

# Sussex Practical Astronomers

## RULES & CONSTITUTION

### 1. Title

The club shall be known as the Sussex Practical Astronomers. For the purposes of this document henceforth known as "SPA"

### 2. Objectives

The objectives shall be:

- (a) To promote participation in and provide facilities for the study of astronomy.
- (b) To encourage amateur astronomy as a scientific, educational and enjoyable recreation.
- (c) To promote good fellowship amongst its members and those of other societies/organisations.
- (d) To organise instructional meetings, lectures and other events deemed to further the Objectives. This shall include both theoretical and practical activities.
- (e) To be a member of the "Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies" (SAGAS) and the "Federation of Astronomical Societies" (FAS).
- (f) To concern itself with any objective which will benefit those interested in astronomy in the locality.
- (g) SPA will attempt to provide a balance of knowledge and experience from within it's membership for a wide range of astronomical interests. Beginners in astronomy should be made to feel as welcome as those with greater and more specific skills.

### 3. Membership

- (a) This shall consist of persons, who have been accepted by the Committee and have paid the due subscription for the current period.
- (b) Honorary membership of stated duration may be conferred upon any person deemed by the Committee to have rendered notable service to the SPA.
- (c) Junior membership will be granted to persons under the age of eighteen. Such junior members will not be required to pay the annual subscription but will be subject to the admission fee due at each monthly meeting. No junior member may be a voting member of the society.
- (d) Junior members are to be accompanied by a responsible adult when attending SPA meetings and events. The responsible adult may be a member or a guest of the SPA.
- (e) Student members will not be required to pay the annual subscription but will be subject to the admission fee due at each monthly meeting.
- (f) A member shall complete the application form as prescribed by the committee. Membership of the SPA shall be open to anyone interested in astronomy on application regardless of sex, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other benefits. The committee may refuse membership only for good cause, such as conduct or character likely to bring the SPA into disrepute. Appeal against refusal may be made to the members. However, limitation of membership according to available facilities is allowable on a non-discriminatory basis.

- (g) The Committee may expel from membership any member who has breached any of the rules of the SPA, or who has in the opinion of the Committee been guilty of any conduct derogatory to the character or prejudicial to the interest of the SPA, provided that before expelling said individual the Committee shall allow the member to appeal the decision to the members and provide an explanation of their conduct and allow a proper opportunity of answering the allegations against them.
- (h) Members are entitled to bring along a guest to the monthly meetings. This is limited to a maximum of 3 guest invitations per member in any one year.

#### **4. Administration**

##### **The Committee**

- (a) All powers of management shall be vested in the Committee, which shall consist of as a minimum a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Additional Committee members may be appointed to undertake such roles of Hospitality, FAS/SAGAS Representation, Publicity, Membership and Technical as required. Four committee members shall form a quorum.
- (b) All members elected to the committee, are expected to contribute to the general running of the SPA.
- (c) Committee members will be proposed and elected at the AGM
- (d) The Committee shall have the power to fill any casual vacancy arising among members of the Committee, but any person so co-opted shall retain office only until the next following Annual General Meeting and shall then be eligible for re-election.
- (e) Members, who are not committee members, may be assigned one-off or on-going tasks or responsibilities, reporting back to the committee as required.
- (f) The Chairperson shall be elected annually by the Committee from among their number.
- (g) The decision of the Committee shall be final unless overruled at the General Meeting.
- (h) The Committee shall be the sole authority for the interpretation of the rules, or for anything relating to the SPA not provided therein and their decision shall be final and binding on the members.
- (i) The Committee may formulate byelaws for the detailed running of the SPA and elect sub-committees for any special activities associated with the SPA, which the Committee may authorise.
- (j) The Committee may appoint annually a President. By virtue of their appointment, they will become Honorary Members of the SPA, but they will not become members of the Committee. The term of Presidency will be agreed between the committee and the proposed individual but will normally be for a maximum period of 3 years or a shorter term as agreed by both parties.

#### **5. Subscription and Fees**

- (a) The financial year of the SPA shall commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> June each year and run to the 31<sup>st</sup> May.
- (b) The annual adult subscription shall be £20, or such other sum, as shall from time to time be determined by the Committee. The SPA will keep subscriptions at levels that will not pose a significant obstacle to people participating.
- (c) The annual subscription shall be payable on the first day of the SPA's financial year. Any member not renewing membership by 1<sup>st</sup> October may be removed from the mailing list at the committee's discretion, but only after they have been notified to this effect. Any member joining the SPA on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January shall be deemed to have paid his or her subscription for the ensuing year.

## **6. The Annual General Meeting**

The AGM shall be held at the June meeting in each year to transact the following business.

