



ASSA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

DATE	27 January 2025	TME	17:00 – 17:40	VENUE	Via Jitsi Meet
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ATTENDANCE

Council

	Role
Derek Duckitt	President, Chair – Hermanus Centre, Cosmology Director
Dr Daniel Cunnama	Vice President (outgoing President)
Dr Ian Glass	Council Member
Lerika Cross	Secretary
Andre Bruton	Membership Secretary
Mike Hadlow	Chair – Durban Centre
John Lindsay-Smith	Chair - Johannesburg Centre
Willem Brazelle	Chair – Cape Centre

Appointees

Auke Slotegraaf	SGAS Editor
Chris Stewart	Instrumentation Director
Dr Claire Flanagan	Convenor of Scholarships
Tim Cooper	Comet, Asteroid, Meteor (CAM) Director
Dave Blane	Double & Variable Star Director & Photometry & Spectroscopy Director (Acting)
Jacques van Delft	Solar Director
Dr Pierre de Villiers	Outreach Director
Colin Steyn	Observing Director

Apologies (a) and Absentees

Dr Matie Hoffman (a)	Vice President (incoming President), Chair – Bloemfontein
Adv AJ Nel (a)	Treasurer
Chris de Coning (a)	ASSA Archiving, Historical Director
Case Rijsdijk (a)	Council Member
Dr Christian Hettlage (a)	Web Master
John Gill (a)	Web Manager
Peter Hers	Chair – Garden Route Centre
Johan Smit	Chair - Pretoria Centre
Martin Heigan	Imaging Director

Documents supporting this meeting are available in the [ASSA Cloud Folder](#):

[Meeting Agenda](#), [Meeting recording](#)

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
1	Welcome, Present, Apologies, Proxies received Derek Duckitt opened the 3 rd ASSA Council meeting for 2024/25 year, welcoming all members. Apologies received before & after meeting are noted under Attendance.
2	Previous Minutes of Meetings and Agenda The minutes of the Council meeting held 28 October 2024 : Pierre de Villiers proposed that the minutes be accepted – no objections were received. Note: Outcomes and actions arising from previous minutes/Council discussions are <i>in italics</i> . Actions are underlined. Progress since previous meetings included.
3	3. Communication 3.1 Communications document (<i>Permanent item</i>) Latest draft is available on the ASSA Cloud, 23 September 2024 .

3.2 Communicating with members

3.2 Update:

Christian could not attend the meeting. [Daniel](#) agreed to assist [Christian](#) with expediting the items under 3.2 and 3.3 relating to items for the SAAO IT to look into.

3.2.1 Join Us top menu item on website

(11 Mar) Auke created top menu item, [Join Us](#) on website but was unable to edit /create a new Form and called on [Christian](#) /SAAO IT to make changes requested.

(22 April) To resolve Join Us and Captcha issues: a plug-in Updraft for migrating the website to a WordPress single-site set-up at the SAAO. [Christian](#) can arrange Google Analytics.

(28 Oct) Christian apologized for SAAO IT delay (due to staff shortages) SAAO IT is busy extracting from the current multisite into a site of its own. It looks like no plugin (and hence no funds) might be required.

Update ([Christian](#))

3.2.2 Search function

(22 April) Since the website review: reactivating the "Search" function (Christian)

(24 Jun) Christian informed Search button was added back to site. It was suggested to move it to the menu. As this requires changes to the site template, this shall be addressed once the site has been moved from the current WordPress multisite to a standalone site.

Awaiting outcome of 3.2.1

3.2.3 Captcha error

(28 Oct) When completing/submitting either "Ask an Astronomer" or "Report a Sighting" forms on [Contact Us](#) the submission fails with error: "The reCAPTCHA was invalid. Go back and try again."

This issue awaits outcome of 3.2.1

3.2.4 Spam emails

Tim reported that he is receiving spam to his personal email from shallowsky@ that seems to originate from "Report a Sighting". Christian undertook to take up the issue with SAAO IT.

([Christian](#))

3.2.5 ASSVIP.io Group

The ASSVIP.io group was created for communication with Country Members and Council – it has 91 members at present. The .io groups allow free membership for up to 100 members.

Premium membership will cost \$20/month or \$220/year.

Council discussed and agreed that it would be best to stay on a single platform.

Options to be unpacked.

3.3 Sending email to all Members

(22 April) Proposal for implementing an ASSA Member List

(24 Jun) Some Centres are in support, some not. Daniel proposed to work with Christian on an alternate option to allow members to opt in to mail list using Join Us tab on website and MailChimp.

(28 Oct) Daniel informed that he and Christian must still explore the option and will inform in due course, e.g. if there will be any cost involved.

Update ([Daniel](#), [Christian](#))

3.4 ASSA Cloud repository

Chris de C reported that all the outstanding actions from previous meeting have been actioned.

