

cants) are changed from one Observing Period to the next. Given the limited number of OPC Members, a particular Application is thus evaluated by specialist as well as non-specialist referees. Accordingly, applicants have to make their proposed observations appealing to specialists and non-specialists alike. They must both, demonstrate their competence within a specific area and show the importance of the proposed work in the broader context. Since any large discrepancy in the ratings will be discussed at the semi-annual OPC Meetings, faulty judgements on the side of the non-specialist (or specialist!) will be eliminated.

Preliminary Observing Schedule

When the ratings and recommended numbers of nights from the referees are available, ESO produces a list of the Observing Applications for each telescope, with the Applications being ranked according to the average ratings of the three referees. The average recommended number of nights is used to sum up the observing time required as one goes down the list, and a cutoff line is drawn, when the number of nights available for astronomy (technical time being considered separately) is reached. (Applications where doubt about the feasibility was expressed by at least one referee are listed apart.) The information contained in this list is also used to generate a set of tables which shows the distribution of the programmes above the cutoff line over the months and the moon phases for each telescope. This set of tables also shows the resulting change-overs of instruments for each telescope. These working documents, which actually represent preliminary observing schedules for the various telescopes, are sent to the members a few days before they get together in the OPC Meeting.

OPC Meetings

The OPC meets twice a year (i.e., once for each Observing Period) during two days. Most of the meeting time is spent in clarifying discrepancies in the judgement of Applications. The deliberations take place in the presence of the Director General and the Head of the Section Visiting Astronomers. The record of the meeting is kept by Mrs. Chr. Euler. Thus, a dozen people attend the OPC Meetings. The size of this group permits a frank and uninhibited discussion. It is important to note that this discussion is based on the scientific merit of the Applications alone: the national origin of an applicant is of no concern to the OPC.

Obviously, not all Applications can be discussed at a two-day meeting.

Nevertheless, the preliminary schedule for each telescope is closely inspected.

First, those few Applications where doubt about feasibility had been expressed are scrutinized, one by one – and, if justified, are reinstated into the main list.

Next, Applications where the referees disagree in their ratings, are discussed in detail. The three OPC Members who had evaluated the Application in question are asked to explain why and how they arrived at their mark; and in the ensuing discussion, which usually involves the other OPC Members too, an effort is made to arrive at a more uniform judgement. In some cases, nevertheless, discrepant marks are left unaltered; this then reflects an honest difference of opinion between peers!

The influence of these discussions on the scientific judgement of the OPC Members (and, in the end, this *is* the scientific policy of the OPC!) cannot be overestimated. For these frank and spontaneous interchanges, the limited size and confidential nature of OPC Meetings is essential.

To further foster a "unité de doctrine" in the OPC, the Members may ask for discussion of any Application. In fact, referees will often earmark long-term observing programmes for a joint review of progress. Referees will also point out similar proposals with the same goal; the OPC will then seek to avoid unneeded duplication.

OPC Members are aware of the danger that they may (as committee members usually do) give preferential

Tentative Time-table of Council Sessions and Committee Meetings in 1986

October 3	Scientific Technical Committee, Venice
November 17–18	Finance Committee
November 18	Scientific Technical Committee
December 8–9	Observing Programmes Committee
December 11–12	Committee of Council
All meetings will take place at ESO in Garching unless stated otherwise.	

marks to "safe" Applications, which promise minor, but almost guaranteed progress. Such an attitude would be to the detriment of bolder Applications that can lead to less predictable, but potentially much more rewarding findings – or it may even "prevent" discoveries. This tendency is being fought. In the past, the OPC has indeed given time to novel, but risky projects, even if they occupied one of the large telescopes for about a week (as, for example, for an astrophysics investigation on α Cen A). Moreover, the OPC has given several months of observing time on a small telescope for an optical monitoring of the 1979 March 5 γ -ray burst error box. On the other hand, the OPC has also recommended extensive time for more routine studies. Thus, the small telescopes have been made available for an

In conjunction with the ESO-CERN Symposia on Cosmology and Fundamental Physics, CERN and ESO are organizing an

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ON ASTRO-PARTICLE PHYSICS

to be held at the "Ettore Majorana Centre for Scientific Culture", **Erice, Sicily, in the period 5–25 January 1987**. Co-sponsors are the Italian Ministry of Education, the Italian Ministry of Scientific and Technological Research, and the Sicilian Regional Government.

Recent progress in particle physics, cosmology and astrophysics has given birth to a new discipline that encompasses them all. These embryonic developments are not often covered in an interdisciplinary way. The purpose of this school is to fill this gap.

Lecturers will include J. Barrow, R. Brandenberger, B. Cabrera, A. de Rújula, L. Dilella, J. Ellis, J. S. Gallagher, G. Gelmini, D. C. Koo, L. Maiani, F. Melchiorri, D. V. Nanopoulos, K. A. Olive, B. E. J. Pagel, M. Rowan-Robinson, A. Sandage, R. Sanders, J. Silk, L. Stodolski, A. Szalay, F.-K. Thielemann, N. Turok, L. van Hove.

Persons wishing to attend the course should write to ASTROPARTICLE SCHOOL, TH Secretariat, CERN, 1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland, specifying date and place of birth, nationality, academic qualifications, list of publications, and present position. The total fee, including full board and lodging, is SF 1,400. Partial financial support can be provided in some cases, where the need is clearly justified. **The closing date for applications is 1 November 1986.**