

## **MWA TIME ALLOCATION POLICY**

Version 0.1 (Tingay) 2012 July 1

Version 0.2 (Webster/Tingay) 2012 July 26

Version 1.0 (Heald) approved by the MWA Board on 2019 December 13

Version 1.1 (Wyithe) approved by the MWA Board on 2021 October 8

Version 1.2 (Walker) approved by the MWA Board on 2023 March 13 - Clarified Points 5 and 13

Version 2.0 (Chico) approved by the MWA Board on 2024 August 29

We here present the Time Allocation Policy for the Murchison Widefield Array (MWA).

1. This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised by the MWA Board, according to changes in project conditions.
2. If users of this policy identify issues relevant to this policy, but not explicitly covered by this policy, these issues can be raised in writing to the MWA Board Chair, for consideration by the Board.
3. During the operations phase of the instrument, “Open Skies” shall be the fundamental guiding principle for allocating observing time, giving due consideration to the needs of the MWA Science Working Groups. Open Skies means that proposals for observing time may be submitted by any scientist or group of scientists from any country in the world for review by the MWA Time Allocation Committee (TAC). The MWA operations phase begins when the MWA commissioning period is declared complete.
4. Observing time allocation shall be determined by the MWA Time Assignment Committee (TAC). The TAC is tasked with scientifically assessing and ranking proposals for MWA observing time. The TAC will also allocate observations proposed using external instruments, as defined in the *MWA External Instruments Policy*.
5. The TAC will consist of six appointed members, selected by the MWA Board, and drawn from the broad astronomical community. TAC members will be appointed initially for periods of one year (3 members) or two years (3 members), and subsequently for periods of two years. The MWA Board will appoint a TAC Chair and a Deputy Chair, chosen from the six members, each for a two-year period. The Principal Scientist will be an additional *ex-officio* member of the TAC. The Principal Scientist will not be able to vote on or rank proposals, but will provide technical feasibility reviews of proposals when required to assess their merit. In circumstances where a TAC Chair is not selected from among the TAC Members, the Principal Scientist may act temporarily as the TAC Chair until a TAC Member can be appointed.

6. Calls for Proposals for use of available time on the MWA will be made on a semi-annual basis by the MWA Director. The MWA Time Allocation Committee (TAC) will be responsible for receiving proposals in response to these Calls.
7. The level of available time and constraints on usage of the MWA in each semester will be advised in the corresponding Call for Proposals. The Call for Proposals will also indicate whether proposals being considered in that term are subject to “shared risk” conditions.
8. The TAC is responsible for establishing a process of competitive peer review for these proposals and for making recommendations to the MWA Director on the allocation of time to proposed projects. Such recommendations must be consistent with this policy and are subject to any constraints on the availability of MWA science capabilities. The process established by the TAC for competitive peer review will be subject to the approval of the MWA Principal Scientist.
9. The TAC will have the flexibility to meet either online or in person, as needed, to address and deliberate on relevant issues.
10. Before each TAC meeting, the TAC Chair should communicate clear guidelines on conflicts of interest to members of the TAC. This should cover both proposals on which TAC members or their close collaborators/colleagues are involved, and proposals that are in competition to projects pursued by TAC members. Consideration must be given to both actual and perceived conflicts of interest. All TAC members must respond to the TAC Chair in advance of the TAC meeting, indicating for which of the proposals under consideration where they are conflicted. TAC members must absent themselves from the meeting when proposals on which they are conflicted are being discussed and considered. The TAC Deputy Chair will act in the Chair’s capacity for proposals on which the Chair is conflicted.
11. Following each TAC meeting, and within six weeks of the closing date for proposals, the TAC Chair will provide a written report and recommendation to the MWA Director. The report will include a rank ordering of the proposals by scientific merit and technical feasibility and recommend time allocation for each proposal. The Director will verify that the recommendations are consistent with MWA policies, and will schedule the available time consistently. The MWA Principal Scientist will inform proposers of the outcomes of their proposals.
12. The MWA TAC will allocate time in two categories: Guaranteed Time (GT) and Open Access (OA).
13. GT will be allocated to proposals led by Individual Members of the MWA or submitted by teams comprising more than 50% Individual MWA Members. GT will comprise a target

60% of available observing time on the MWA. GT proposals seeking time for EoR science in whole or in part must be accompanied by an explicit endorsement from the Chair of the MWA EoR consortium. In utilising GT, the proposers will be bound by all MWA policies.

14. OA will be allocated to proposals led by individuals who are not Individual Members of the MWA or by teams comprising less than 50% Individual (as long as the proposal is not led by an MWA Individual Member or is driven by MWA Individual Members). OA will comprise a target 20% of the available observing time on the MWA and can be allocated to any area of science apart from studies of the Epoch of Reionisation. Individuals and teams allocated time and data under OA are not bound by MWA Collaboration policies.
15. Up to 20% of the remaining available observing time on the MWA will be allocated to Director's Discretionary Time (DDT).
16. The MWA has a rapid trigger response capability, which allows approved observing programs to interrupt scheduled observations in order to observe transient events that have been externally triggered (e.g. by a VOEvent). All observing proposals must indicate whether they are interruptible and what impact, if any, this would have on their science. Triggers may also be interrupted, with suitability determined primarily by the relative ranking of each project. In cases where relative rankings would lead to ambiguity, the Principal Scientist will have final discretion for establishing the scheduling priority, which will be communicated to the proposal leads and the MWA scheduler.
17. Time outside available observing time will be allocated to maintenance.
18. Proposers can appeal the outcome of the Time Allocation process in writing to the MWA Director. The MWA Director will either rule on the appeal or elevate the appeal to the MWA Board for resolution, at his or her discretion;
19. The data produced as a result of all MWA observations, including via GT, OA, or DDT will be subject to the MWA Data Access Policy.