



PAWSEY SUPERCOMPUTING RESEARCH CENTRE

MERIT ALLOCATION COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

April 2023 - Version 2

These Terms of Reference (ToR) are prepared by the Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre as a guide as to the roles and responsibilities of the Pawsey Merit Allocation Committee and may be amended from time to time.

1. Background

The Pawsey Supercomputing Research Centre (Pawsey) provides Australian researchers with merit based access to Setonix, through the following access schemes:

- **The National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme (NCMAS)** This scheme operates annual allocation calls open to the whole Australian research community and provides substantial amounts of compute time for meritorious, computational-research projects.
- **The Pawsey Partner Merit Allocation Scheme** This scheme operates annual calls open to researchers in Pawsey Partner institutions and provides significant amounts of compute time for meritorious, computational research projects. The Partner institutions are CSIRO, Curtin University, Murdoch University and The University of Western Australia. There is an out-of-session application process for newly eligible project leaders.
- **The new Preparatory Access Scheme** is now available for researchers preparing their applications to merit allocations schemes. It is designed to support feasibility studies and benchmarking.

More information about the schemes can be found here:

<https://support.pawsey.org.au/documentation/display/US/Allocation+Schemes+and+Eligibility>

Pawsey has an established Pawsey Allocation Committee (PAC) (a sub-committee of the Pawsey Board) which advises Pawsey on the development and management of the allocation processes.

Allocations within each of the schemes are made on merit, with the reviews of merit and allocations made by established Merit Allocation Committees (MAC).

2. Objective

To help ensure that supercomputing resources are used effectively and efficiently, Pawsey allocates compute time to researchers through project awards. Proposals for projects may be submitted through any of a number of schemes that Pawsey operates or participates in.

Through these allocation schemes, Pawsey strives to:

- maximise the research impact of Pawsey supercomputing resources.
- promote scientific advantage in priority domains, including radio astronomy and other targeted areas.
- provide leading-edge, supercomputing resources for researchers in Pawsey Partner institutions.
- enable wider adoption of and benefit from supercomputing across Australia.

In order to ensure timely access to Pawsey resources for meritorious proposals, merit schemes which are not one-off special opportunities will typically have a call for proposals issued once every twelve months.

3. Scope

Pawsey provides access to research infrastructure through several allocation schemes.

Schemes in scope:

- Schemes where stakeholders who own a number of shares in the infrastructure wish to attribute resources to meritorious projects. This includes the Pawsey Partner Merit Allocation Scheme.

Schemes out of scope:

- National merit schemes with contributions from multiple research infrastructure providers. This includes the National Computational Merit Allocation Scheme (NCMAS). Strategic schemes where resource is available for allocation at the Director's Discretion. This includes the new Preparatory Access Scheme.

The purpose of this document is to clearly set out the purpose, structure and responsibilities of the Merit Allocation Committees (MAC) that relate to the stakeholder (Partner) and targeted schemes.

4. Purpose of the Merit Allocation Committees

The primary purpose of the Merit Allocation Committees is to allocate shares of the machines to meritorious research projects. The committees should make considerations regarding project requirements, merit of the project and overall resources available.

Specifically in 2024 there is one Merit Allocation Committee which need to be constituted according to these Terms of Reference:

- a committee to award time through the Pawsey Partner Merit Allocation Scheme

In 2024 the resources to be awarded relate primarily to compute time on the Setonix supercomputer.

5. Pawsey Merit Allocation Committee Membership 2023

There are two assessments of the applications: one for the scientific excellence of the project and the other for the technical relevance for the Pawsey resources requested.

- The Science Review Committee for each call will be the relevant Merit Allocation Committee.
- The Technical panel will provide information and assessments to the Merit Allocation Committee.

5.1 Science Review Committees

At the foundation of a Science Review Committee, members will be appointed for periods of one or two years, and subsequent appointments will be for periods of two years, or in the case of replacements up to the end period of the replaced member.

Committee Members will be drawn from a pool of researchers endorsed by the Pawsey Allocation Committee for that scheme or through Expression of Interest call endorsed by the Pawsey Allocation Committee, and they will have the following attributes:

- Each member is to have at least a doctoral qualification
- Each member is to have previous experience as a user of Pawsey services

Members of the committee will be appointed taking into account diversity of research domains, research institutions, and diversity of the individuals.

Committee Members may be unappointed by the Executive Director where necessary to ensure that the responsibilities of committee positions are met.

5.1.1 Science Review Committee – Stakeholder Schemes

The Science Review Committee for a stakeholder scheme is composed of individuals who represent the stakeholder institutions. The Committee members should possess knowledge of fields of research that are most commonly covered by users.

The Committee and its members should have the following attributes:

- Be comprised of at least seven individuals
- Each member is to be a current staff member of a stakeholder institution

5.2 Chair of a Merit Allocation Committee

As well as the attributes listed for Committee members, a Chair of the Merit Allocation Committee will be engaged in a university at least at academic classification level D (Associate Professor) or else be a recognised research leader in a national science agency, and the chair will be appointed by the Pawsey Allocation Committee for a period of two years. At the end of the two year term, the Chair can continue for a further two year period subject to still meeting the requirements of the Chair role and with endorsement from the PAC.

5.3 Technical Review Panel

The Technical Review Panel is appointed for each call and is comprised of members of the Pawsey Team, delegated by the Head of Scientific Services. There will be a minimum of two reviewers per panel to provide technical evaluation.

6. Key Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Merit Allocation Committees are as follows:

- Read and assess applications.
- Attend meetings of the Merit Allocation Committee.
- Make recommendations on allocations of time on Pawsey services in relation to the particular call that they are allocating to.
- Inform the Committee of any conflicts of interest.
- Keep applications and discussions confidential.
- Advise the Executive Director of recommendations made by the group.

7. Meetings

Quorum and attendance at meetings

- Meetings are held once per call.
- A quorum consists of at least two thirds of the members.
- An acting Chair will be elected by those committee members present at the meeting in the case that the Chair is absent.
- Facilities should be made available to ensure that the meetings can be conducted by teleconference, video conference, or face to face.
- A secretary will be appointed to take minutes regarding any discussion points.

Out of Session Requests

- Out of Session applications to a Scheme may be determined via electronic means such as email.
- Out of Session applications to a Scheme undergo both Technical and Science reviews.
- A quorum consists of at least two thirds of the members.

Resolutions

- The Merit Allocation Committees will make recommendations to the Pawsey Executive Director for allocations under the Scheme.
- Records of all resolutions and proceedings of the Merit Allocation Committees will be retained by the Pawsey Centre.
- The Executive Director may, in extreme circumstances, use his discretion to overrule a decision made by the Merit Allocation Committees.

Agenda items and supporting documentation

- A specific agenda and relevant supporting documents will be circulated to members prior to each meeting.
- A summary of the outcomes of the meeting will be circulated to members within a week following each meeting.