

# Guide to Hosting a CASCA Annual General Meeting

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## 1 Organization

### 1.1 Preliminary tasks

Once your offer to host a CASCA meeting has been accepted by the Board of Directors of the Society, preferably at least two years in advance, your first step is to form a Local Organizing Committee (LOC). The main responsibilities of the LOC are the following:

- At least one year in advance, identify dates for the meeting (normally late May or early June), avoiding conflicts with other major astronomical meetings; e.g., AAS, ASP, IAU, etc. Meeting dates must be approved by CASCA Board prior to the Annual General Meeting in the previous year.
- Reserve block accommodation in residences and/or hotels. This should be done as early as possible in order to secure sufficient space and the best rates.
- Reserve an appropriate lecture hall, easily-accessible poster area, and committee meeting rooms. Be aware that universities are still very busy after the spring term. Reserve rooms as early as possible.
- Secure local financial support. Universities will often make some funds available for national meetings. Affiliated research institutes or businesses may also contribute. It never hurts to ask.
- It has become standard practice to identify a scientific theme for the meeting. This is not mandatory, but recommended. The scientific theme should be as broad and inclusive as possible. Note that a better balance between student, postdoctoral, and professor oral presentations can be arranged if the theme is mostly restricted to invited speakers.
- Identify keynote speakers for the meeting, based on the theme if you have adopted one. Please do not overlook local or nearby experts when choosing speakers. Local speakers not only add to the prestige of your meeting, but also keep expenses down
- Communicate with your university's information technology office to determine if their secure website practices conform with those of the financial institution which you plan to use for online registration.
- Communicate with your university's financial office to determine what mechanisms are available for distributing travel support to students and how to set up budgets for expenses. Although the Graduate Student workshop is financially separate from the CASCA meeting, note that CASCA Graduate Student committee may need help to establish a budget for their workshop. Let them know that the conference is non-profit and hence the registration fees are tax-exempt.
- It is useful to organize using an itemized task list with which to set timelines.

## 1.2 Interaction with the CASCA Board

It is important to be aware that the CASCA Board must specifically approve the meeting dates, scientific theme, and invited speakers. Moreover, the LOC must submit progress reports at each Board meeting (November and June), beginning two years from the meeting date. These reports should become more detailed as the meeting draws nearer and plans mature. Prior to the fall Board meeting before the CASCA AGM, the LOC must submit a preliminary budget and a tentative speakers' list to the Board.

LOC chairs should feel free to seek advice from former LOC chairs, as well as the Second VP of the Society, the official liaison between the Board and the LOC. Chances are that your problems or difficulties are not unique, so there is no need to “reinvent the wheel”.

## 1.3 Publicity

Representatives from your LOC must attend the previous annual general meeting (AGM), both to promote your meeting -- especially during the business session -- and to pick up valuable organizational tips.

Early in the calendar year -- typically late February -- an information package announcing the AGM and including registration and abstract submission details should be e-mailed to all CASCA members. This is now done via the CASCA Exploder operated by the Secretary of the Society. This service can also be used by the LOC when important AGM-related messages have to be transmitted to the entire membership after the bulk mailing has taken place. Copies of email announcements for the CASCA exploder should be sent to the Secretary of CASCA. The email address of CASCA officers can be found at the CASCA web site at [www.casca.ca](http://www.casca.ca)

Since e-mail addresses of the registrants will be included on the returned form, the LOC will ultimately be able to co-ordinate its own e-mail correspondence to meeting registrants.

The announcement information should include;

- The Web address (URL) for the meeting
- The theme of the meeting and names of invited speakers
- Deadlines for receipt of abstracts as well as for late registration and hotel reservations
- Availability of student travel grants and the deadline for these
- The names and addresses (including fax and e-mail) of appropriate LOC contact persons.

A brief AGM announcement should also appear in the Vernal Equinox issue of *Cassiopeia*. Sending this information to the Astronomy Meetings list issued by the CFHT Library, as well as the AAS Newsletter, will guarantee maximum exposure. A web site set up in order to advertise the meeting, to provide valuable meeting-related information and to collect registration information is now standard practice. Web sites and information announcing the annual meeting and accepting registration must be online at least 6 months prior to the meeting. The URL (address) of the page should be disseminated as widely as possible, for example, by registering it with the International Astronomy Meetings List hosted at CADC. The CASCA web page will point to your web page when it becomes available.

