LSST Dark Energy Science Collaboration
Policy on External Collaborators

# Contents

*June 2023 (v1.3)*

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# DESC Policy on External Collaborators

## Introduction

The DESC Publication Policy recognizes that some DESC Projects[1] and publications may benefit from the participation of contributors who are not members of DESC, and not applying to join DESC, but are willing and able to work with DESC on specific Projects, typically providing expertise, data, or simulations not available within DESC. This document specifies the circumstances and process for participation of external collaborators.

The policy and procedures described here are relevant for establishing participation of individual external collaborators (perhaps more than one) in a given DESC Project. Joint work between DESC and other collaborations is not covered here; such arrangements should be negotiated between DESC and the collaborations on a case-by-case basis, and documented via memoranda of understanding. (The expectation is that in these cases the Spokesperson would negotiate MOUs for ratification by the Collaboration Council.)

## Scope of Approval

In no circumstance can an external collaborator arrangement result in Rubin Observatory Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST) data access being granted to someone who would not already have data rights based on national or institutional participation in the Rubin Observatory. For external collaborators without LSST data rights, the DESC data products that may be shared are limited to those that are either independent of the LSST data, or that are derived from and represent LSST data *in summary form only*, i.e., data products that are intended for eventual publication by DESC. If derived from LSST data, these DESC data products must be distinct and "value added" subsets or reductions. Examples of such summary products include supernova sample coordinates to enable follow-up, statistics such as correlation function estimates, and MCMC samples in joint cosmological and nuisance parameter space.

An external collaborator is understood to participate in the work on the Project, including as appropriate analyses and drafting the associated notes and papers.

External collaborators will be granted access to all DESC resources needed for their participation in the Project. This access is understood to be for work on the specific Project only. In general the access would not include DESC mailing lists or Slack channels, or GitHub repositories or Confluence spaces for specific working groups, but would include Project-specific lists, channels, repositories or spaces[2]. Access of the

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[1] The DESC Publication Policy contains the definition of DESC "Projects": their features include being advertised to the collaboration as soon as they are defined. We capitalize the term to emphasize that it has this technical definition. DESC Projects are not to be confused with the Rubin Observatory Construction Project (which is often referred to as "the Project" and also usually appears capitalized).

[2] If broader access to DESC mailing lists or Slack channels, and GitHub repositories or Confluence spaces is felt to be necessary for participation in the Project, then the applicant may want to consider whether an application for DESC membership would be more appropriate.

external collaborator to DESC resources (repositories, etc., as needed for participation in the Project) will end with the conclusion of the Project.

See the DESC Publication Policy for policy on how external collaborators are included in the author lists of DESC publications.

## Standard Approval Process for External Collaborators

1. The Project members, together with the external collaborator they would like to nominate, prepare a proposal. Ordinarily the proposal for external collaboration should be made at the time a Project is proposed to a science working group. If the need or utility of the participation of an external collaborator is recognized only later by the leads of the Project, a proposal can be made at any time. The proposal must be written, naming the Project and concisely addressing[3]:

    - the proposed role of the external collaborator in the Project[4];

    - the motivation for the proposal, e.g., unique expertise, data, or simulations provided by the external collaborator, with a clear explanation of why this work cannot be undertaken by current DESC collaborators (see below);

    - what non-public DESC data products the external collaborator will need for this work;

    - a statement that the external collaborator agrees to use these data products only for the proposed joint work with DESC, not to use other non-public DESC data products, and not to redistribute these data products outside DESC.

2. The Project members provide the proposal to the conveners of the host Working Group, who if they find it initially acceptable on its merits, e-mail it to lsst-desc-spokesperson at slac.stanford.edu for consideration of any issues not related to the proposal itself that would prevent acceptance of the proposal, e.g., past violation of the DESC Code of Conduct. This review is intended to be prompt, although in some cases may involve the Spokesperson team seeking clarifying information from the proposed external collaborator. The Spokesperson team will notify the Working Group conveners whether the proposal cannot be considered further. Such a decision is final. For reasons of confidentiality, the Spokesperson team may not be able to provide details. The Working Group conveners will share the decision with the Project members.

3. For proposals that can proceed for consideration, the proposed external collaborator must agree to abide by the DESC Policy on External Collaborators, DESC Publication Policy, and DESC Professional Conduct Policy for this work with DESC[5] As for any DESC member, violation of the DESC Professional Conduct Policy, or sanction by another collaboration, an institution, or a professional society for violation of a code of conduct, is grounds for removal by DESC Management of an external collaborator from participation in a DESC Project.

4. The Project members submit the proposal to the relevant Working Groups for the Project. (If a Project belongs to a Task Force or Topical Team that does not have a primary 'host' analysis, computing, or technical Working Group, then the proposal must be made to DESC Management.) The conveners of the Working Groups consider input from the Working Group members, and the merits of the specific proposal for the external collaborator arrangement. The proposal should be circulated within the Working Group, and presented at a meeting of the Working Group, as part of giving Working Group members an opportunity to comment. The best-effort time limit for this Working Group stage of the process is **two weeks**.