He also reported that ASSA has an agreement with UCT Special Collections Archive who professionally Archive and preserve unique / irreplaceable material. In contacting the UCT Libraries to arrange for the deposit of new material (from Hermanus Centre) he received the reply [2025-01-Kirkwood - ASSA Archival material](#). Material that ASSA deposited in 2013 regarding the Natal Midlands Centre and Jan Hers Collection were damaged but not destroyed by the Jagger Library Fire in April 2021. The main collection of ASSA which have been Indexed and Archived was in a building a few kilometres from the fire and is totally unharmed.

[Chris de C](#) will deposit the Hermanus Material soon.

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p><u>Auke</u> reported that he will compile the SkyGuide files and upload to the repository.</p> <p>3.5 Dark Sky 3.5.1 Astro Tourism <i>(4 Oct) DSI Astro Tourism Strategy Plan: final plan to be presented following which funding will be known. Funding is likely to be dependent on ASSA being registered as a PBO.</i> Daniel reported there is progress albeit slow: the Strategy will be presented to Parlement 18 February.</p>
4	<p>4. Outreach 4.1 Astrophotography (“AP”) Competition <i>(28 Oct) The results of the 2024 AP competition were posted on the website and the Flyer on the Outreach page updated with the winning image, the Running Chicken Nebula and Pearl Cluster Centres and Directors are asked to consider making the Flyer available at sessions attended by the public / non-ASSA members.</i> 2025 AP Competition: As 2024 winner, John Lindsay-Smith will join Martin and Chris on the 2025 judging team. <u>Chris S</u> visited G&L Agencies mid-Dec to discuss potential sponsorship items with Graham Lynch to allow marketing and advertising of the 2025 Competition early in 2025. Graham noted that in the layout in future the Celestron and Sky Watcher logos need to be clearly separated. Awaiting feedback from Graham Lynch regarding sponsorship consideration. (<u>Chris S</u>)</p> <p>4.2 ASSA GMN Outreach Project (https://globalmeteonetwork.org/outreach/) The project is listed on the ASSA Outreach page and the latest status available at: https://globalmeteonetwork.org/outreach/2024/04/10/south-african-cameras-installations/ <i>(28 Oct) As it is near end of the school year, not a lot will happened before mid-January.</i> <i><u>Pierre</u> and <u>Tim</u> will start to unpack how to get learners more involved.</i> <i>If the application for another 4 camera is successful, they will discuss where to place those cameras.</i> Tim reported: Pierre has been talking to Laingsburg and Touws River schools since start of school year. A presentation to schools will be held on 19 February to go through with students and teachers what they see, how to interpret what they see and to familiarise them with Stellarium.</p> <p>Funding for 4 additional cameras has already been granted. Instead of getting the 4 cameras imported – already assembled with raspberry pi and ready to install at schools – Tim will procure components and assemble these locally thus potentially saving money to procure more than 4 units. <u>Chris S</u> volunteered his services to help with assembling the cameras if needed and <u>Tim</u> said they would appreciate assistance and will let Chris S know when they’re ready.</p>
5	<p>5. ASSA Publications 5.1. SGAS 2025 <i>(24 Jun) FSC on 5 June agreed to keep the SGAS 2025 price at R100.</i> Andre reported overall successful distribution of 2025 SGAS; only had 3 returns. 3 international deliveries for which people paid for.</p> <p>Auke thanked Ian Glass for joining him in various sessions / radio interviews on the 2025 SGAS.</p> <p>Auke encouraged everyone to give him feedback for the SGAS 2026. 2 people informed they prefer the format of the previous version. (<u>All</u>)</p> <p>5.2 SGAS 2025 epub As per last year, PenguinRandomHouse was asked to send complementary Sky Guide 2025 epub versions to authors, sponsors, members outside South Africa, members who would prefer epubs – these were sent to 7 gmail addresses. For any queries re the complementary epubs, contact Lerika.</p> <p>5.3 MNASSA (https://assa.saao.ac.za/publications/mnassa/) <i>(28 Oct) The generic email MNASSA@saao.ac.za does not yet revert to Willie (<u>Christian</u>).</i> For now, send contributions to his personal email "Willie Koorts" koorts.willie@gmail.com</p>