The importance of local advertising cannot be overemphasized, particularly for the special lectures (especially the Hogg Lecture), and Education Session. These events should be brought to the attention of the RASC, as well as to secondary school and college science teachers, and the local university community.

A few months before the meeting, contact the CASCA Publicity Officer who will help draft (in both languages) a press release, outlining the theme of the meeting and highlight some talks, and will distribute this release. This release will also invite the media members to attend the event for free. After the

abstract submission deadline invite the CASCA membership to produce press releases, which will also be distributed to the media electronically and at the meeting, and direct them to the guidelines which are currently on the web at <http://www.physics.umanitoba.ca/~english/cappess/guidelines.html>. While your university's Public Affairs Officer will have local media contacts, it is beneficial to contact members of the press personally to assess whether one would like to, say, write a story for their newspaper.

It is a good idea to emphasize the theme of the meeting, and unique special event(s), or outstanding local attractions in the advertising material in order to exert the “maximum pull” on the membership.

## 1.4 Registration and Abstract Submission

Interactions with the membership should be carried out as much as possible via the internet. Announcements can be sent by e-mail and registration and abstract submission should be via a web site. Web sites from previous CASCA meetings, including HTML/PHP registration forms and abstract submission forms are available from the LOC of recent meetings.

The meeting web site should include:

- Information contained in the Announcement
- Registration Form
- Abstract Submission Form
- A description of special events planned (e.g., tours, banquets, spousal events, etc.) and their cost

The Announcement and Registration Forms must be in both official languages of the Society. The cost of translation should be included in the budget.

It is recommended that the Announcement indicate which versions of which web browsers are compatible with the form. Otherwise, you may get a lot of email from people complaining that they can't register. Consider stating whether or not the receiving of FAXed registrations will be confirmed and, if so, how long will it take before this confirmation is sent.

Payment of all registration fees should be in Canadian dollars, even for non-Canadian participants, in order to avoid costly exchange transactions.

### 1.4.1 Registration Form

The registration form should contain the following:

- Personal data: Name, address, e-mail, etc.
- Registration fee: There are five categories for both normal and late registrants. Normally student members are exempt from the late registration penalty. The LOC must set the registration fees for:
  - CASCA full members
  - CASCA student members
  - Non-members, their registration fee must be at least \$60 higher than for members
  - Students who are non-members, their registration fee must at least \$25 more than the fee for student members.
  - Other categories: Traditionally, the registration fee has been waived for members of the press. Companies or organizations wishing to set up an exhibit might be charged a higher registration fee. Undergraduate students, and professionals (such as engineers) engaged in astronomical work, should be allowed to register for the meeting on a one-time basis (not requiring them to be CASCA members).

- Presentations: State that CASCA members may present one scientific presentation (either an oral or a poster, but not both) and one education presentation (either oral or poster). (If you are allowing the possibility of more than one first author presentation in either session, adapt the above.)
  - Type of Scientific Session presentation requested: Oral or Poster.
  - Type of Education Session presentation requested: Oral or Poser.
- Banquet Dinner:
  - number of tickets required
  - any special dietary needs
- Will you be attending the CASCA Graduate Student Workshop? (students only)
- Are you an invited speaker? (Note: this helps tally the budget correctly if you are using databases.)

### 1.4.2 Abstract Submission Form

The abstract submission form should contain the following:

- Title
- Collaborators, Departments, Institutions
- Abstract text
- Type of presentation: oral or poster. (Indicate that because of the limited amount of time available for oral presentations, a person may not be able to present his or her paper in the preferred format.)
- A box should be available in the registration form to specify if a person registering wants to publish his abstract or not in the JRASC. If the answer is yes, the publication charge should be added to the registration fee.
- Student Information: In order to include students in the programming schedule and to determine whether students qualify for travel grants and presentation awards, request the following information:
  - Undergraduate or graduate
  - Year of Program
  - Supervisor's name and email address
  - Do you require travel support? (This is available for graduate students who are CASCA members at the time of registration and who register early.)
  - Type of accommodation available (e.g., residence, hotel, etc. – indicates prices)