- (a) To receive and if approved to adopt a statement of the SPA's accounts to the end of the preceding year.
- (b) To elect Committee members.
- (c) To appoint a member to act as Accounts Examiner
- (d) To approve the annual subscription
- (e) To deal with any special matter which the Committee may desire to bring before the members and to receive suggestions from members for consideration by the Committee.
- (f) A notice convening the General Meeting shall be sent to the members not less than 14 days before the meeting and shall specify the matters to be dealt with.
- (g) Nominations for election to the Committee and/or items for inclusion at the AGM will be submitted to the Secretary not less than 7 days before the AGM.

This will normally take the form of a meeting allowing attendance by all members. In exceptional circumstances that prevent such a meeting taking place, alternative arrangements will be made.

## **7. Special General Meeting**

- (a) A Special General Meeting may be called by the Committee, or by a request signed by not less than five members, specifying the business to be discussed.
- (b) The Secretary shall give all members at least ten days notice of the date of such a meeting and shall specify in such notice matters to be dealt with at the meeting.
- (c) Notice may be given to any member by sending it by post to them at their address in the United Kingdom, registered in the records of the SPA, and/or by their given e-mail address. If any member has no address in the United Kingdom such member shall not be entitled to receive any notice. The accidental omission to give such notice of a meeting to any member, or the non-receipt of a notice of a meeting by any member shall not invalidate the proceedings of that meeting.

## **8. Meeting Frequency and Content**

- (a) With the exception of July and August the SPA will endeavour to hold both a lecture meeting and a practical astronomy meeting each month. These may be held at different locations.
- (b) Current lecture meetings are held on the first Monday of each month. Should the first Monday be a Bank Holiday then an alternative date may be arranged.
- (c) Practical astronomy meetings will normally be held on a Wednesday, towards the middle of the month.
- (d) The SPA intends to have a main speaker at each monthly meeting.
- (e) Members are encouraged to contribute to the evenings content.
- (f) An invited guest of a fully paid up member may attend a meeting on payment of the admission fee. Each member may only offer 3 guest invitations during the Society year and each guest may only attend 2 meetings.

## **9. Special Events**

- (a) The SPA may organise additional events e.g. tuition classes; viewing evenings and/or open days on a regular and/or ad-hoc manner. These events may be

- attended by members only or may also include invited guests and/or be open to members of the public.
- (b) Any costs incurred by the SPA through the running of such events will be agreed in advance by the Committee and efforts will be made to recover such costs by charging an admission fee.
  - (c) Any person under the age of 18 attending such an event must be accompanied by a guardian or responsible adult.

## **10. Society Accounts and Income**

- (a) The annual accounts of the SPA shall be examined each year. The examination will be carried out by a member who may be on the Committee.
- (b) This member will be appointed at the AGM
- (c) The appointed member should have some experience in accounting matters.
- (d) All surplus income or profits are to be reinvested in the SPA. No surpluses or assets will be distributed to members or third parties, unless considered and approved by the Committee
- (e) Suggestions by SPA members for donations to charity may be considered on behalf of the SPA by the Committee. If agreed by the Committee, the membership shall be informed of the proposal prior to such donations being made.

## **11. Society Rules and Constitution**

These rules may be added to, repealed or amended by resolution at any Annual or Special General Meeting, provided that no such resolution shall be deemed to have been passed unless carried by a majority of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting thereon, and provided that prior notice has been sent to all members stating the proposed amendment.

## **12. Insurance, Liability and Information Management**

- (a) The SPA, its Committee or person acting on their behalf, shall not be held responsible for any accident or injury to any person or property howsoever caused.
- (b) The SPA will hold Public Liability Insurance, tailored for Astronomical Societies, provided by the "Federation of Astronomical Societies" (FAS)
- (c) Information held by the SPA about individual members will be with their full knowledge and approval. Such information will be kept in a secure manner and not be disclosed to or shared with other parties without the expressed approval of the individual concerned.
- (d) The SPA will maintain compliance with current UK national legislation regarding information management

## **13. Astronomical Equipment Loan**

- (a) Equipment owned by the SPA may be loaned to individual members for their personal use only. Authorisation shall be given by two Committee members and the period of the loan recorded and a loan document signed by both parties.
- (b) The equipment loaned shall be the sole responsibility of the person to whom the equipment is loaned.
- (c) The equipment shall be returned in full working order. If any damage is incurred, the SPA has the right to have the item of equipment repaired or replaced at full cost to the individual to whom the equipment is loaned.

- (d) Should the equipment not be returned, the SPA has the right to enter proceedings to recover or replace said equipment at full cost, including incidental expenses, to the individual to whom the equipment is loaned.

#### **14. Society Dissolution**

In the event that dissolution of the SPA shall occur, the assets shall be used first to discharge all liabilities and the remaining assets shall be given or transferred to another registered Astronomical Society, or a registered charity for use by them in related community activities.