

Minutes:

Present:

Ted Williams [TW] (SAAO Director)
Ramotholo Sefako [RS] (head of TOPS)
Chris Engelbrecht [CE] (Chair)
David Kilkenny [DK]
John Menzies [JM]
Nazli Mohamed [NM] (secretary)
Nadeem Oozeer [NO]
Amanda Sickafoose [AS]
Brian van Soelen [BvS]
[briefly, on invitation, to discuss point 1]: Lisa Crause [LC]

Apology:

Quentin Parker

Agenda:

1. Matters arising from the Minutes of the previous meeting
2. Instrumentation status/developments: Part 1: SpUp[NIC]
3. Future meeting schedule
4. Website and enhancement of communication with user community
5. Terms of reference
6. Next membership elections
7. Telescope status/developments
8. Instrumentation status/developments: Part 2
9. Software developments
10. Status of the TAC
11. Impact of IT staffing changes
12. The Science Advisory Committee and STUC
13. Other issues

Meeting commenced at 12:00

Agenda items 1 and 2 swapped in order of business.

1. Instrumentation status/developments: Part 1: SpUp

LC – Spectrograph has been on telescope for 4 weeks; 2 issues were identified. The first: instability in grating identified; this was worked on and will be tested on-sky. The second issue: not tracking well due to the Cassegrain flange not being on perfectly square; this will be properly aligned. The aluminising has been scheduled for next week. Expected back on telescope by 1st or 2nd December, then on-sky testing will take place. Performance during first 4 weeks was very encouraging.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes circulated and approved (one typo pointed out in point 7(iii) – to be corrected before submitting on website).

Matters Arising:

2.1 (point 5 in Minutes): Terms of Reference: see agenda point 6 below.

2.2 (point 6 in Minutes): STUC website: see agenda point 5 below.

2.3 (point 7 (vii) in Minutes): KMTNet Access

RS – data will be made public after 1 year. The proprietary period could be extended to 3 years if requested by specific PI's. KMTNet will provide flat fields and other stuff related to reduction to the PI's. There is no standard format for providing the data.

2.4 (point 10 (ii) in Minutes): IRSF

RS – the trimester schedule will be adopted from January 2016.

2.5 (point 10 (i) in Minutes): Fault Reports

RS – discussed with staff and requested that all fault reports are logged and responded to in writing in the books provided.

2.6 (point 7 (viii) in Minutes): MASTER telescopes

CE – email response received from David Buckley states that all discoveries of transients with MASTER are sent out as Astronomical Telegrams, so they are all in the public domain. The website will be added to the STUC site along with a few guidelines on how to access the information. **[*ACTION ITEM* - RS?]**

3. Future Meeting Schedule

CE – PROPOSAL: Meetings to be held at 10am (to accommodate time zones of all members) on the third Thursday for the months of February, June and October. Availability of members for this proposed meeting schedule will be tested via Doodle poll. [*ACTION ITEM* - CE]

4. STUC Website and enhancement of communication with user community

CE – the website is indeed now available on the SAAO server.

AS – request Patrick Woudt to remove the old site from the UCT server. [*ACTION ITEM* - CE]

CE – Minutes will be placed on the site after TW has reviewed them. Propose to circulate the approved Minutes to a list of users of SAAO telescopes over the last 36 months and invite comments approximately 6 weeks before a STUC meeting. [*ACTION ITEM* - CE]

AS – include people who *submit* proposals on the list as well [Samantha Fishley can provide names of proposers]. [ditto]

CE – Add a note to the site inviting comments to be received by two weeks before the next meeting and request information from users, e.g. graphs, that could be added to the website. [ditto]

TW – A link to the SAAO list of publications can be added to the STUC website as well. [ditto]

5. Terms of reference

CE – received the version from NO and compared with the official version; there are a few minor differences, e.g. the current internet version does not state that the Director will be involved in the selection of the committee.

NO – the main issue is that there are 2 versions of the ToR circulating; we must decide which one is final.

RS – recommend keeping the current internet version as the final ToR.

– Accepted by all.

6. Next membership elections

CE – half the membership of STUC must be replaced by next year June; all current members should solicit nominations from the community in time for election at the June meeting. [*ACTION ITEM* - ALL]

7. Telescope status/developments

RS – the contract for the new 1m telescope dome modification has been signed with the vendor and work will begin January 2016 to April 2016. The telescope design is ongoing.

8. Instrument status/developments: Part 2

AS - SHOC software has been overhauled and is working well.

GIRAFFE – project on hold.

One of the present priorities is the WiNCam for the new 1.0m. SHOC will also be useable on the new 1.0m.

STIGS – Goettingen Univ and North Carolina are working on the spectrograph and plan to place it on Monet. Encouraging SAAO staff to work with them to learn about the project.

TW – we should receive input from the user community on what they would like from a spectrograph.

CE – when should such a survey go out?

TW – this could be LC's project after SPuP, probably early 2016, will follow up with Stefan Dreizler.

[*ACTION ITEM* -TW/CE]

1.9m Prime Focus Camera: Progress/planning for this should also be followed up with LC;

TW – where should this project fall on the priority list? It is currently on hold and focus is on the WiNCam for the new 1.0m telescope.

TW – the Field of View would be slightly smaller on the 1.9m

RS – the other telescopes do have wide-field cameras so the capability for wide-field imaging is available.

9. Software developments

No update.

10. Status of the TAC

AS – Note that the TAC also considers applications on KMTNet and LCOGT. To date, 14 cycles of TAC work have been concluded. The reviews from TAC have slowed down; the last set of members were AS, Steve Potter, Lerothodi Leeuw and Brian Warner, but two of these members have now stood down. What is the way forward?

RS – AS and Brian Warner have stepped down and 2 new members are required. Nominations have been received, viz. Sudhanshu Barway and Chris Koen, but TW needs to send out official letters of invitation to them.

TW – will look at replacing the other 2 members in 1 year.

CE – STUC should discuss a current status report on the TAC at each of its meetings, starting with the February 2016 meeting. [*ACTION ITEM* -TW?]

11. Impact of IT staffing changes

DK – heard of 4 resignations within IT, need clarity because this would pose a big concern for users, especially at Sutherland. Users are totally dependent on IT staff being available.

TW – this is being dealt with. Resolution of possible retention packages and replacements are in progress.

12. The Science Advisory Committee and STUC

CE – received an email from TW regarding an overlap of the STUC and a Science Advisory Committee (SAC). STUC needs to discuss this:

TW – a recommendation was made by the NRF Institutional Review Panel and the SAAO is required to implement it. Main question is, if the SAC is formed will there still be a requirement for STUC to continue as a separate entity or evolve into the (SAC) committee?

CE – STUC represents a global user community and includes an international member. Is the proposed SAC for SAAO going to include an international scope?

TW - There is no ToR from the NRF yet but assume it will include international members.

DK – is the SAC’s brief going to include advice on research projects undertaken at the Sutherland site of SAAO ?

JWM – must see what the SAC ToR will be before deciding. The STUC should be kept as a separate committee.

TW – will inform the NRF that STUC has been advised and the SAAO will find some rational ToR for the SAC.

13. Other issues

CE – The minutes will be distributed to the committee within 21 days after meeting. Corrections to be received (by the Chair) by 35 days after the meeting. TW to approve final version before the Minutes get loaded on the STUC website.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 3rd Thursday in February, a doodle poll will be circulated to finalise a time and date. [*ACTION ITEM* -CE]