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p><u>Christian</u> to confirm that mnassa@ email is reverting to "Willie Koorts" koorts.willie@gmail.com. Willie encouraged everyone to send him articles for MNASSA – for now send them to both MNASSA@ and his gmail address.</p> <p>5.4 Other ASSA publications (<i>Permanent item for noting</i>)</p> <p><u>MNASSA</u>: Recent edition was published October '24</p> <p><u>CAM Notes</u>: Recent edition published 26 Dec '24: 2025 No.1 covering January to March '25</p> <p><u>Solar Bulletin</u>: Recent edition was published 12 January 2025</p> <p><u>Deep Sky Bulletin</u>: Recent edition was published December '24</p>
6	<p>6. Scholarships</p> <p>6.1 2024 Bursaries</p> <p>(28 Oct) http://assa.sao.ac.za/about/scholarships/ has been updated with the 2024 Bursars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ASSA Scholarships: Isabella Goodwin 2nd year BSc at UCT; - Cooke Scholarship: Liam Harris 3rd year BSc at Wits. <p>They have both been onboarded as Bursary Country Members and joined the ASSAVIP group. Claire sent communication to both 2024 Bursars, asking them to join as Centre or Country Member as their gratuity Bursar membership expires June '25. Their membership on ASSAVIP needs to be updated if they do not join as Country Members. (Lerika)</p> <p>6.2 2025 Bursaries</p> <p>(28 Oct) AJ confirmed that both ASSA and Cooke Scholarships will remain at R25k</p> <p>Claire and AJ agreed the closing dates for 2025 applications which is published as 21 Feb on the webpage https://assa.sao.ac.za/about/scholarships/</p> <p><u>Claire</u> will post the bursaries notice to the SA Astronomers list and will send Daniel a note for the ASSA FB page.</p> <p>6.3 Bequest from Prof Brian Warner's estate</p> <p><u>AJ</u> is processing a bequest of R10 000 from Prof Warner's estate and proposes for it to be part of ASSA's investment account to ensure a legacy and will convey the same to the institution.</p> <p>ASSA has 2 Scholarships at present (refer item 6.1) : "both ASSA and Cooke Scholarships will remain at R25k for 2025." Pierre supported the proposal for a 3rd Brian Warner Scholarship. No objection received.</p>
7	<p>7. Membership</p> <p>7.1 Country Membership (13 Honorary Membership (max 15))</p> <p>Andre reported that there are 120 Country Members in total. 22 have not yet renewed. 6 gratis 13 Honorary and 1 Advertiser.</p> <p>Willie canvasses for new Country Members every year using the carrot of a free SGAS – the feedback be received is that the SGAS delivery for the last 2 years has been very positive.</p> <p><u>An item to discuss</u>: change the renewal time for membership from middle of year to make it align better with the SGAS cycle. <u>Lerika</u> to approach Council.</p> <p>Clyde mentioned he did not receive a SGAS but bought one in Windhoek. <u>Andre</u> offered to look into and clarify the SGAS delivery to Clyde.</p>
8	<p>8. Governance</p> <p>8.1 Register ASSA for tax under a VDP (Voluntary Disclosure Program) Application</p> <p>(7 Jul) CTFS to be asked on process PBO registration and to provide a quotation</p> <p>(7 Feb) CTFS kindly offered to not charge ASSA unless cost involved becomes substantial.</p> <p>(8 May) The 3 willing unconnected persons (Daniel, Chris S, Pierre with Pierre the SARS rep.) have completed forms required by CTFS. CTFS will now start the application process.</p> <p>(24 Jun) CTFS informed of the allocated ASSA tax number 9229741260 and provided updated forms to be signed by Daniel, Pierre and Chris. The forms were signed/returned to CTFS 12 June.</p>

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p>(28 Oct) AJ confirmed he has received correspondence from CTFS that tax for last year is zero, so it seems the Tax Exemption is in place.</p> <p>Lerika has followed up on current status registering as PBO – awaiting feedback from <u>CTFS</u></p> <p>8.2 Checklist - upcoming alerts</p> <p>Next up:</p> <p>21 Feb: Scholarship application dead line</p>
9	<p>9. Financial Matters</p> <p>9.1 2023/24 Financials</p> <p>(28 Oct) AJ confirmed the financials for the year-end 30 June 2024 was received from CTFS and signed. AJ to send Lerika copy of signed financials to place on record in the cloud. (AJ)</p> <p><u>AJ</u> to send Lerika signed financials to load on repository.</p>
10	<p>10. General</p> <p>Dr Ian Glass informed that Dr Rosalind Skelton has been appointed NRF-SAAO Managing Director, replacing Professor Petri Vaisanen.</p>
11	<p>Closure</p> <p>Derek thanked everyone for their attendance and all the contributions to the meeting.</p> <p>Derek closed the meeting after 38 minutes.</p> <p>Next meeting to be scheduled ~late March.</p> <p>Centre monthly meetings:</p> <p>Hermanus Centre: 3rd Tuesday. Jhb Centre: 2nd Wednesday. Durban Centre: 2nd Wednesday, committee meetings 4th Wednesday. Cape Centre: 4th Wednesday</p>

Minutes Approved: _____ Date: _____

Checklist (covered under Governance item 8.2)

21 Feb Scholarship application dead line

31 Mar Scholarship allocation finalised

31 Mar Closing date for nominations for: Honorary Members and Awards

15 April Deadline for Secretary to send to President and Vice President list of nominations

1 June Call for nominations for Council; Annual review of website

1 June New Country Membership fees to be agreed by Council

30 Jun Closing date for nominations for Council, receipt of Section reports, receipt of report from Scholarships Convenor, submission of items for placing on the Agenda of the AGM, Financial year end; Council to review appointment and roles of all Council Appointees including the Section Directors;

1 Jul Submission of annual updated ASSA membership form, Country Members: Subs renewal

31 Jul Closing date for ballot for Council nominations: Centre AGMs to be concluded before AGM

AGM 1st Wed Aug. 21 business days before 1st Wed in Aug: Deadline for members to receive notice

1 Oct Appointment/Negotiations with SGAS Editor for next edition. Open negotiations with Struik

Annual refresh of the Communications document after the AGM

END

