

Name an exoplanet

June 6 2019



Credit: IAU

In recent years, astronomers have discovered thousands of planets and planetary systems orbiting around nearby stars. Some are small and rocky like the Earth, whilst others are gas giants like Jupiter. It is now believed that most stars in the Universe could have planets orbiting them and that some of them may have physical characteristics that resemble those of the Earth. The sheer number of stars in the Universe, each potentially with orbiting planets, along with the ubiquity of pre-biotic compounds, suggests that extraterrestrial life may be likely.

The IAU is the authority responsible for assigning official designations and names to [celestial bodies](#) and now, while celebrating its first 100

years of fostering international collaboration (IAU100 - www.iau-100.org/), it wishes to contribute to the fraternity of all people with a significant token of global identity. Following the first NameExoWorlds [campaign](#), which named 31 exoplanets in 19 [planetary systems](#) in 2015, the IAU will now, within the framework of the IAU100 NameExoWorlds project, offer every country the chance to name one planetary [system](#), comprising an exoplanet and its host star. Each nation's designated star is visible from that country, and sufficiently bright to be observed through small telescopes. This is only the second time in history that a campaign will lead to the naming of stars and exoplanets.

"This exciting event invites everyone worldwide to think about their collective place in the Universe, while stimulating creativity and global citizenship," shared Debra Elmegreen, IAU President Elect. "The NameExoworlds initiative reminds us that we are all together under one sky."

After carefully selecting a large sample of well-studied, confirmed exoplanets and their host [stars](#), the IAU100 NameExoWorlds Steering Committee assigned a star-planet system to each country, taking account of the association with the country and the visibility of the [host star](#) from most of the country.

In each participating country, a national [committee](#) has been specially created by the National Outreach Coordinators (IAU NOCs - www.iau.org/public/noc/) to carry out the campaign at the national level. The national committee, following the methodology and guidelines set up by the IAU100 Name ExoWorlds Steering Committee, is the body responsible for providing the conditions for public participation, disseminating the project in the country and establishing a voting system.

The national campaigns will be carried out from June to November 2019 and, after final validation by the IAU100 NameExoWorlds Steering

Committee, the global results will be announced in December 2019. The winning names will be used freely in parallel with the existing scientific nomenclature, with due credit to the persons that proposed them.

If your country is not yet organising a national campaign, and you are part of a science organisation or Non-Governmental Organisation interested in carrying out a nation-wide contest, there is still time until 30 July 2019 to express interest to organise a national campaign. Send us your brief proposal through this form and the NameExoWorlds Steering Committee will review your proposal and will get back to you with its decision. Questions about national campaigns should be specifically addressed to the National Committees.

More information: Name ExoWorlds website:
www.nameexoworlds.iau.org/

Provided by International Astronomical Union

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