OCTOBER 2025
Vienna, AUSTRIA

The Schools' Observatory (TSO) – Go Observing Handbook

Document Title	Go Observing HANDBOOK
Version/Date	V1.01/27Oct2026
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How to Use 'Go Observing' — User Manual for Teachers & Students

1. Introduction

This manual provides a step-by-step guide on how to use the 'Go Observing' tool of The Schools' Observatory to plan, submit, and analyze astronomical observations. It is intended for both teachers and students who want to engage in real astronomical data collection using professional robotic telescopes such as the Liverpool Telescope and Faulkes Telescope Network.

2. Accessing The Schools' Observatory

Go to https://www.schoolsobservatory.org/ to access the Go Observing platform. You will find general information, login options, and links to registration.

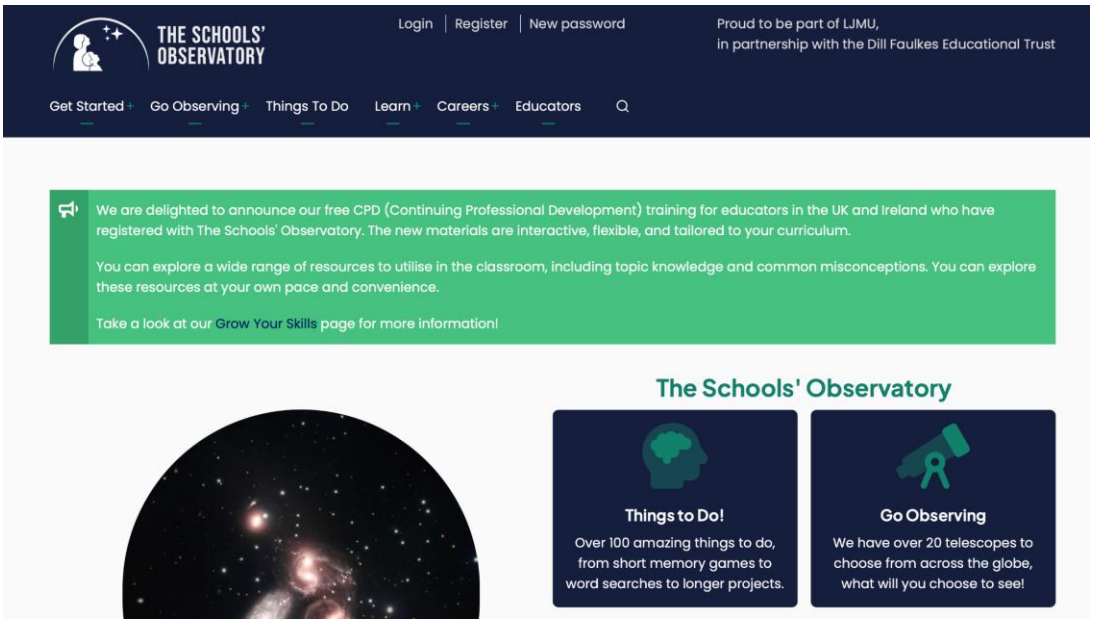


Figure 1. Homepage of The Schools' Observatory showing access to Go Observing.

3. Logging In or Registering

Before you can start observing, you must be logged in as a registered user. Registration is free. Click 'Register' to create an account or 'Login' if you already have one. Teachers should register as “Educator”, Students as “Student”.