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[3]A proposal template is available in Confluence.

[4]External collaborators can be proposed for participation in a specific Project, not a series of Projects.

[5]These policies are publicly available at https://lsstdesc.org/pages/policies.html. The proposed external collaborator must send an e-mail message to lsst-desc-ext-collab at slac.stanford.edu with a brief statement indicating agreement to abide by these policies in working with DESC.

5. If the Working Group conveners are inclined to accept the proposal, they then circulate it to DESC membership[6] for a **one week** comment period[7]. The primary considerations are whether the external collaborator brings essential or unique expertise to the project, and/or unique data. If the expertise is not unique, i.e., if similar expertise exists within the Working Group or DESC as as whole, the conveners should establish whether the existing members would be able to lend their expertise to the project on an appropriate time scale.

6. If a **viable DESC-internal alternative is found**, with the concurrence of the Project leads, the Project leads will **withdraw the external collaborator proposal**.

7. If internal candidates have offered to fill the role, but the conveners are still inclined to approve the external collaborator proposal, they must first inform the internal candidates. These candidates will have the opportunity to appeal. Ordinarily, appeals would be made to the relevant coordinator (analysis, computing and simulations, or technical) who oversees the Working Group.

   If the relevant coordinator is conflicted, e.g., a lead of the Project in question, then the appeal is considered by the Spokesperson. In either case, the decision by the coordinator or Spokesperson on whether the internal candidate has the required expertise and availability to meet the need described in the external collaborator proposal is final, and the process of appeal and decision must be complete within **one week**.

8. If at the end of the comment period (and once any appeals are exhausted), **no DESC-internal alternative for the proposed contribution is identified**, the conveners will **approve the external collaborator arrangement**.

9. The DESC membership, and the proposed external collaborator should then be informed of the decision by the Working Group conveners. After approval, the external collaborator must be registered by the Working Group leads in the entry for the Project in the Publication Management System. The approved proposal must also be uploaded into the entry for the Project.

   Figure 1 is a flow-chart version of these steps.

The timeline described above should take no more than four weeks. For fairness and transparency within DESC, in all cases, the participation of the external collaborator **must be proposed, and approved, before participation of the external collaborator can begin**.

## Approval Process for External Collaborators on Subsequent Related Projects

After an approved proposal for external collaboration on a given project, if there are related projects that involve the same external collaborators, a streamlined approval process is possible, as detailed below. To follow this abbreviated procedure, the following criteria must be met:

- The project must involve the same external collaborators, plus any new students working with the collaborators.

- The project must be directly connected to the previous project for which these external collaborators were approved.

In these situations, the following process applies:

1. The Project members, together with the external collaborators they would like to nominate, prepare a proposal. The proposal must be written, identifying:

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[6]This would ordinarily be via e-mail to the lsst-desc-members@slac.stanford.edu list announcing the proposed external collaborator, the working group and the project.

[7]If one of the conveners is conflicted (e.g., a leader of the Project), they should not participate in the decision to circulate the proposal. If both are conflicted, the decision is up to the relevant coordinator for that working group (analysis, computing and simulations, or technical).

**1**
Project members and potential external collaborator(s) prepare written proposal

Project members submit proposal to the relevant WG conveners

WG conveners support the proposal?

No → Either an internal alternative has been identified or the proposal needs revision

**2**
Yes → WG conveners submit the proposal to SP Team

SP team identifies issues that prevents accepting proposal?

Yes → SP team informs WG conveners → WG conveners inform Project members

No → SP team informs WG conveners

WG conveners inform Project members

**3**
External collaborator(s) send email to indicate willingness to abide by DESC Policies

**4**
Project members submit proposal to the relevant WGs for member comment

Internal candidates offer to fill role?

No / Yes

**5**
WG conveners and Project members select an internal candidate?

No / Yes

**6**
Appeal by internal candidates?

No / Yes

Coordinator/Spokesperson accept the internal candidate?

No / Yes

**7**
WG conveners **accept** the External Collaborator proposal, Project members are informed

WG conveners **reject** the External Collaborator proposal, accepting the internal candidate, Project members are informed

**8**
WG conveners inform DESC membership of the outcome & Participation in the Project by the external collaborator or internal candidate begins

