



ESAC Science Faculty General Assembly

30 March 2017



Agenda:

1. Introduction - What does the faculty do and summary of current activities [Mark Kidger]
2. Jamboree: New faculty members presenting themselves – [David Williams, Felix Fürst, Macarena García Martín]
3. Science at ESAC and future plans of the faculty [Michael Küppers]
4. Budget situation [José María Castro Cerón]
5. Future of the weekly Seminar [Eleni Kalfountzou]
6. AOB and next meeting

ESAC Science Faculty

Aims and Current Issues

ESAC Science Faculty Assembly

March 30th 2017

What, why and when?

- Founded in 2006 with a mandate from then Head of ESAC, Álvaro Gímenez to look after the interests of scientists at ESAC.
- Administers a budget of about 100K€.
 - Budget used to support science (visitor programme, seminars, conferences).
 - All budget use must be justifiable as “maintaining and enhancing the skills of ESAC scientists to carry out their functional tasks”.
 - Increasing pressure on Faculty budget.
- Acts as a bridge to Management, presenting issues and looking for solutions.

Faculty Charter and Faculty-maintained documentation

- Although *Terms of Reference* were agreed with AG, they were never encapsulated into a formal **Faculty Charter**.
 - 2015: WO'M & Sentinel set about preparing a formal Charter of 2 pages + appendices.
 - Multiple iterations & amendments since. Latest: end 2016.
- **ESAC Research Environment** document: 1st draft 2009, regularly and extensively revised.
 - Effectively a manual for scientific life at ESAC.
- **Research Fellow Management** document: maintained by Faculty on behalf of H/SRE-O.
 - Covers all aspects of RF life from selection process to post-ESAC.

A Few Current Issues

- **Pressure on Science Time**
 - In theory, an average of 20% science is the aim for science personnel at ESAC.
 - Essential to keep scientific credibility and to maintain skills.
 - But strictly an average. Many personnel complain that they have little or no science time and have difficulty carrying out research in disjointed periods of lower functional pressure.
- **Publication record for ESAC scientists is modest**
 - How to improve it?
 - How to assess science output? [Essential if protected science time is become a guaranteed right]
- Initiatives such as weekly science days had very limited effectiveness and have now been abandoned.

Seminar Programme

- Was specifically excluded from Faculty responsibilities in original Terms of Reference.
- Has been based around Faculty visitors.
- Generally agreed that it requires an overhaul.
 - Initiatives such as Distinguished Visitor Seminars and special Christmas seminars introduced in recent years, but these are only a start.
 - Too many seminars, uneven quality & poor attendance are some of the issues identified.
- Major overhaul of Seminar programme under way, with a newly appointed Faculty Council officer responsible for seminars taking the lead.

Research Fellows

- The lifeblood of research at ESAC.
 - The only 100% dedicated researchers at ESAC.
- Many issues under discussion at present, e.g.
 - How to make ESAC a more attractive destination?
 - How to increase the pool of potential ESAC Mentors?
 - How to improve the selection process?
 - Is a “one size fits all” solution for ESTEC & ESAC RFs still the best way to go?
 - Should RFs be offered the option to be embedded in Operations terms and allowed to spend a small percentage of time on functional tasks?
 - Some RFs feel that this would be a valuable addition to their CV and make them more marketable in the future.
 - Are RFs being used in the most effective way by ESAC?

ESAC Library

- Over the years has been downsized from occupying B3, to occupying Stores to its current location in A-Building.
- The library has considerable resources (including support to services from all ESA libraries), but is not well known and has deficient installations.
- Can we combine the good resources, but deficient installations of the ESAC library with the good installations, but limited resources of the CAB library to produce one, first class library on site?
 - Proposal currently under discussion with Management (ESAC, CAB & Library).

ESAC Library

This is what you see normally when you walk past.



With the lights on it is easily confused with a storeroom.



ESAC Library Resources

There is a librarian 2 mornings per week who maintains services & stock.



The library has considerable stock & offers many services that are not well known among the ESAC Community.



