

## **Terms of Reference for the South African SALT Time Allocation Committee (SASTAC)**

The National Research Foundation, the South African shareholder in the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), delegates the authority to distribute South Africa's share of SALT observing time to the South African SALT Time Allocation Committee (SASTAC). The South African SALT Task Team shall have oversight responsibility for the SASTAC.

SASTAC's mandate is to allocate time based on scientific merit to programmes that are technically feasible, but having due regard for training of students based in South Africa, especially from previously disadvantaged communities, or in Africa. The committee shall seek the continuing advice of the South African astronomical community to establish time allocation policies that are equitable and promote scientific excellence, the interests of South African astronomy, and the reputation of SALT. Key criteria for the allocation of SALT time are given in the document "Key Criteria for SASTAC Time Allocation on SALT".

SASTAC shall carry out its duties with the highest standard of integrity. Conflicts of interest shall be declared and managed so as not to compromise equitable treatment of any person/s applying for SALT time.

SASTAC shall have the following members:

1. Six (6) voting members and optionally one (1) non-voting member, all of whom will hold a PhD in astronomy or a cognate discipline.
2. The six (6) voting members will be nominated and elected by members of the South African astronomical community; this process is described in Appendix A.
3. At least one (1) of these members will be associated with an institution located outside of the Western Cape.
4. At least three (3) of these members will have a track record of research in stellar or planetary astrophysics.
5. At least three (3) of these members will have a track record of research in extragalactic astrophysics or cosmology.
6. At least one member of the committee must have obtained their PhD within the 8 years preceding his/her election to the SASTAC.
7. The non-voting member will advise the committee on technical matters related to SALT, but not participate directly in the assessment of the proposals. He/she will be appointed by the SAAO Director in consultation with the SALT Science Operations Manager. If the voting members already include a member sufficiently knowledgeable of the technical matters, a non-voting member may be deemed unnecessary.

Neither the Director of SAAO nor the DCEO (Astronomy) of the NRF shall be eligible to be members of SASTAC. If it is not possible to elect committee members meeting the criteria outlined in points 3-6 above, then the SALT Task Team, through its Chair, shall decide how best to proceed.

The committee shall elect its own Chair and will, as far as is possible, make decisions based on consensus. The committee may co-opt additional persons to assist or advise it, provided that the approval of telescope time remains the ultimate responsibility of the 6

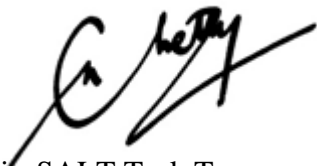
voting members. All proposals and associated intellectual property shall be kept confidential within the committee as well as by any co-opted persons. The committee shall also have the power to appoint referees for proposals if it is deemed desirable. The committee shall maintain confidential minutes of its meetings and discussions.

The Chair of SASTAC should ideally retire from the role and become an ordinary member of the committee when he/she has at least one time allocation left to serve. This is intended to introduce and assist the incoming Chair to/with the administrative work associated with allocating time. The retiring Chair should, in consultation with the SALT Task Team through its Chair, organize an election for his/her replacement from among any SASTAC member (current or past, if they are re-elected for the upcoming semester) who has served at least one semester on SASTAC.

The Chair must take responsibility for:

- Organising and running the committee
- Ensuring that the observing time is allocated within the deadlines specified on the relevant SALT Call for Proposals
- Arranging for elections unless he/she has a conflict of interest
- Following each time allocation, delivering a report both to the SALT Task Team Chair as well as to the entire astronomical community providing as much detail of the proposal process and broad outcome as possible, without disclosing details of any specific proposal, or the treatment thereof
- Dealing with problems in the work or composition of the committee. In the first instance, problems shall be solved by discussion within the committee. In the case that this does not succeed, the Chair shall discuss and attempt to resolve problems with the SALT Task Team, through its Chair.

The decisions of the SASTAC on the scientific merit of proposals, on the ranking of proposals, and on the allocation of observing time shall be final. Any member of the SA astronomical community who feels that the SASTAC has failed to follow appropriate procedure in arriving at their conclusions, or has failed to follow the allocation criteria, may lodge a written complaint with the SALT Task Team. This body will review the complaint within one week after receipt, and may direct the SASTAC to correct any procedural fault determined.



Chair, SALT Task Team  
27 January 2016

## **Appendix A: Election of SASTAC Members**

Those elected shall serve for a maximum of 6 rounds of time allocation (normally 3 years). Members of the committee who have completed this length of service shall stand down; normally this will be two members each year. Nominations will be solicited and an election will be held to replace those standing down and, if necessary, for any vacancies owing to resignations or deaths. The members standing down will not be eligible for re-election for two years after standing down.

Elections will be organized by the Chair of the committee at the time of the election, unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case the SALT Task Team, acting through its Chair, will organize the elections. It is the responsibility of the election organizer to ensure there are sufficient candidates of high academic standing on the ballot.

The election shall be conducted by calling for nominations of persons resident in South Africa who hold a PhD in astronomy or a cognate discipline, and whose status if elected will ensure that the composition of the committee remains as defined above. Self-nomination is permitted. Nominees are expected to normally be available for SASTAC meetings in March and September. If there are more nominations than vacancies, voting will take place. Those qualified to vote in the election shall be persons holding a PhD in astronomy or a cognate discipline and normally resident in South Africa. The elections should take place at least a month before SASTAC convenes to deliberate on new proposal submissions where the new members are needed.

Winning candidates will be considered sequentially in order of those with the highest number of votes. Candidates with more votes than the other remaining candidates will be declared elected, unless their selection will result in a composition for the committee that is inconsistent with the above description. For example, if the committee plus those already declared elected are all based in the Western Cape, no further candidates from the Western Cape will be elected. Candidates from outside the Western Cape with the highest number of votes will then be considered. This process will be iterated until the committee is complete. The constituencies to be filled and the eligibility of candidates will be specified at the time nominations are requested and received. Two candidates, one with experience in stellar research and the other in extragalactic research, who received the most votes of those not selected, shall be considered as substitute members of SASTAC to be called to serve if a regular member is not available for a round of time allocations.