**9**
Approved proposal copied to central location accessible to the collaboration
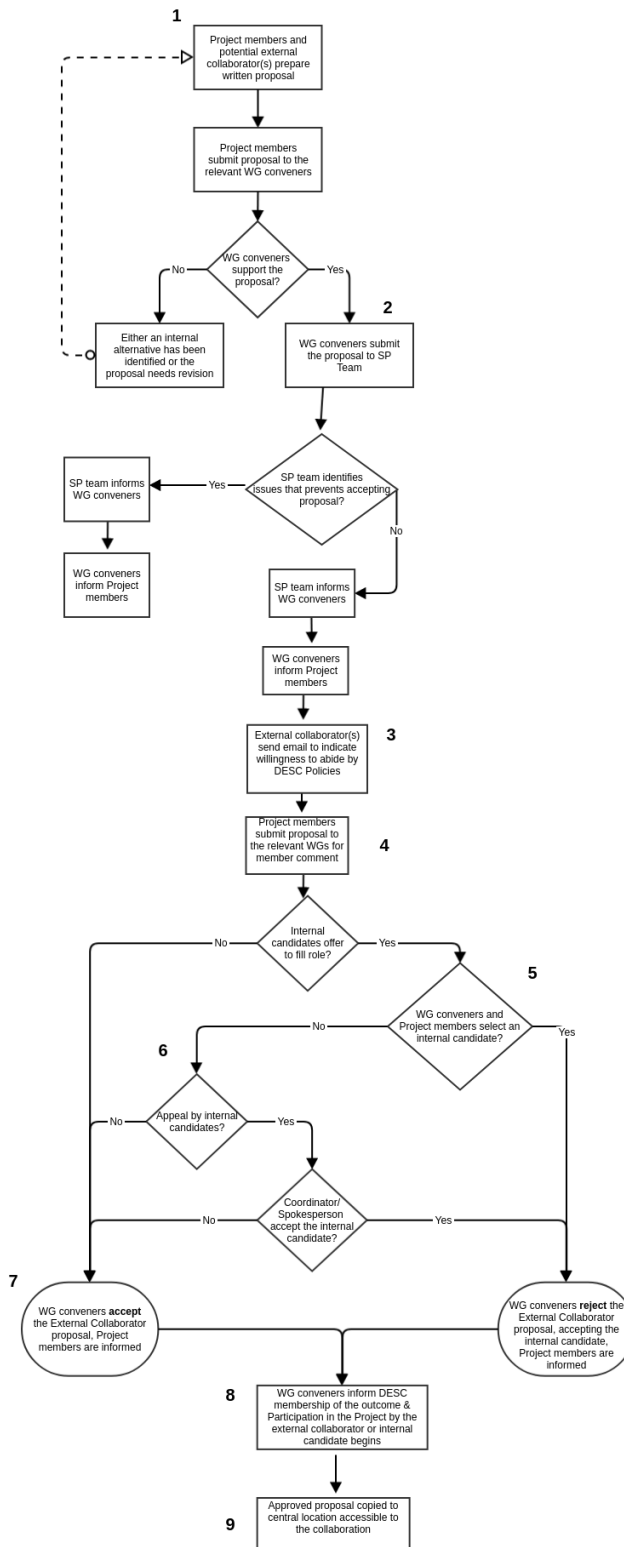
Figure 1: Schematic representation of the review and approval process for External Collaborator proposals. The numbers correspond to the steps described in the text.

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- The previous project for which the external collaborators had been approved.

- The connection between this project and the previous one.

- The non-public DESC data products the external collaborators will need for this work. These products should be identical to those which were listed in the original external collaborator agreement, or updated versions thereof, plus any data products produced by the previous project(s).

- A statement that the external collaborators agree to use these data products only for the proposed joint work with DESC, not to use other non-public DESC data products, and not to redistribute these data products outside DESC.

2. The Project members submit the proposal to the relevant Working Group(s) for the Project. (If a Project belongs to a Task Force or Topical Team that does not have a primary 'host' analysis, computing, or technical Working Group, then the proposal must be made to DESC Management.) If the Working Group conveners are inclined to accept the proposal, the proposal should be circulated to the DESC Membership for a one week notification period.

3. If a DESC member objects to this external collaborator extension proposal and raises their concern with the conveners or the relevant coordinator, this pauses the agreement and may result in either further specification of scope to the new project and/or will trigger a normal approval process for the external collaborator agreement. If concerns cannot be addressed with the relevant conveners, the appeals may be made to relevant coordinators who oversee the working group or team.

4. If there are no objections during the notification periods, the proposal is approved. The Working Group conveners should register the agreement for the new project using the same procedures listed in step 7 of the approval process for new external collaborator agreements.

5. The Operations Management team, on receipt of the announcement of the approval of the proposed contribution, copies the approved proposal to a central location (e.g., a Confluence page) for future reference by the collaboration.

## Amending an existing External Collaborator Agreement

An existing agreement may be amended to include additional participants provided the new participants are all students working with the external collaborators named in the existing agreement. The Project members submit a proposal for amended agreement to the relevant Working Groups for the Project. If the Working Group conveners are inclined to accept the amendment, the approval is immediate. Upon approval, all project members shall be notified of the changes. There is no circulation among the working group or waiting periods for comments.

# Version History

- June 2022 (v1.2): Sections added for continuing external collaborator agreements to new projects and for amending existing external collaborator agreements.
- June 2023 (v1.3): Items added for allowing the Spokesperson team a space to sign off on external collaborators.