Services of interest to the community include:

Availability of popular journals such as Nature, New Scientist, Sky & Telescope to browse; Journal distribution lists; Obtaining articles; Maintaining electronic journal access; Adding new books & journal subscriptions by request; etc.

The CAB (LAEFF) Library

Sited at the top of the CAB wing of D-Building (D-250)



- Has excellent installations, but limited resources to maintain stock and services.
- Most stock has been donated. About 2000 volumes, but no stock control.
- Some services such as journal subscriptions & many books duplicate ESAC library.
- CAB library strengths are ESAC library weaknesses & vice versa!

Proposal

- **Aim:** offer a better and more complete library service to everyone on site.
 - *Combine stock and services from the two libraries on site into a single library offering a high-quality service.*
 - **ESAC offers** its resources (librarian, stock, subscriptions, services) to the combined library & to do a full inventory & rationalisation of combined stock.
 - **Faculty offers** initial support of ~7K€ to renew stock (e.g. proceedings volumes).
 - **ESA library service offers** to extend librarian hours at least for the initial period.
 - **CAB would offer** library access to ESAC & office space for the librarian.
 - Invest savings from combined resources into improving services.
- **Everybody benefits. Better service for the ESAC Community.**

Jamboree



Science at ESAC and future plans of the faculty



1. Working as a scientist at ESAC and role of the faculty
2. What can be done to enhance scientific activity?
3. ESAC relation to ESTEC faculty
4. Issues to be addressed in the near future



Science at ESAC



- ESAC staff and contractors are paid for functional work
- Purpose of scientific activities from an agency point of view
 - Maintain standing in the scientific community we interact with
 - Enhance functional abilities
- Consequences:
 - Very limited time available for science (in general)
 - Limited recognition for scientific achievements
- Exception: Research fellows



Role of the Science faculty



From the charter: The purpose of Faculty is to foster a productive scientific environment at ESAC and to give a united face to the scientific work of Faculty members

What do we do?

- Funding of visitors
- Funding of workshops
- Trying to maintain scientific “life” and communication at ESAC
 - E.g. seminar and library issue
- Funding of common PhD projects with external partner has been started



Role of the Science faculty



What do we not do?

- Decide or suggest which fields of science should be pursued
- Manage the scientific activity itself
- Research projects with external organizations (work done outside ESA) is funded by the research budget of the divisions (outside faculty)



Enhancing scientific activity



- Visitor program and divisional research program foster and maintain scientific collaboration of us with the community
 - However, personally, I sometimes got the impression it helps me more to administer science done by others than maintaining my own scientific activity
- Can the program be complemented?
 - Mini-sabbaticals?
 - Time-out for science (e.g. few weeks for a specific project)?
 - If we get any of those, we need to accept evaluation of outcome



Relation between ESAC and ESTEC faculties



- Tendency to increased “separation” between ESAC and ESTEC faculty
 - New Research Fellow selection procedure
 - Divisional funding: No common call this year

- More generally, which activities should be done commonly and for which do we prefer to be independent?



Issues to be addressed by faculty



- Research fellow selection process and research fellow mentoring
 - Benefits and problems of the new selection process
 - What should be changed?
- Future of the library
- Reorganization of the Seminar -> Eleni's presentation
- Are new schemes of promoting science at ESAC in addition to the existing ones (visitors, workshops, projects funded by division) beneficial (and possible)?



Faculty web page



<https://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/esac-science-faculty>