### 1.4.3 Undergraduate Participation in the AGM

CASCA Board would like to encourage undergraduate participation in the AGMs. Therefore, it recommends that the LOC set the registration fee for undergraduates to be approximately 50% that of graduate student members. Given that this is not yet a tradition at CASCA meetings, it is also recommended that the LOC advertise the CASCA meeting as widely as possible by sending announcements to Universities and undergraduate associations around Canada (especially if the LOC decides to host an undergraduate workshop – see Section 3.1.3).

Undergraduates are welcome to submit an abstract requesting a poster presentation (for example, to present the results of a summer USRA position or a senior research project) provided that they provide the LOC with written approval from their supervisor. Undergraduates are not allowed to give oral presentations.

## 2 Finance

A CASCA AGM should be a zero-sum affair; i.e., it should run neither a deficit nor a profit. Expenses should be met entirely from registration fees and other sources of funding you are able to secure. This includes expenses for facilities rental, travel and lodging, catering, local transportation services, printing, duplication and mailing costs, Ethernet and phone connections, translation, etc. Expenses for regular invited speakers are also the responsibility of the LOC. The prize money for Prize lecturers is covered directly by CASCA, but the travel expenses for Beals, Petrie, Plaskett and Hogg Lectures (when given at the CASCA AGM) are the responsibility of the LOC.

A reasonably detailed budget should be prepared about a year in advance, and certainly for the November Board meeting prior to the AGM. In some instances, small CASCA grants may be made available to help defray expenses.

It is recommended that the LOC open a special account with the host institution or bank in order to handle all financial transactions.

A registration fee of approximately \$200 for regular members is now common, while the cost for students is considerably less. Attendance at past meetings has ranged from about 100 participants to over 300. In establishing the registration fees, the organizers should take into account their institute's policies regarding provincial and federal taxes and credit card fees.

Any profit accrued in excess of 5% of the gross revenue (the total of all funds received and administered by the LOC) must revert to the Society.

### 2.1 Sponsorship

A sponsorship package, which includes template contact and thank you letters and a brief list of national organizations and their contact information, is available upon request from the CASCA Office. Additionally you should contact your provincial government (Education division and Science division), offices at your university (e.g. Research, Administration, your faculty's dean and department head), and determine if your university provides special grants for meetings. Local technical businesses (computer, laser and optics, etc.) sometimes support meetings. An initial email is a good start but must be followed up with a phone call, regardless of whether there has been a response to the email. The contact should be made several months before the event since some organizations have allotted their sponsorship budget by February. The sponsors like to have a very detailed second contact email that includes a list of items that need sponsorship, the benefit that they will derive from this support, etc. Most thank you notes can be sent before the meeting even occurs.

Some sponsors will be able to write a cheque directly to the university that is supplying you with a budget. This kind of sponsor may need to know your university's Charitable Registration Number. Ensure with your administrator that the process you set up for payment results in a tax-deductible receipt. Other, say government, sponsors will need to pay the suppliers directly. That is, they cannot pay for food or beverages and renting poster boards, etc. is difficult. They can really only purchase supplies for the meeting, such as abstract booklets, conference bags, etc. You will need to put these sponsors in touch with the suppliers of these items and keep both parties informed about your needs.

### 2.2 CASCA Student Travel Grants

Each year CASCA allocates \$3000 to \$4000 for small student travel grants. These grants are distributed by the LOC to students presenting papers. These grants must be mentioned in the announcement of the meeting. It is recommended that the LOC contact the Treasurer of the Society early in the year to get the funds for distribution and that only those students who meet the early registration deadline are eligible.

## 3 Meeting Program

The core of the CASCA meeting should be confined to a three-day period, including the scientific, business and education sessions. It is wise to seek the Board's advice when you are ready to allocate a time-slot for the meeting.