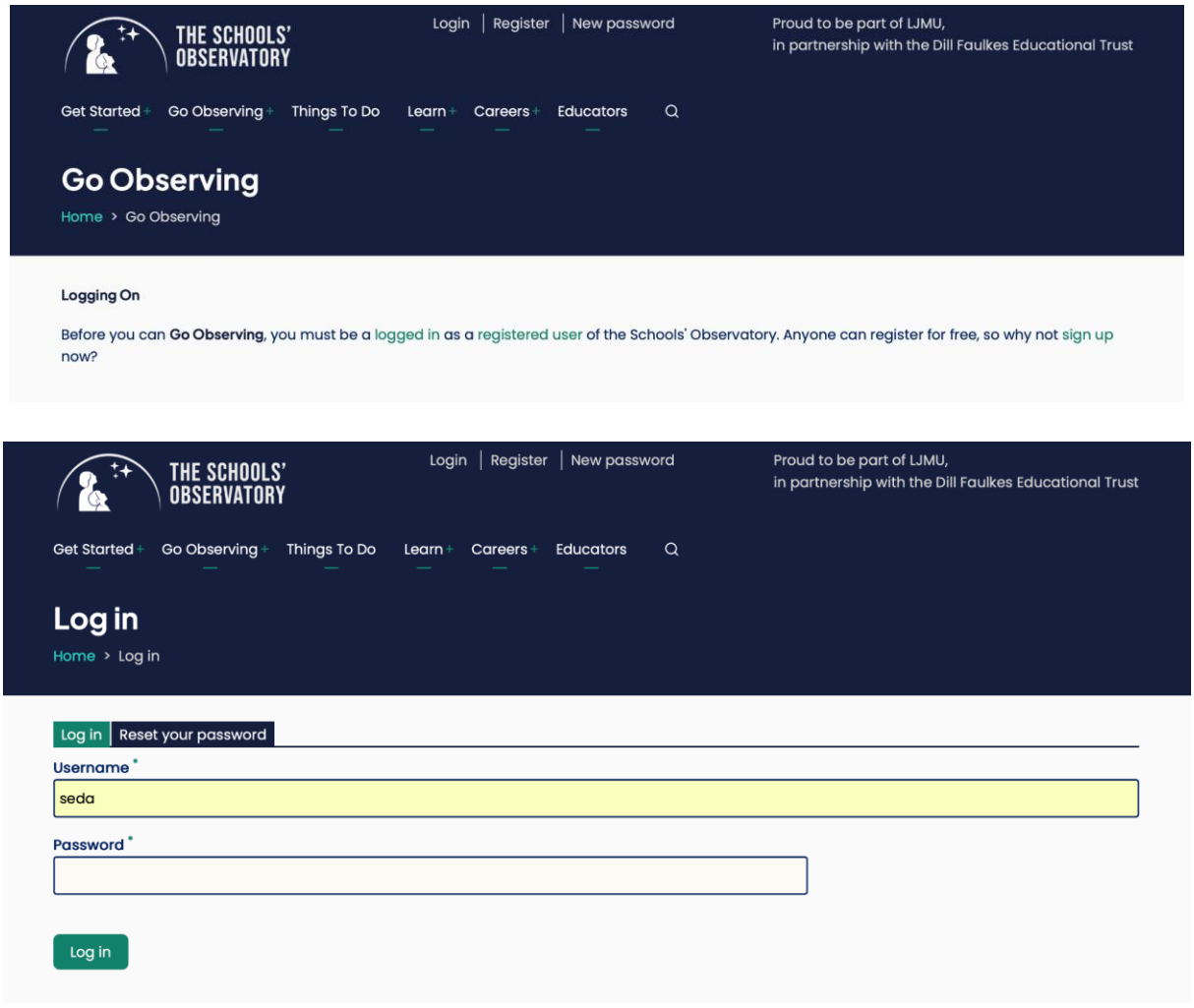


Figure 2. Login and registration pages.

4. Choosing What to Observe

Once logged in, navigate to 'Go Observing' → 'Decide What to Observe'. Here you can select from categories like the Moon, Planets, Deep Sky Objects, and special programs.

