadership be needed, the EC must be informed to ensure effective coordination and communication within the committee. The following steps should be taken to execute a change of leadership:

1. The EC holds a general open call for new leadership with short expressions of interest as well as expertise.
2. The EC and current SIG or SAG leadership work through a selection process to identify the new leadership.
3. The process should also select a leadership team or steering committee to support the lead(s) if deemed necessary.
4. The outgoing leads should meet with the new leads to do a transfer of information and infrastructure

5. The new SIG or SAG leadership should present their updated goals and leadership selections at an ExoPAG EC meeting for recommendations and approval by the EC.
6. If there are no issues the SIG or SAG can begin conducting regular business.

This comprehensive document serves as a guiding framework for the governance of the ExoPAG. It ensures transparency, inclusivity, and efficient decision-making within the scientific community. It is subject to periodic review and amendments as deemed necessary by the EC and NASA Headquarters.