

Speed Science

A proposed new format for ESO Science Day

What is Science Day?

The purpose of Science Day is for all ESO astronomers in Garching to get to know each other. Given hectic day-to-day schedules, this is often a difficult goal to achieve, especially in the case of faculty meeting the students and fellows. To fix this, we invest one day a year to be introduced to colleagues and their science. The return for this investment? More collaborations, more discussion, and a stronger scientific community.

Previous Science Days

The format of Science Day in previous years has not necessarily been the best way to achieve these goals. The day consisted of a series of five minute presentations over the course of an entire day. This suffered problems common to all long series of presentations: overrunning, overloaded slides, and waning attendance, concentration and consciousness as the day progressed. In addition, though the format efficiently exposes the speaker to the entire audience, it does so in an impersonal and overly formal manner. We believe there is room for improvement.

Speed Science

The students and fellows have thought up with an alternative format which could address many of these problems: Speed Science. Inspired by speed dating, Speed Science would consist of groups of four to five astronomers (a mixture of faculty, fellows and students) having an informal chat for 10 minutes. Each person would introduce themselves and their science to the group in what is hopefully an informal, light-hearted, and fun atmosphere. After 10 minutes, groups will swap around. We estimate that, within the available time constraints, this format could allow every faculty member to meet every fellow and student. To re-iterate why we think this format is, in principle, better: **more personal, more interactive, more fun**. Below we outline some details of how we intend to make this happen.

How will it work?

The day will take place in a large meeting room, with a number of tables laid out. On arrival, each participant will be given a personalised schedule outline which table they must go to at each session. A moderator will ring a bell between each ten minute session, signalling the participants move to their next destination.

What is the format of each 10 minute chat?

We want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak. The chats will therefore begin with a one minute introduction from each participant, describing themselves and their science. We also want to ensure that the chats are fun, and not excessively repetitive. To this end, on each table there will be a box of *AstroCards*, which contain lighthearted questions, e.g.

- If you were an ESO instrument, which one would you be and why?
- Have you been mistaken for an astrologist?
- If you weren't an astronomer, what job would you have?

After their minute introduction, each person will pick and respond to one *AstroCard*. After everyone has had a go, the remaining time will be available for free discussion.

How many groups and chats will there be?

Our aim is for every faculty member to meet every student and fellow. Assuming 100% attendance, this will require ~30 lots of 10 minute chats, assuming 4-5 participants per group. We would split this over three two hour sessions during the day, interspersed with lunch and a coffee break. The day would end with refreshments.