



# AstroChallenge 2020

**Attn: HOD Science**

## **COVID-19: AstroChallenge 2020 Contingency Plans**

Dear Sir/Mdm in-charge:

We refer to the new guidelines released by the [Ministry of Health](#) on 24th March. Under these guidelines, all events and mass gatherings (e.g. conferences, exhibitions, festivals, concerts, sporting events, trade fairs) must be deferred or cancelled, regardless of size.

In view of these changes, the Organizing Committee of AstroChallenge 2020 is activating our contingency plans for an online-only format (“AC Online”). An Information Letter containing more specifics will be released in the next 2-3 weeks.

Due to the highly fluid situation, the format of AstroChallenge 2020 is possibly subject to further changes. Should the situation improve over the next month, we will revert to a physical format which maintains a 1m physical distancing between students, following the prevailing guidelines set by the Ministry of Health prior to 24th March.

Please refer to the Appendix for more information with regards to:

- Appendix A: AC2020 Pandemic Contingency Plan – AC Online
- Appendix B: AC2020 Alternative Plan

As this is an entirely novel situation for teachers, students and organizers alike, we seek your understanding in these trying times. In particular, we strongly welcome any feedback/suggestions you may have regarding these format revisions.

Sincerely,  
Grace Huang Wei (Ms.)  
Chairperson  
AstroChallenge 2020 Committee



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## Appendix A: AC2020 Pandemic Contingency Plan – AC Online

### Day 0

**Day 0 is cancelled.** In lieu of a physical meeting in an LT, a series of videos/documents will be released online containing relevant information about the competition. Further, the Data Analysis Question will be released online and emailed to all team leaders. Payment for registration will be done prior to the event by bank transfers.

Note that in view of the 1m distancing requirement, **the Project Round Exhibition segment is cancelled** – the Project Round will only contain **a video and a separate infographic submission**, and follow up questions by the organizers if necessary. Project Round videos and infographics will be submitted via email as per usual. The weightage of the video and infographic will be 60%/40% respectively.

### Day 1

The Individual Round will be conducted via an online platform. Participants will be given a link at the start time of the round, and will have 2 hours to complete the paper.

The Team Round paper will be an **open-book paper**, emailed to participants at the start time, and teams will have 2 hours to complete the entire paper. Teams will submit their paper by emailing us their completed script (photos of their answer script/workings).

The Observation Round will be assessed through a guided assignment regarding practical astronomy. The assignment will be sent to students electronically and students will be given a fixed deadline to submit the assignment.

### Day 2

Day 2 will be Finals only - the Post-Mortem will be delivered as a document uploaded online. Teams will be notified if they are selected for the Finals. Due to the resultant implementation difficulties, **there will not be a Team 6 for this year's Finals.**

Finals will be conducted via video-conferencing, and the Buzzer Round will be scrapped from the Finals.



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## Appendix B: AC2020 Alternative Plan

### Day 0

No change to the structure of Day 0 is proposed. Day 0 will remain cancelled.

### Day 1

Instead of gathering everyone in a single LT as per past practice, Day 1 will be held in several classroom venues. This is so that we can implement the 1m distancing requirement, as well as to avoid mass gatherings and facilitate potential contact tracing.

Teams will be assigned to a specific classroom throughout the duration of Day 1. Students will not mix across classrooms for the duration of the competition. We will also implement staggered start/end times for each classroom to prevent mass crowding along hallways.

Day 1 will still comprise of the Individual Round, Team Round and Observation Round (Seniors only). However, in view of the 1m distancing requirement, teams will not be allowed to huddle together during the Team Round. Teams may still discuss by passing around notes, or by speaking with an appropriate distance apart.

The Theory Observation Round will become an individual assessment. Each school will be separated into different rooms and students will not be allowed to communicate. Students will be taken out for the Night Sky Tour component individually. They will be given 5 minutes to prepare to deliver a Night Sky Tour of up to 3 minutes.

The following changes will be made to the assessment criteria:

- Content (55% to 60%)
- Presentation (30% to 40%)
- Teamwork component will be removed

There will be less emphasis placed on diversity in the objects chosen since there is less time. However, students are still discouraged from choosing objects in the same category. Stellarium will now be controlled by an AstroChallenge QM according to verbal guidance from the presenter (note: the restrictions placed on Stellarium will still apply).

### Observation Round (Practical)

With the changes in structure, the number of participants for the Practical Observation Round will be changed to **3 students** from each school.

Due to the lack of suitable venues within NUS, the Practical Observation Round may be held in a separate location, to be confirmed closer to the date. Participants will be given detailed instructions on how to reach the site and are expected to reach by the stipulated timing with their equipment.



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To comply with the 1m separation as advised by the Ministry of Health, the telescope setting-up portion of the Practical Observation Round will be done by a single randomly-chosen representative from each team.

If a team wishes to use their personal equipment for the Practical Observation Round, they will have to submit a list and pictures of their equipment to the AstroChallenge Committee beforehand for approval. This is to ensure that the equipment can be safely set-up by all members of the team.

The remainder of the Practical Observation Round will follow the general guidelines of AstroChallenge – i.e. limited physical proximity and restricted movement to ensure spatial separation between schools and between students from the same school.

## **Day 2**

Day 2 is functionally identical to the current plan under AC Online, with the only difference being that the Finals will be done in a classroom setting instead of an LT as per past practice. In view of these changes, we will attempt to setup a livestream of the Finals to prevent mass gatherings.