

Council elections 2012: Background of candidates

Serena Viti – Secretary

Serena Viti is a reader (equivalent of Associate Professor) in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at University College London. She moved to the UK to read Astrophysics at Queen Mary College, and then moved to University College London (UCL) to work on the spectroscopy of very cool stars during her PhD in the mid 90s. After her PhD she changed field and started working in the areas of star formation and astrochemistry at UCL. After a couple of postdoctoral fellowships in UK and abroad, she obtained an STFC Advanced Fellowship and moved back to UCL as a lecturer in 2003. She has been a Royal Astronomical Society council member from 2002 to 2005 and serves on several STFC panels and committees. Her research interests span a wide range of topics but are all centred around the role of molecules in space, especially in galactic and extragalactic star forming regions. She and her group have developed a suite of chemical and radiative transfer models that are routinely used to interpret submillimeter observations from ground and space.



Roger Davies – Vice-President

Roger Davies is the Philip Wetton Professor and Head of Astrophysics at the University of Oxford and President of the Royal Astronomical Society 2010-12. He grew up in Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire attending the John Leggott School going on to read Physics at University College London. He started research working on galaxy dynamics in Cambridge in the 1970s after which he moved to California before spending 6 years on the staff of the US National Observatory in Tucson, Arizona. As part of the “7 Samurai” team he worked out a new way of measuring the distances to galaxies and discovered the “Great Attractor”, a huge concentration of galaxy clusters in the southern sky. He moved to Oxford in 1988 to lead the UK's participation in the construction of the 8m Gemini telescopes, in Hawaii and Chile. In 1994 he took up the post of Professor of Astronomy at Durham University returning to Oxford in 2002 where he was Chairman of the Physics Department from 2005-10. His research interests centre on cosmology and how galaxies form and evolve. He has a longstanding interest in astronomical instruments & telescopes. In recent years he has pioneered the use of a new class of astronomical spectrograph to measure the masses and ages of galaxies, as well as search for black holes in their nuclei.



Mike Bode – Councillor

Mike Bode is Professor of Astrophysics and Director of the Astrophysics Research Institute at Liverpool John Moores University. He obtained his BSc in Physics from the University of Leeds and his PhD from Keele University. After postdoctoral work at Keele, he was employed at the University of California Los Alamos National Laboratory and later returned to the UK to take up a Research Council Advanced Fellowship at the University of Manchester. Subsequently, he obtained a lectureship at what is now the University of Central Lancashire, becoming Professor of Astronomy there in 1991. In 1992, he moved to Liverpool as Head of Physics, subsequently serving as Assistant Provost for Research for the university. He then went on to found what is now the LJMU Astrophysics Research Institute and held a PPARC/STFC Senior Fellowship there from 2003-2007. He is a past Vice President and Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society and has chaired many Research Council committees, both national and international, including the Astronomy Grants Panel. Most recently, he was a member of STFC's Science Board, and has just been appointed as chair of the research council's Advisory Panel for Science in Society. In 2006, he was appointed on behalf of the major European astronomy funding bodies to lead the development of the ASTRONET Infrastructure Roadmap – a plan for the development of European astronomy with a 20 year horizon – which was published in 2008.



Johan Knapen – Councillor

Johan Knapen joined the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) in Tenerife, Spain, in 2006, and is currently the Head of the Research Division of the IAC. After doing his undergraduate degree in Groningen, the Netherlands, and his PhD at the IAC, he worked as postdoc in Montreal before joining the teaching staff at the University of Hertfordshire. He was promoted to professor of astronomy there in 2004, and remains a visiting professor at Hertfordshire. He is a multi-wavelength observer working on the evolution and properties of nearby galaxies, studying their dynamics, star formation, and interstellar medium.



Francesco Palla – Councillor

Francesco Palla was born in Rome (Italy) and graduated in Astrophysics at the University La Sapienza in Rome. After a postdoctoral fellowship at the Department of Astronomy at Cornell University (USA), he became astronomer at the Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, Firenze (Italy). Since 2005, he is the Director of the INAF-Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri. He is an expert on the origin and evolution of stars and circumstellar disks. Other interests include the properties of the first stars in the universe, the physical and chemical properties of the interstellar medium, and the observational search for young stars. He is Scientific Editor of *Astronomy and Astrophysics Review* and is actively involved in a variety of outreach activities.