### 3.1 Pre-AGM Sessions

#### 3.1.1 CASCA Board Meeting

CASCA Board meets all day on the day prior to the first day of the meeting. A meeting room suitable for approximately ten should be set aside and, if possible, coffee breaks, internet access (preferably wireless), and AV equipment should be provided.

#### 3.1.2 Graduate Student Workshop

The Graduate Student Workshop (GSW) is organized by the CASCA Graduate Student Committee and is a one-day meeting prior to the main CASCA meeting. Since this has now become a tradition of CASCA meetings, the LOC should provide a number of basic items such as: sufficient meeting space, audio visual equipment, and coffee breaks. These items will need to part of the LOC's overall meeting budget.

However, in order to plan and budget accordingly, it is important that the Grad Student Committee contact the LOC as early as possible. The Grad Student Committee should provide the LOC with a detailed list of their requirements (type and size of meeting space, AV/internet needs, etc) as well as the expected number of attendees.

#### 3.1.3 Undergraduate Student Workshop

Given the success of the first undergraduate workshop (UGW) at the Calgary AGM (2006), CASCA Board encourages the LOC to also host a UGW prior to the main meeting. If the LOC does decide to host a UGW, it should provide the same basic necessities as it does for the grad student workshop (and budget accordingly). In addition, it is recommended that the LOC recruit a number of local undergraduate students to organize the UGW.

#### 3.1.4 Other Meetings

Other larger spin-off meetings (e.g. JCSA) may also take place before or after the main meeting.

### 3.2 Scientific Sessions

The core of the CASCA meeting is the scientific sessions. The organization of these is at the discretion of the LOC. Typically these have been a mixture of review talks and shorter, contributed talks. At recent meetings, some of the sessions of contributed talks were as parallel sessions. This can work well with careful planning. Some issues with this mode are the seating distribution and the increased cost of equipment (e.g. microphones, projectors).

Typically requests for oral talks far outweigh the time available, so the Scientific Organizing Committee (or LOC) must select those who give oral talks and those who present posters. (Recall that a member may have 2 presentations, one in this science session and one in the education session.) The LOC should actively promote submission of oral presentations from graduate students, and in competition for oral time preference should be given to graduate students, particularly senior PhD students. Post-doctoral fellows could also use the exposure provided by oral presentations. Typically, about 30% of the talks should be from graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Undergraduates may be allowed to present a paper at their supervisor's request.

This selection and scheduling of talks should be done at least six weeks in advance of the meeting. The LOC should confirm as early as possible those selected to give an oral presentation, and those giving a poster. Those giving an oral paper should be informed of the allotted time for talks, including questions. This has typically been 15 minutes. Those giving a poster paper should be informed of the dimensions of the poster area available.

If time and space permit, and at the discretion of the LOC, a CASCA member may be allowed to present one oral and one poster communication. Those interested in doing so should contact the LOC by e-mail. It is however permissible to give a first-author paper in the Education Session in addition to a first-author paper in a science session.

At the discretion of the LOC, facilities or projects included in the Long-Range Plan may propose special posters, that are not counted in the maximum of two submissions permitted (see above). These posters should be given their own "LRP" display area.

Choose the chairs for the sessions and contact them at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.

No sessions should be planned for the evening of the third full day. However, an informal poster get-together (with cash bar) at the end of the final session provides an opportunity for those staying over to continue discussions stimulated by the meeting.

### **3.3 Special Sessions**

One session should be allocated to an "Education" session. This session is jointly organized by the LOC and the CASCA Education and Outreach committee. The chair of the LOC should contact the chair of the Education and Public Outreach committee well in advance of the meeting to plan this session. Normally a tentative plan for this session should be presented in the report to the CASCA board at its November meeting.

The LOC should ensure that at least one of the scientific sessions be devoted strictly to poster viewing. Highlighting a selected number of posters each poster session has also proven to be rather successful.

Keep in mind that other special information sessions (e.g., for CITA, CFHT, JCMT, DRAO, Gemini and CASCA subcommittees) may need time slots and side meeting facilities. The chair of the LOC should contact the chairs of the CASCA subcommittees in advance of the meeting. The LOC should forward requests for presentations at the business meeting to the president of the society who sets this session's agenda. The LOC should be prepared to print handouts for this session close to the meeting date. Note that the president also presides over the closing session,

Even-numbered years must include a time-slot for the outgoing CASCA President's Address. The President's address can be scheduled for after dinner at the banquet (see below), or during a meeting session. The President should be consulted.

