

1 Observatory Road Observatory Cape Town	
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Minutes of the Special ExCo Meeting (4 June 2026)

VENUE: Zoom

DATE: 4 June 2026

TIME: 14h00 – 15h25

CHAIRPERSON: Amare Abebe (AA)

SCRIBE: Meryem Guennoun (MG)

ATTENDANCE RECORDS

<u>Amare Abebe (AA)</u>	amare.abebe@afasociety.org	<u>President</u>
<u>Benedicta Woode (BW)</u>	benedicta.woode@afasociety.org	Executive Committee Member
<u>Charles Takalana (CT)</u>	Charles.takalana@afasociety.org	Advisor (Ex-Officio)
<u>Edward Jurua (EJ)</u>	ejurua@must.ac.ug	Co-Opted Executive Member
<u>Joyful Elma Mdhuli (JEM)</u>	joyful.mdhuli@afasociety.org	Executive Committee Member
<u>Kenda Knowles (KK)</u>	kenda.knowles@afasociety.org	Executive Committee Member (joined at 15h)
<u>Léon Snyman (LS)</u>	SnymanLD@ufs.ac.za	APA Committee Chair
<u>Meryem Guennoun (MG)</u>	meryem.guennoun@afasociety.org	Executive Officer
<u>Patricia Ann Whitelock (PAW)</u>	kenda.knowles@afasociety.org	Executive Committee Member
<u>Takalani Nemaungani (TN)</u>	Takalani.Nemaungani@dst.gov.za	Ex-Officio Member

<u>Thebe Rodney Medupe (TRM)</u>	rodney.medupe@nwu.ac.za	Immediate Past President (Ex-Officio)
Yin-Zhe Ma (YZM)	yin-zhe.ma@afasociety.org	Vice President
Youssef Moulane	youssef.moulane@afasociety.org	Executive Committee Member
<u>Yunus Manjoo (YEM)</u>	yunus.manjoo@afasociety.org	Project Manager

Apologies

Kevin Govender (KG)	kg@astro4dev.org	Advisor (Ex-Officio)
<u>Marie Korsaga</u>	marie.korsaga07@gmail.com	Co-Opted Executive Member
<u>Marc Yoa</u>	yao.fortune@gmail.com	Co-Opted Executive Member

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DATE
1. Welcome & Opening 1.1 AA welcomed all participants and confirmed that quorum had been reached. 1.2 Apologies were received from MK and KG . KK indicated that she would join later due to another commitment. 1.3 The agenda was adopted with the following discussion items: • AfAS Journal • AfAS 2026 Conference Proceedings • AfSA Capacity Development Training Opportunities • Ethics Committee Procedures	ALL	
2. AfAS Journal AA introduced the discussion and provided an update on recent engagements with representatives of the Institute of Physics Publishing (IOPP) regarding the establishment of an AfAS Journal. AA reported that IOPP had expressed willingness to support the establishment of an AfAS-owned journal at no direct cost to AfAS. Under the proposed arrangement, AfAS would retain ownership of the		

journal while IOPP would provide publishing infrastructure and support services. YZM presented the journal model previously discussed during the AfAS2026 Conference. He explained that the preferred model would be a society-owned journal published through a non-profit publisher, with AfAS maintaining editorial control through its own editorial board. YZM outlined the anticipated operational requirements of the journal, including editorial oversight, manuscript management, language editing, publicity, and administrative support. He noted that further clarification was required regarding the extent of support that would be provided by IOPP. Discussion focused on: ● Access to and support for the ScholarOne manuscript management platform. ● Staffing requirements for the editorial office. ● Potential publication charges that will be levied to authors of papers and funding models. ● Sustainability of the journal over the long term. ● The importance of maintaining high editorial standards from the outset. ● Accreditation and indexing requirements. Several members expressed concern regarding the introduction of publication charges for African researchers, noting that such fees may present a significant barrier to participation. Alternative approaches, including external fundraising and institutional support, were discussed. TN indicated support for continuing the initiative and suggested that the journal should form part of future fundraising discussions with strategic partners. He further commented that due to budgetary constraints, no new funding will be forthcoming from the DSTI to support this initiative. PAW emphasised the importance of understanding accreditation and indexing requirements at an early stage to ensure that the journal would be recognised by relevant funding and research bodies. She further stated that to encourage South African astronomers to publish in the journal, a pre-requisite is to ensure accreditation which will realise publication subsidies from the Higher Education Department. It was agreed that further engagement with IOPP was required before a final decision could be made regarding the journal model and operational structure.		
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3. AfAS 2026 Conference Proceedings MG presented an update on the AfAS 2026 Conference Proceedings being prepared through Proceedings of Science (PoS). MG reported that the call for submissions had been circulated on 11 May 2026 and that only five submissions had been received to date. MG proposed issuing an additional reminder before the end of June, followed by the previously planned reminders in July and August. The Committee welcomed the progress made and encouraged continued follow-up with presenters to maximise participation.		
4. AfSA Capacity Development Training Opportunities AA presented the request received from the African Space Agency (AfSA) concerning proposed training opportunities under the Africa-Europe Space Partnership Programme. AA reviewed the training themes currently proposed by AfSA and discussed additional areas that may be beneficial to the African astronomy and space science community. Suggestions raised during the discussion included: • Proposal writing and telescope time applications. • Training related to major international facilities, including space telescopes. • Virtual Observatory tools and data access. • Multiwavelength data analysis. • Radio astronomy data utilisation. • Hackathons and practical data science training activities. Members agreed that AfAS should provide input to the process and strengthen its engagement with AfSA through constructive participation. It was agreed that members would review the documentation further and submit suggestions before the response deadline (15 June)		
5. Ethics Committee Procedures AA recused himself from the meeting. The meeting recording was stopped for the remainder of the discussion. ExCo members discussed the composition of the Ethics and Conduct Committees and the process for identifying suitable individuals to serve on it. Members noted the importance of ensuring appropriate expertise, independence, and balanced representation. There was no		

agreement on whether there should be a standing committee with permanent members or members being selected on a case by case basis. PAW noted that the Ethics Policy will require updating to strengthen the need for confidentiality throughout the process as well as Clarification_on how the Ethics and Conduct Committee members are appointed.		
6. Closing		
NEXT MEETING	22 July 2026	

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS	DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Engage further with IOPP to clarify publishing support, infrastructure requirements, editorial services, and operational arrangements for the proposed AfAS Journal.	Ongoing	AA
Include the proposed AfAS Journal as a flagship initiative in future fundraising and partnership discussions.	Ongoing	ALL
Circulate an additional reminder to AfAS 2026 Conference presenters regarding proceedings submissions.	End of June	MG
Provide suggestions for additional AfSA training priorities and capacity development topics.	Before 15th of June	ExCo members
Request nominations for suitable independent members who may serve on Ethics Case Committees	Before 15th of June	ExCo members