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für astronomische
Forschung in der
südlichen Hemisphäre

Guidelines for the nomination of OPC and Panel Members

Ferdinando Patat

&

Silvia Cristiani

Observing Programmes Office - ESO

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1. Introduction

This document provides some background information and the guidelines for the nomination of members of the Observing Programmes Committee (OPC). The document is meant for the Users Committee (UC) delegates, however the guidelines are also applicable to other ESO governing bodies and additional sources for nominations (see below).

2. The Observing Programmes Committee

In its current set-up, the OPC consists of 13 panels, each composed of 6 Panel members, one of which is the Chair of the panel and as such a member of the OPC proper.

Because of the different subscription rates of the four scientific categories (A: “cosmology and the intergalactic medium”; B: “galaxies”; C: “interstellar medium, star formation and planetary systems”; D: “stellar evolution”), there are an unequal number of panels per category. Specifically: 2 panels in A, 3 in B, and 4 each in C and D. This also implies that the amount of Panel members required for each category is different (A: 12, B: 18, C: 24, D: 24). In total, 78 referees are needed in the OPC/Panels composition.

The OPC proper is composed of 13 Panel Chairs and 3 additional OPC members (in order for all scientific categories to be equally represented). Typically, the Observing Programmes Office (OPO) also needs to select a couple of “members-at-large” among the panellists, to replace OPC members that are conflicted during the discussion of Large Programmes.

The Director for Science recommends the OPC Chair and Vice-Chair (the latter to be selected from the already recruited OPC members) to the Director General. The appointment of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair is then approved by the ESO Council. The OPC Chair is not a member of the Panels, but is part of the OPC proper. The OPC Vice-Chair is instead one of the Panel Chairs.

The OPC Chair and the Panel members are invited to serve for two semesters, while the OPC proper members serve for four semesters. To guarantee some level of continuity and memory in the process and depending on the specific needs for each given period, some Panel members are asked to serve a third period. Occasionally and depending on their seniority, after having served in the Panels some Panel members may be asked to be part of the OPC proper.

3. The Nominating Committee

The NomCom is composed of four distinguished members of the astronomical community (one per scientific category of expertise), the leaving OPC Chair and the Director for Science.

The NomCom is formally in charge of compiling a list of approved nominations. The NomCom review is purely scientific: it is performed based on bibliometrics and, when applicable, via direct evaluations by the NomCom members.

In practice, the OPC and Panel member nominations are collected from various channels and are then submitted to the Nominating Committee (NomCom) for their review and final approval. Once approved, the nominations are passed to OPO for the actual recruitment.

The main nomination channels are:

- a) The Users Committee;
- b) ESO governing bodies;
- c) The Director General and the VLT and VLTI Programme Scientists;
- d) Ex-OPC/Panel members.

In April 2015 ESO proposed that the UC should be the main channel for providing the nominations, as this Committee represents the community at large and, through its delegates, has a direct and capillary link to its members. The proposal was approved during the 39th UC Meeting (April 27-28, 2015).

The other channels are kept open for additional nominations.

4. Recruitment for OPC and Panel composition

Every semester there is a turnover of 25 to 35 OPC/Panel members (the number varies according to how many referees may have accepted to extend their service in a given period). People who have already served on the OPC/Panels are usually not called again before 5 years have passed from their last term on the Committee.

Once the nominations are approved by the NomCom, OPO proceeds with contacting the candidates. The final selection depends on a number of criteria. Mainly: scientific expertise, scientific/institutional conflicts, country and gender. For these reasons, not all the proposed names may be suitable for the given period (however, they may be used in future semesters).

5. Criteria for nominating OPC and Panel members

This section provides the basic criteria that should be used for the nominations:

- 1) OPC and Panel member nominations must be provided purely based on scientific merit and expertise. This is by far the most important aspect.
- 2) The nominations should represent the community in a homogeneous way, in terms of scientific areas and institutes (within a given country).
- 3) Similarly, care should be taken to ensure gender balance and diversity.
- 4) The nominated researchers must be scientifically active in their field (in terms of publications and conferences), have a good command of English and be suitable for constructive discussions in an international and multi-cultural environment.
- 5) Although an experimental background and a previous usage of ESO facilities is an asset, scientists with a theoretical background are also suitable.
- 6) Nominations for the Panels should include scientists with a level of seniority starting from senior post-docs (on top of the requirements stated at point #4 above).
- 7) Nominations for the OPC proper should include scientists with a level of seniority starting from associate professor (or the equivalent).
- 8) Exceptions to the above two requirements can be considered in cases of promising, more junior researchers (minimum level PhD).
- 9) Nominations from a given country may include scientists who are affiliated to other countries. Precedence is given to scientists affiliated to ESO member countries, but the OPC and Panels always include a fraction of researchers from non-member states.
- 10) Nominations should only include scientists who - when approached by the UC representative – have already agreed in principle to serve in the OPC and/or panels.

6. Submitting nominations via the web interface

To allow an easy, structured and searchable input, a dedicated web interface is available at the following URL:

www.eso.org/sci/php/opo/opc_referees/index.php

This is accessible to all UC delegates via a user ID and password, which they receive directly from OPO. Non-UC members, on the contrary, will have to send their nominations directly to OPO (opo@eso.org), who will insert them into the database. The interface is quite self-explanatory. The following fields need to be provided:

- 1) Last name*
- 2) First name*
- 3) Gender
- 4) Professional affiliation*
- 5) Email*
- 6) Scientific Category*
- 7) Current position
- 8) ORCID
- 9) Comment box

The fields marked with an asterisk are mandatory. The ORCID field, while not mandatory, is strongly recommended, as it helps the OPO office in disambiguating suggested candidates from others with similar names.

Once the required input is entered, the nominations can be submitted by pushing the “Add” button. By doing this, the nomination is entered into a central database.

The system accepts any correctly provided nomination and does not include any automatic check of the presence in the database of the suggested names. This is left to the manual intervention of OPO - to keep the information always up-to-date. Only if the nominated person is currently serving in the OPC/Panels or has served during the last five years, this information will be displayed on the page and the nomination will not be accepted.

The UC delegates can check their work progress by displaying the entries of the day or of the last month.

The interface for the nominations submission will be accessible at all times. Nevertheless, the UC delegates will be contacted every semester in due time with a request to provide new nominations by a given deadline.

NOTE: after four periods the UC representatives will receive a list of the candidates who have not been recruited yet, to serve on the OPC panels. Our request to the UC representative is to identify those candidates they wish to confirm and to update their corresponding details. This also gives the UC the opportunity to verify whether a given candidate is still available or not.