The business meeting requires at least two hours and should be scheduled at a time when most of the membership is present. It should not be scheduled during the last afternoon of the meeting. No other event should be scheduled within two hours after its conclusion.

At the end of the CASCA meeting, student presentation prizes are awarded (see 0).

### **3.4 Prize and Public Lectures**

A slot must be set aside every year for the Plaskett Medalist Lecture (awarded to the best astronomy-related PhD thesis from a Canadian university). In even-numbered years a slot must also be set aside for the Beals Lecture (awarded to a Canadian astronomer in recognition of an outstanding achievement) and an evening slot for a public lecture in Astronomy. The LOC is encouraged to work with the local RASC or other amateur astronomy groups in selecting a public speaker. CASCA may provide support for this

through WESTAR funds. In odd-numbered years, an slots must be provided for the Hogg Public Lecture (an evening lecture sponsored jointly by CASCA and the RASC) and the Petrie Memorial Lecture (given by an internationally-known astronomer). When appropriate, the Hogg Lecture should be scheduled for the evening of the first day of the meeting.

The only award in which the LOC has some direct input, along with the presidents of CASCA and the RASC, is the selection of the Hogg Lecturer. For a list of past winners of these awards, see the most recent CASCA Membership Directory or web site.

CASCA gives two \$200 prizes: one for the best poster by a student and one for the best oral presentation by a student. The judges for the CASCA prizes are two of the directors of the Society. Note that the LOC needs to identify to the judges of the student prizes those presentations by students. This can be done by providing a list of qualifying CASCA students (along with their talk schedules) to the CASCA directors at the board meeting. In the past, other prizes have sometimes been awarded, so the LOC should be open to this possibility.

### 3.5 Social Events

Registration and the welcoming reception normally take place on the evening prior to the first day of the meeting.

The society banquet usually takes place on the second evening. Typical banquet ticket prices are \$35. (Please try to be sensitive to those with special dietary needs.) The Society banquet need not include a special lecture or presentation.

### 3.6 Miscellaneous

- It is highly likely that something will arise which you hadn't thought about before or during the meeting. For this reason it is important to arrange for good secretarial assistance and volunteer help for the meeting. (Graduate students make excellent volunteers, particularly if given the incentive of a "free" banquet ticket, for example.) Depending on the level of automation of your operation, there will be a need for at least a part-time secretary a few weeks prior to the meeting to handle registration, answer the mundane e-mail questions, and direct the "emergencies" to the appropriate LOC person.
- A CASCA AGM revolves about the science sessions. For this reason, every effort should be made to facilitate audio-visual presentations. At recent CASCA meetings, the trend has swung to computer-based presentations. A recent-model electronic projector is essential. Setup time can be reduced if (a) speakers test their laptops with the equipment before their talks and/or (b) speakers copy of their presentations to a single pre-tested laptop provided by the LOC. Two overhead projectors are a must (in case of failure), a slide projector, access to a VCR and monitor, as are ample table space, pointers, and appropriate microphones. Ensure that audio-visual technicians are available in case of failure, especially if the meeting starts on a weekend.
- Dependable e-mail access should be provided to the membership. Even in a university context this can be difficult. But it is essential. The general rule is one terminal per 20 participants. Consideration should also be given to providing direct internet access to participants with laptop computers, either by wire or wireless connection, if possible.
- "Coffee" breaks should not involve only coffee and tea, particularly in a hot climate. Juices are often welcome, as are other light refreshments such as cookies, etc.
- The LOC should provide a list of lunch and dinner establishments in the vicinity of the meeting place, including the price. A local map in the registration package will ensure that members can locate the restaurants.

- Local tourist attractions are usually of interest to most of the participants. By contacting appropriate municipal or provincial offices, one can often get free tourist information that can be included in the registration package. It is also helpful to provide a general description of the weather conditions likely to be experienced by the participants so that appropriate precautions can be taken.