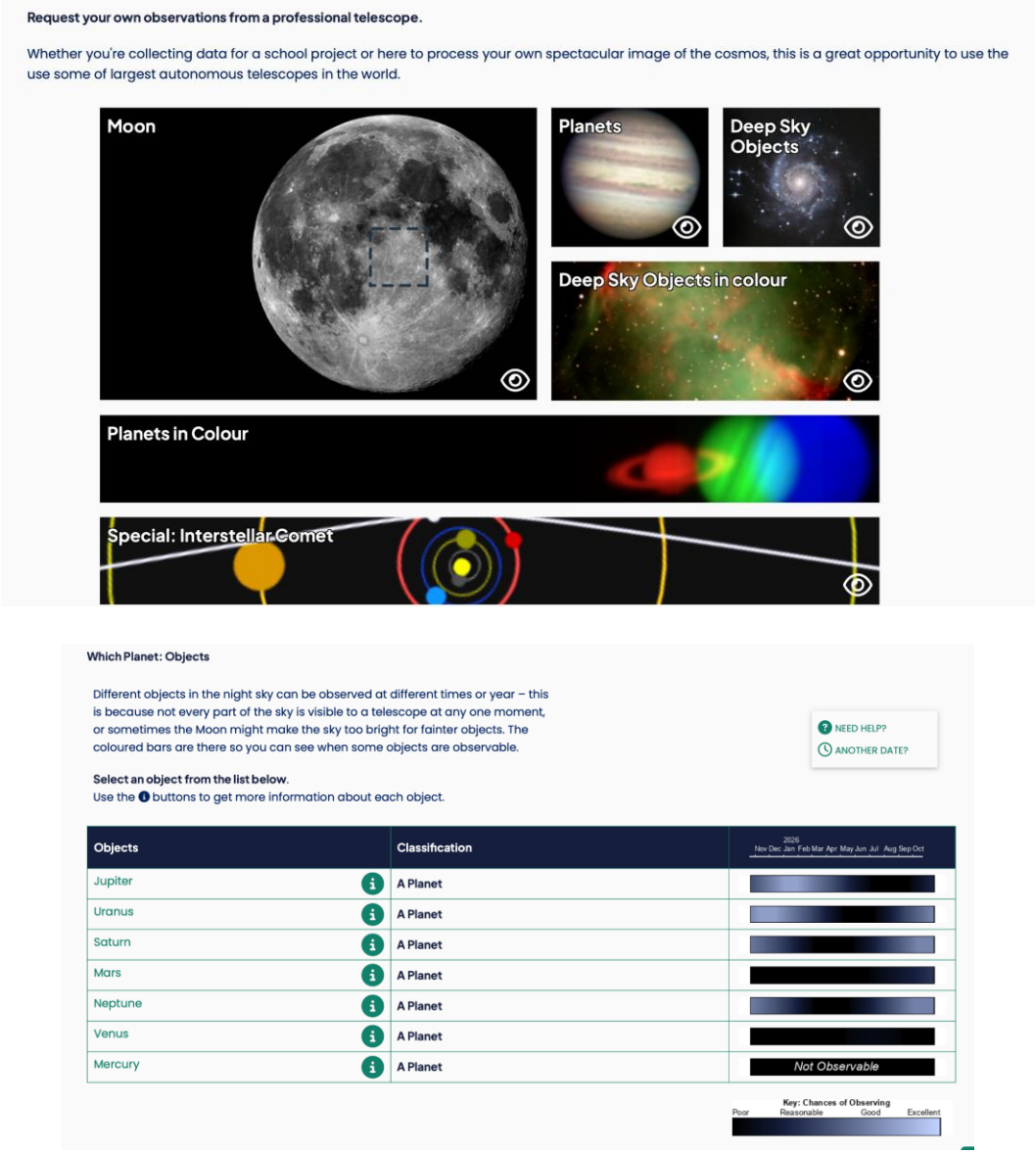


Figure 3. Object selection interface and planetary visibility chart.

5. Submitting Your Observation

After selecting your target (e.g., Saturn), review the observation details such as instrument, filter, and exposure time. When ready, click 'Submit Observations' to send your request to the telescope network.