Web master: Tim Rawle

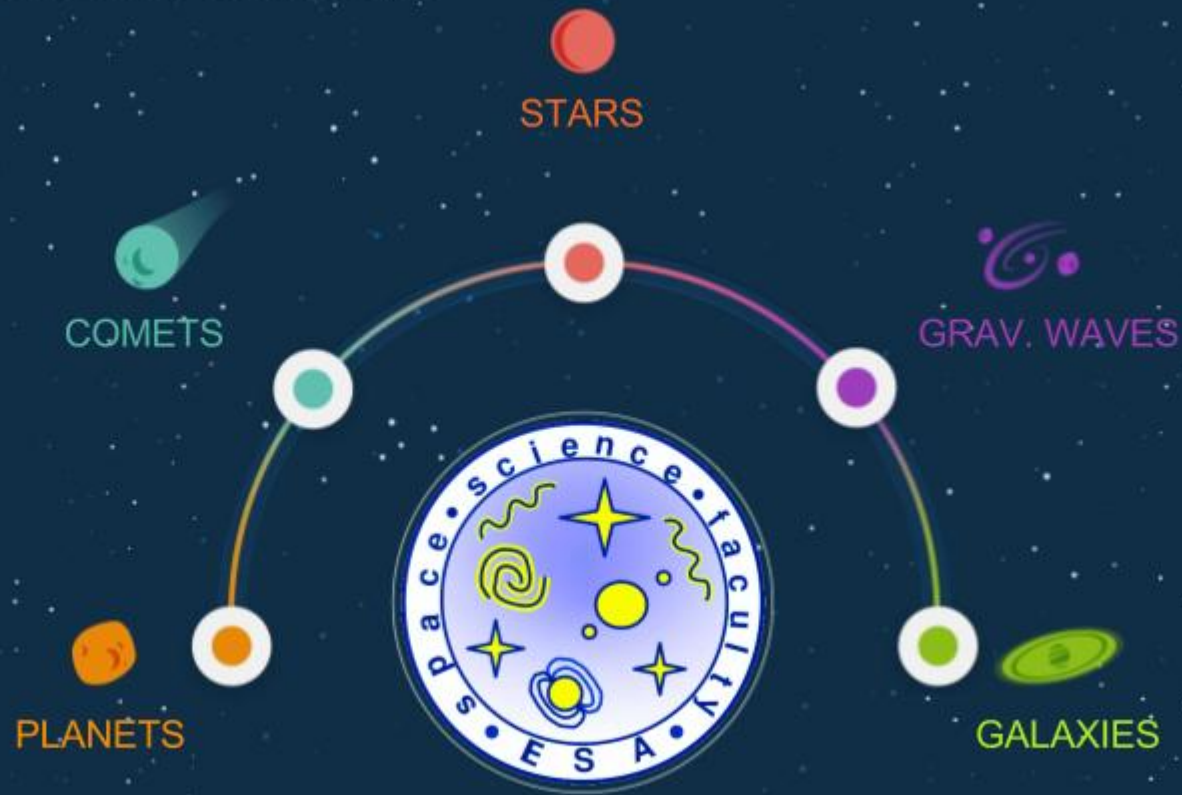


Exchequer Report



Budget 2016:	100.000 €
Approved expenses:	76.292 €
Spent:	87.476 €

ESAC Science Seminars



On behalf of RFs, Faculty Council and Pedro Garcia-Lario

ESA UNCLASSIFIED - For Official Use

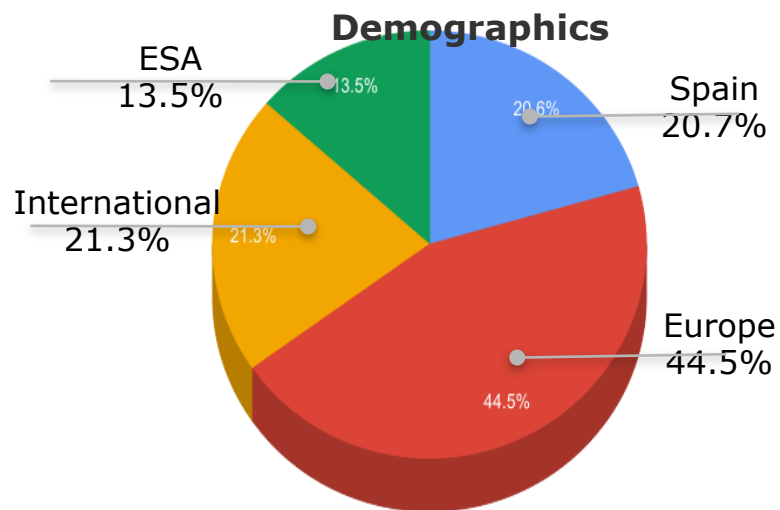
