

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

April 2019

The National Research Foundation, the South African shareholder in the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), delegates to the South African SALT Time Allocation Committee (SASTAC), the authority to allocate South Africa's share of SALT observing time to South African- and African-led projects. The South African SALT Steering Committee (SASSC), which is chaired by the NRF's DCEO for National Research Infrastructure Platforms (NRIP), shall have oversight responsibility for the SASTAC.

SASTAC's mandate is to allocate observing time on SALT based on scientific merit to programs that are technically feasible, 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 and the SASSC to establish time allocation policies that are equitable and promote scientific excellence, the interests of South African and 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) additional, 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 or 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 (1) member of the committee must have obtained their PhD within the 8 years preceding his/her election to the SASTAC.
7. At most one (1) members of the committee can be associated with an institution outside of South Africa, but within the African continent.
8. At least two (2) members of the committee must be at least on their second term, to ensure continuity.
9. The non-voting member will advise the committee on technical matters related to SALT, but not participate directly in the scientific assessment of the proposals. They 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, the non-voting member may be deemed unnecessary.

Neither the Director of SAAO nor the DCEO (NRIP) 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 3-7 above, then the SASSC, through its Chair, shall decide how best to proceed.

The committee shall elect its own Chair, subject to endorsement by the Chair of the SASSC 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 will be elected one semester prior to the end of the tenure of the current Chair. This will allow the incoming Chair to work closely with the current incumbent in understanding his/her role and the associated administrative responsibilities. Members must have at least one semester on SASTAC to be eligible for Chair.

The Chair will be responsible 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 meeting, delivering a report both to the SASSC

Chair as well as to the entire astronomical community highlighting the outcomes of the time allocations without disclosing details of any specific proposal, or the treatment thereof.

- Resolving problems and/or queries through discussions within the committee and/or through consultation with the SASSC 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 SASSC via email to sa-ssc@salt.ac.za. The SASSC shall review the complaint within one week of receipt.



Chair, South African SALT Steering Committee

28/4/19

Appendix A: Election of SASTAC Members

Those elected shall serve for a maximum period of 6 semesters (normally 3 years).

Members of the committee who have completed their maximum term shall stand down and will not be eligible for re-election for a period of two years.

Nominations for new members to replace those standing down will be called for by the SASTAC Chair from amongst the South African and/or African astronomical community.

The nominees must be affiliated with a South African or an African institution 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 in the Terms of Reference above. Self-nomination is permitted. Nominees will be required to 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 affiliated with a South African and/or African institution.

New members shall be appointed at least a month before SASTAC convenes to deliberate on time allocations.

Any member of the South African astronomical community who feels that the SASTAC has failed to follow appropriate procedure may lodge a written complaint with the SASSC via email to sa-ssc@salt.ac.za. The SASSC will review the complaint within one week of receipt.



Handwritten signature and date: 23/4/19