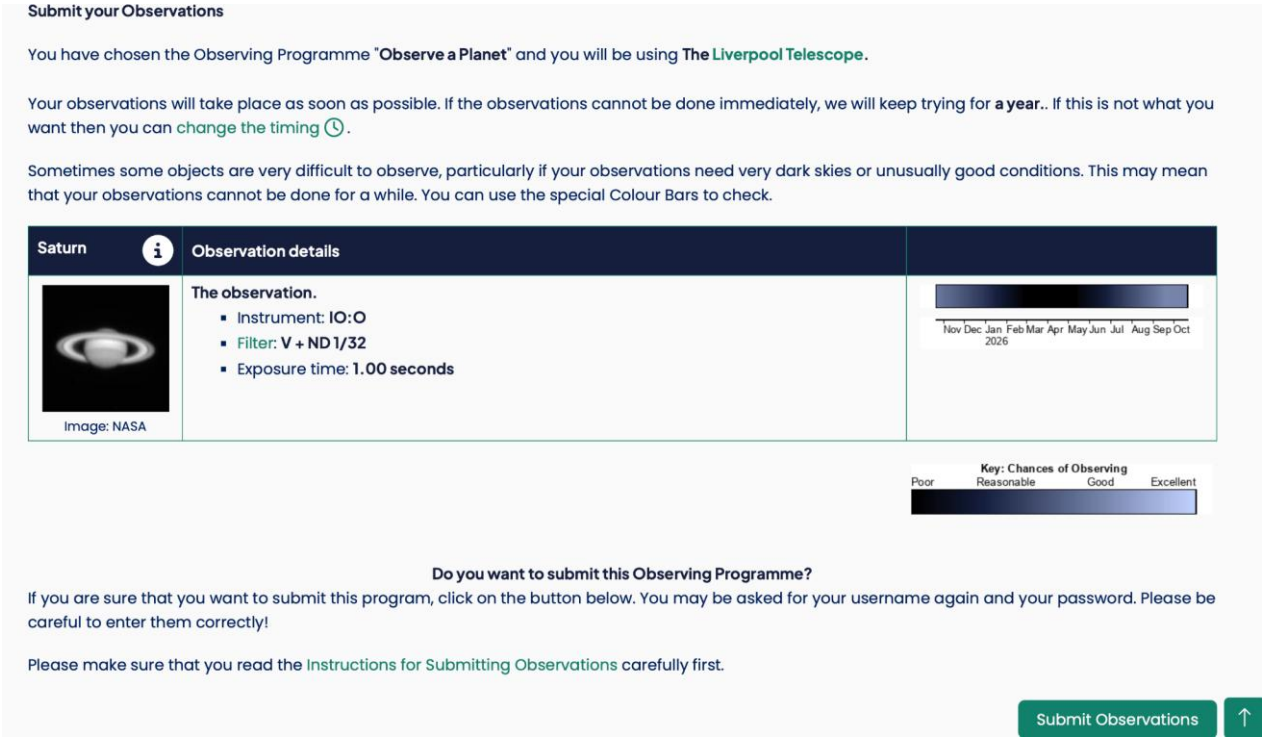


Figure 4. Observation submission form.

6. Observation Confirmation

Once submitted, you will receive a unique observation code. The system will schedule your observation and capture it automatically when conditions are suitable.

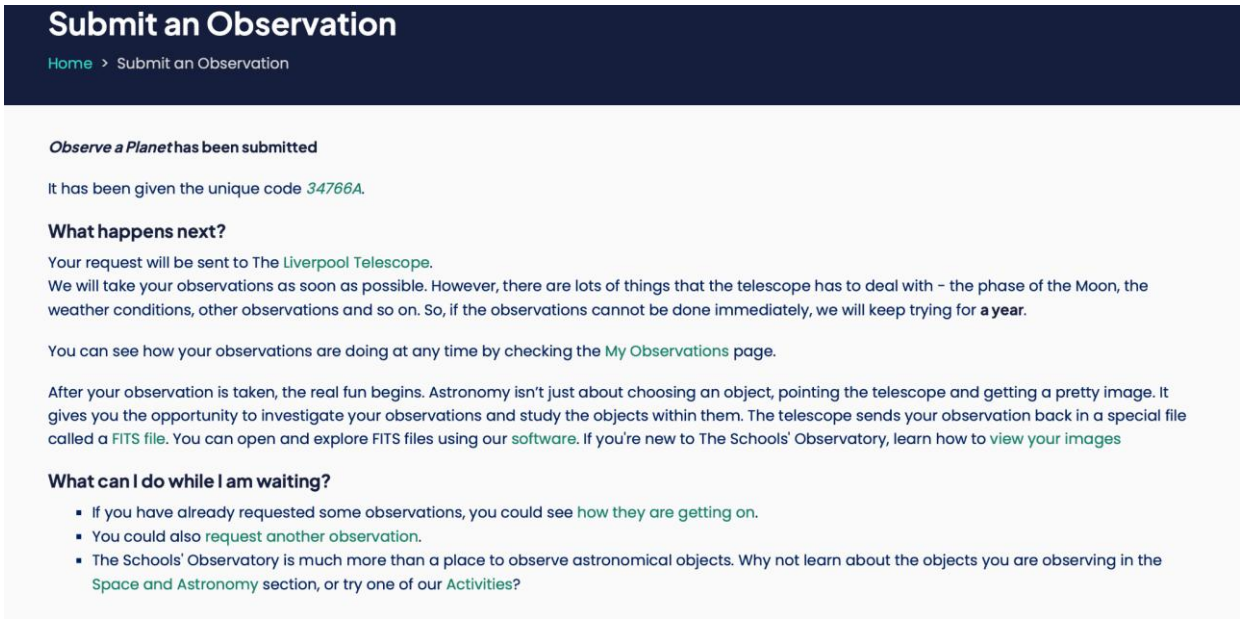


Figure 5. Confirmation screen showing observation code and next steps.

7. Checking Observation Status

You can check the progress of your observations anytime under 'My Observations'. This page lists all programs you have created, their current status, and observation times.