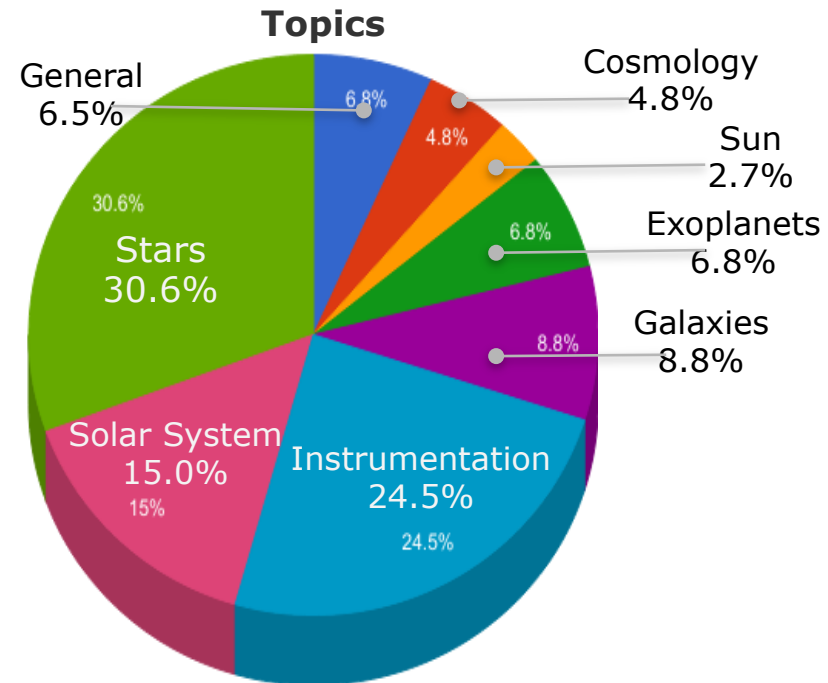


European Space Agency

Where do we stand?

Last 5 years of seminars (2012 - 2016)

155 seminars in total; ~30/year
 ~25% on Instrumentation
 4 Sun seminars
 13 Galaxy seminars
 27 Pulsars and X-ray BH binaries seminars



Need for Quality Indicator
 Internal feedback?
 Suggestions and ideas on how it could work