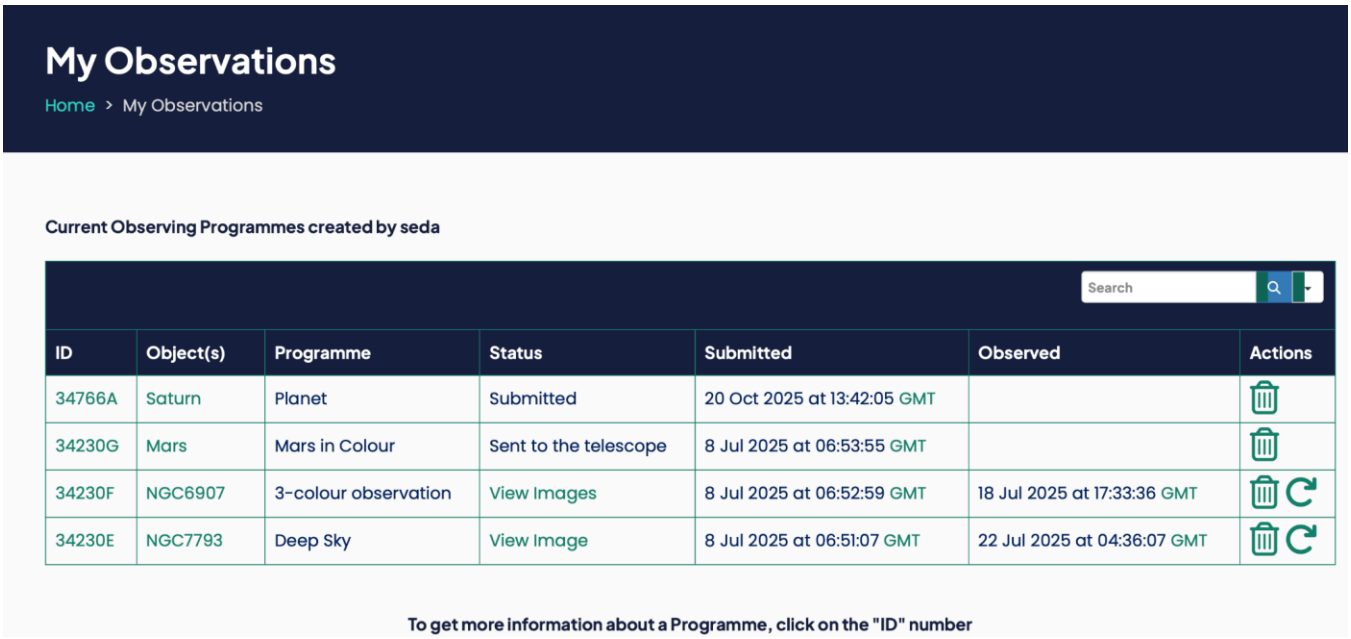
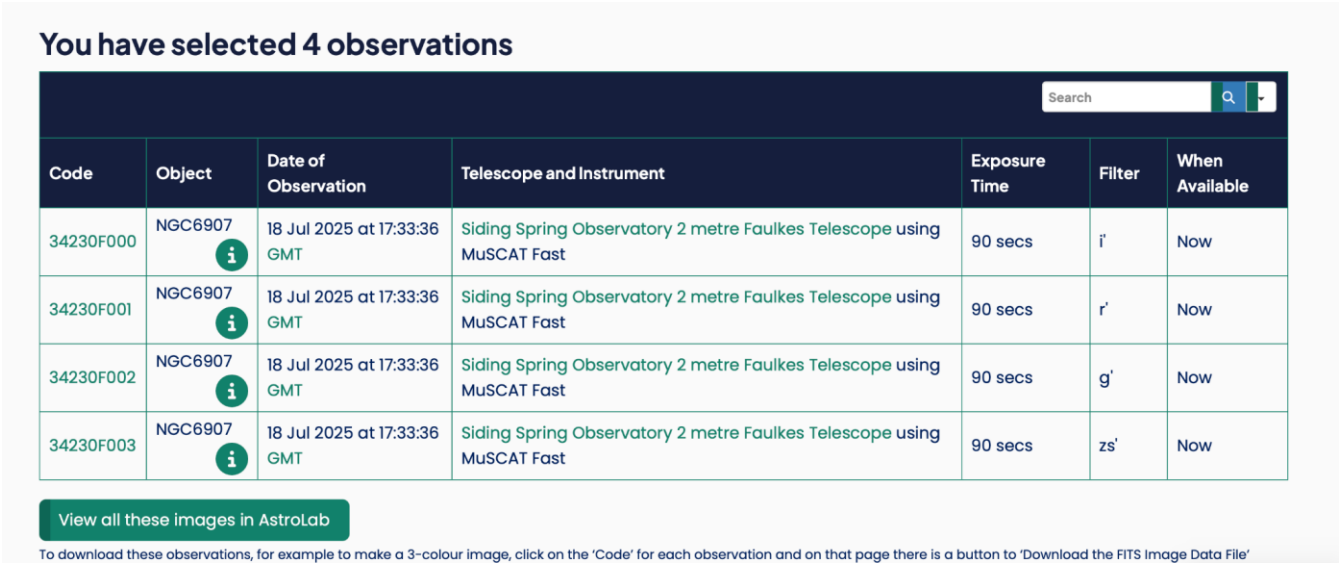


Figure 6. My Observations dashboard.

8. Viewing and Downloading Images

Once your observations are complete, view or download them through the same dashboard. You can access FITS image data files for scientific analysis or use AstroLab to visualize results.



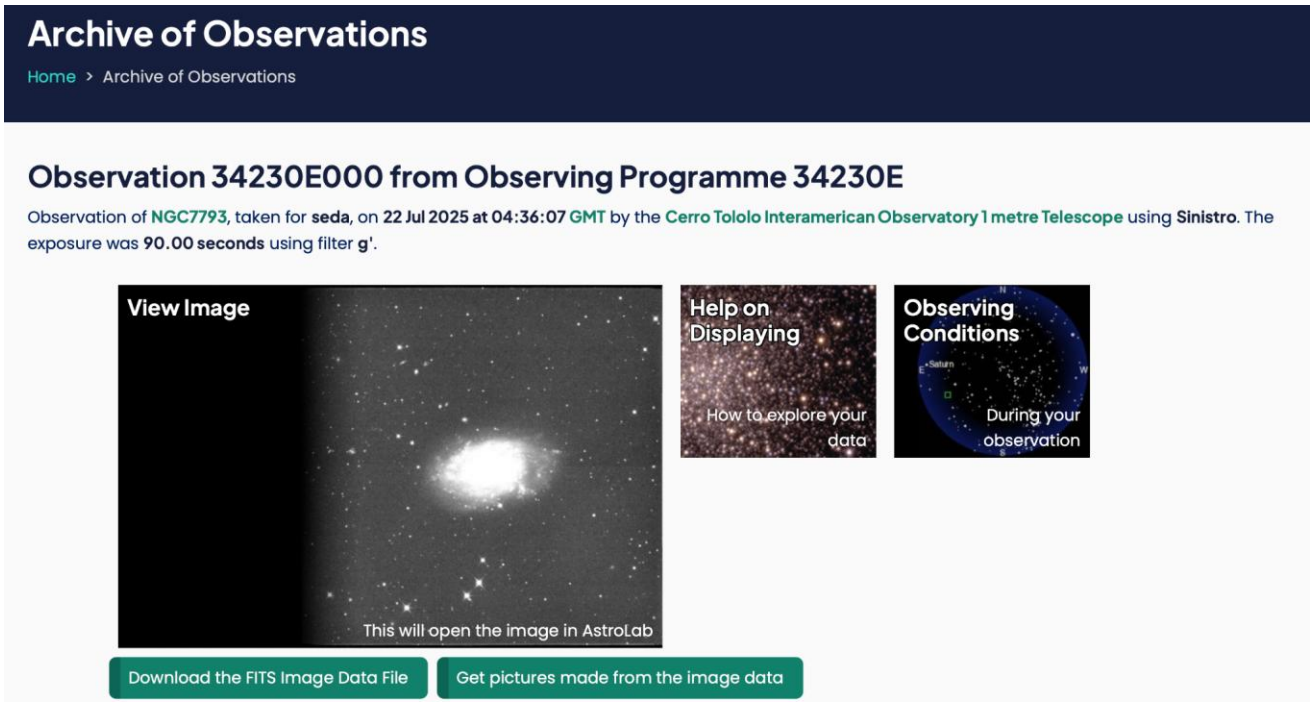


Figure 7. Observation archive and image download options.