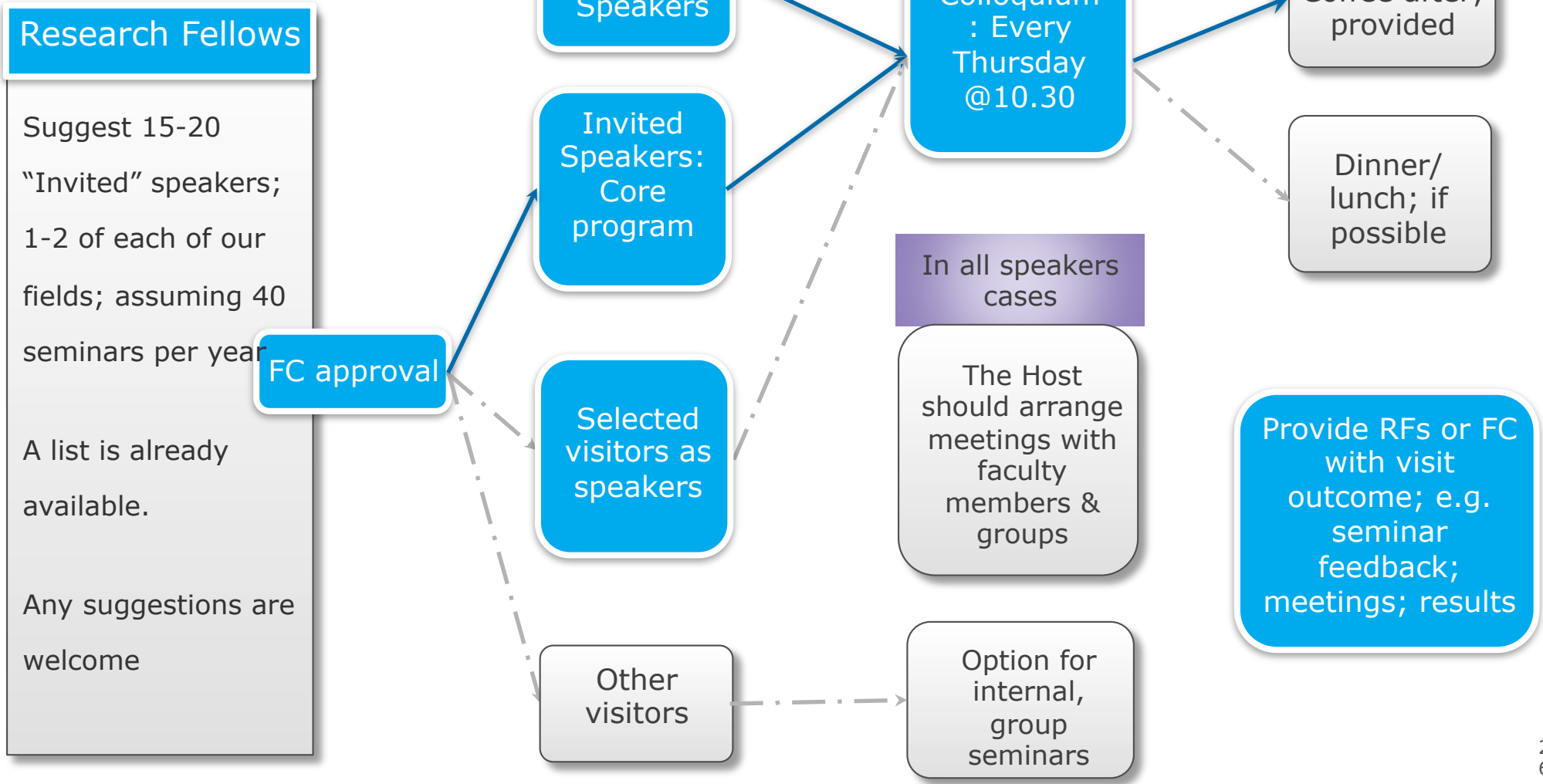
Things we can do to increase the impact and interactivity of our seminars



- **Hold seminars in an appropriate room and time** : Is time fine? Could afternoon seminars work better? Change for the new academic year, if there is demand.
- **Get RFs to organize speakers - Optimize the selection of speakers**
 - Science seminars, RFs work 100% on science. Provide support and connection to ESA in academia. Improve Rfs' (& Staff) connections with academia.
 - **Maximize interaction between the speaker and the department**
 - Try to arrange meetings with other ESAC members. Social events with speakers; especially for well-known ones in their respective fields. Most collaborations are built during social events. Have coffee/tea/beer.
 - Seminar Streaming. Start with ESA members. Equipment is available (?)
- **Balance speakers' research interests**
 - Strong biases in topics the last years. RFs cover a wide field of scientific topics. If each one selects the same number of speakers, the topics of the seminars will be balanced and will cover a wide area of interests
- **Non-science seminars should be included; but limited** : Should Instrumentation seminars be part of the science seminars?
- **Remember the audience** : Remind speakers to give a good introduction



The Proposal



Optimise ESAC faculty Interaction



- RFs will organize **informal weekly coffee meetings** - Let's talk about science and meet each other at the new K building
- **Interact with CAB** - Common Journal Clubs
- Organise **local workshops** with Spanish scientists
- Let us know about your **publications** - we can advertise them at **ESAC's screens** or on a **website** to show the science output of ESAC to the world; similar format to *astrobites*? Or Social media?

And Last but not Least : Talk to us if you have any suggestions. You can find us every Tuesday @14.00 in our RFs meetings