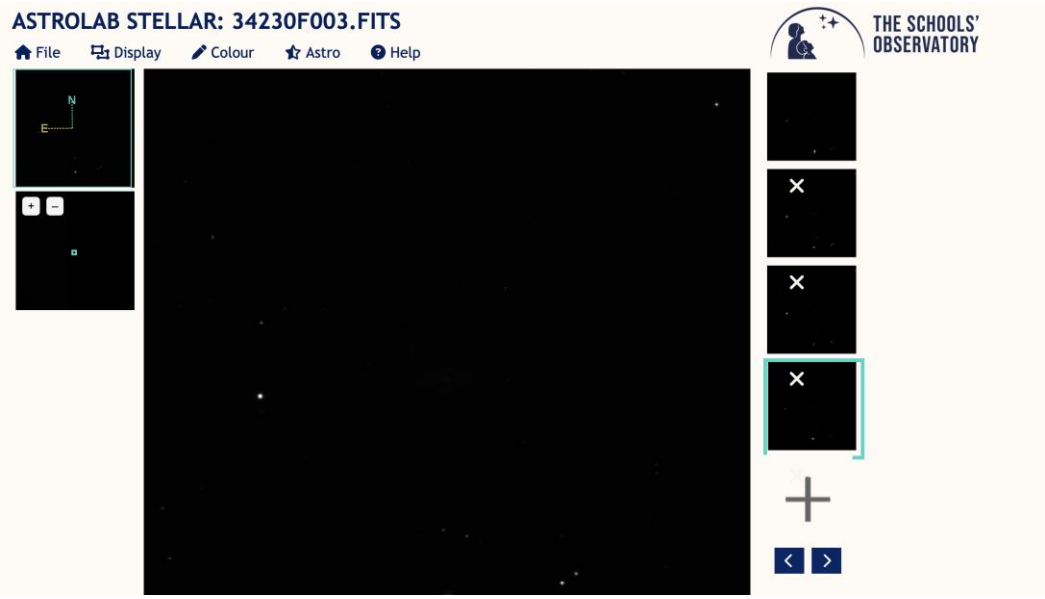


Figure 8. Astrolab app

Note that in Astrolab, the image may look just black. This does not mean that there is nothing on the image. You may have to select “Display” on top and then “Scaling”. A new window will open where you can make the necessary adjustments. Usually you can simply select “Most detail“ as starting point. See Figure 9.

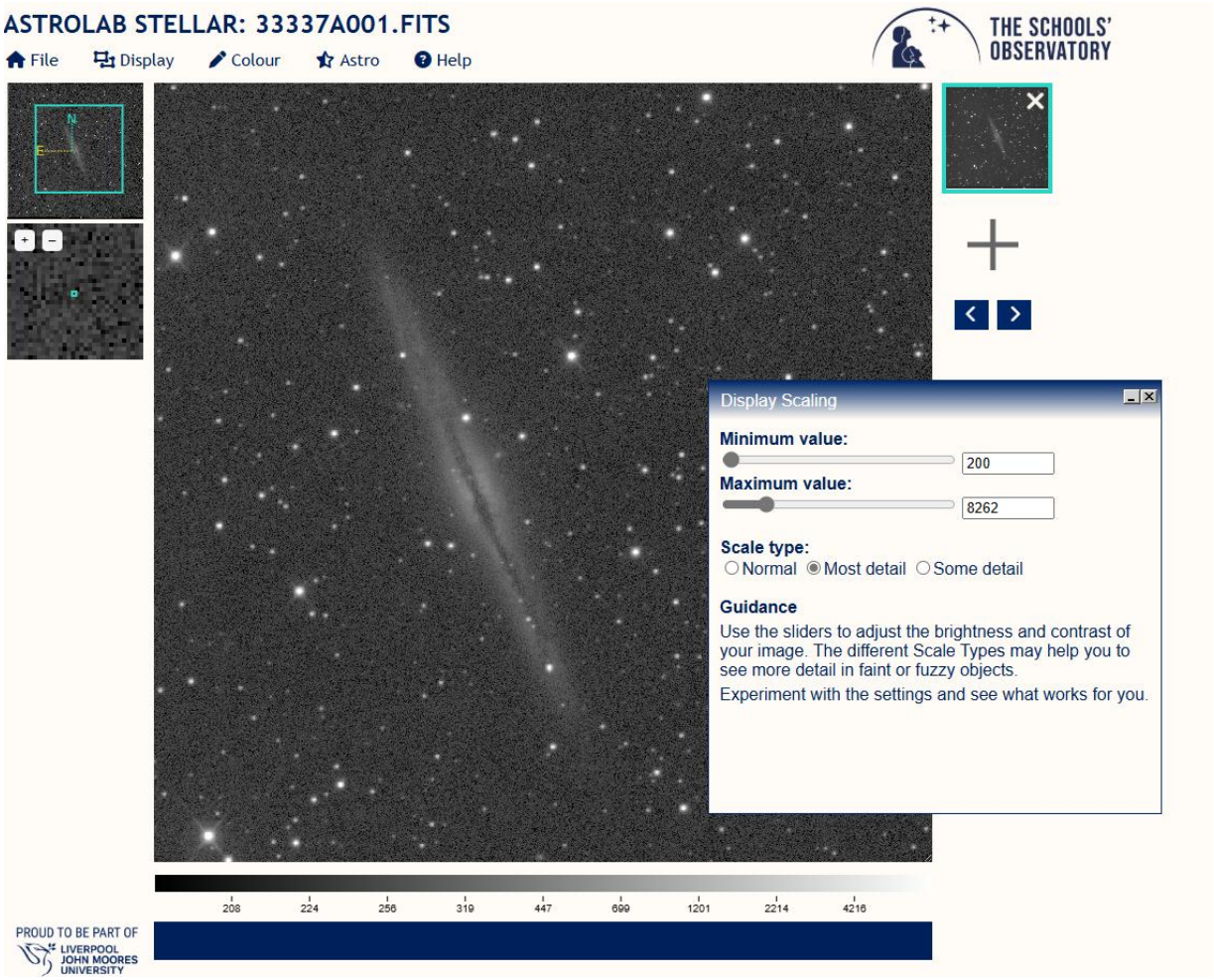


Figure 9. Astrolab – Display Scaling

9. Teacher & Student Guidance

Teachers can integrate Go Observing into lessons about astronomy, data collection, and scientific inquiry. Suggested activities:

- Compare student observations of planets or galaxies.
- Analyze brightness and colors using image filters.
- Discuss how weather or moonlight affects observations.

Students can keep a logbook to record each observation, including target name, observation date, telescope used, and findings.

Also have a look at “Things to do” which you can select on the top of the page, with a large selection of over 130 educational resources. See Figure 10.

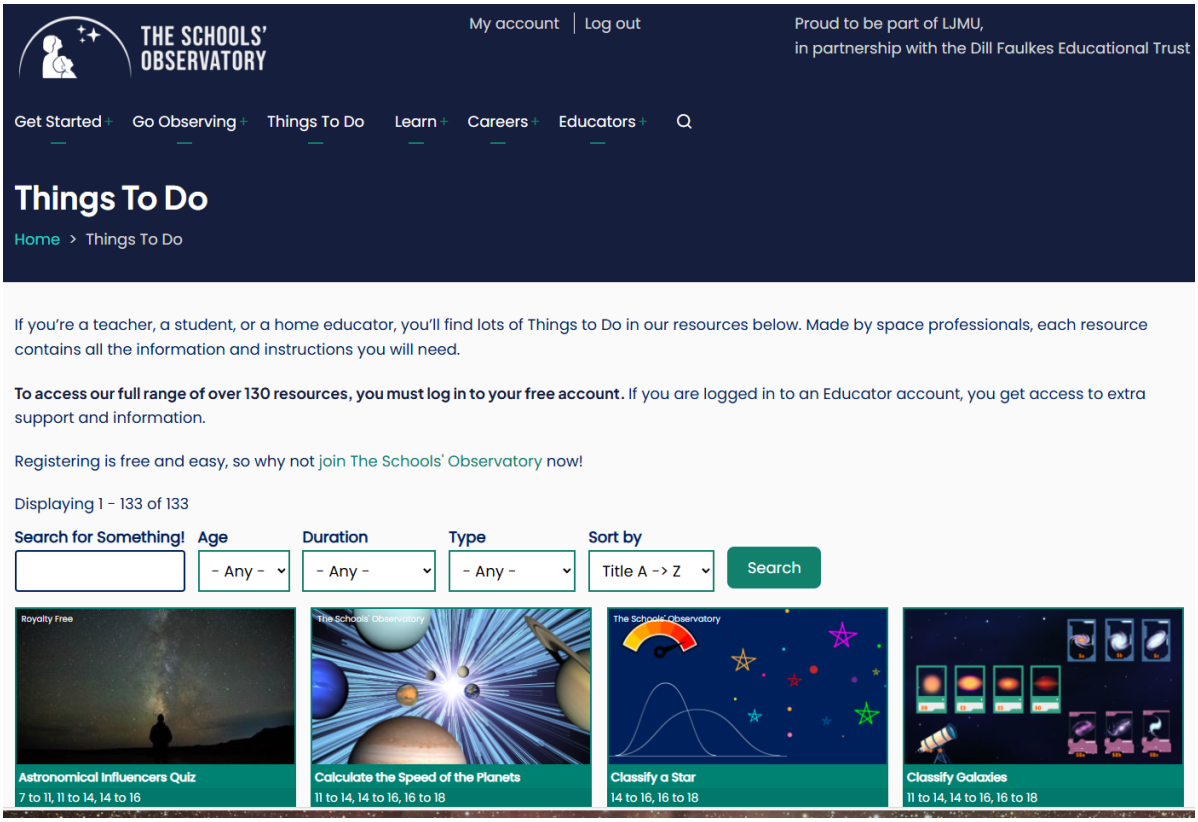


Figure 10. Things to Do

10. Troubleshooting & Glossary

If your observation does not appear or fails to complete, check weather conditions or telescope availability. For technical issues, contact The Schools' Observatory support.

Glossary:

- FITS File – A standard astronomical data format.
- Filter – Optical element isolating light of specific wavelengths.
- Exposure Time – Duration of light capture during observation.
- Observatory – Automated facility that captures your image remotely.