



Constitution

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Constitution of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS)

Preamble

Mindful of the important role that young scientists can play in yielding science-based solutions for the state and society;

Responsive to the call of the South African government to establish a forum through which young scientists can contribute to policy formulation of national and international significance;

Recognising the crucial role of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in conceiving and driving the founding of a young scientists' academy in South Africa;

The South African Young Academy of Science is hereby established.

ARTICLE 1

Purport

Contemporary science must address increasingly complex problems. Such challenges often require participation from investigators with different backgrounds and areas of expertise. Furthermore, scientific progress frequently requires coordination of policies and inputs or support from different sectors of society. Yet, early scientific career development tends to favour academic specialisation and focus. Bringing together young scientists from different disciplines, as well as representatives from business, media, and government, can compensate for this pressure to differentiate from other disciplines and society. In addition, the exchange of ideas across disciplines and cultures is expected to expand opportunities for scientists, increase scientific capacity, and contribute to the development and improvement of the country.

The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) will act as a platform to promote these goals through young scientists and to represent the collective voice in dialogues of national and international importance.

ARTICLE 2

Principles for the South African Young Academy of Science

2.1 Representative

SAYAS will consist of a group of early career scientists, with the aim to include scientists from across the country and for inclusive representation of all disciplines and social groupings.

2.2 Independent

SAYAS acts and operates independently from the government, other academies, funding sources, and businesses, although working in close collaboration with these institutions to make an impact in society. SAYAS will exist not for profit.

2.3 Science-based

As scientists, members of SAYAS will seek to contribute dialogue, innovation, and science-based solutions for society's problems.

2.4 Excellence

SAYAS members will be elected based upon a proven track record for excellent contributions to science, or promising potential to make an outstanding contribution to science, as well as commitment to public service. SAYAS will strive for the highest quality in its activities.

2.5 Impact

To be effective, SAYAS will focus on activities of concern to young scientists and where young scientists can contribute uniquely to addressing issues of relevance to society, locally, and internationally. SAYAS' interests will range broadly from issues at the science-society interface to the career development of young scientists and interdisciplinary research.

ARTICLE 3

Autonomy

SAYAS is autonomous with regard to the content of its academic activities. Its members have the status of a "Member of SAYAS".

ARTICLE 4

Relationship with the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)

The relationship between SAYAS and the ASSAf shall be governed by a Memorandum of Understanding.

ARTICLE 5

Objectives

- 5.1 To give a voice to young scientists by:
 - i. Providing a channel for its members to actively participate in policy development
 - ii. Encouraging interactions with media organisations, through workshops, internships and job partnering
 - iii. Developing statements on science issues of national importance

- 5.2 To promote science as a career of choice for young people by:
 - i. Recognising exceptional young scientists as role models
 - ii. Developing policies to promote broad-based participation in science
 - iii. Promoting mentorships with recognised senior scientists
 - iv. Identifying the science leaders of the future

- 5.3 To promote science capacity by:
- i. Promoting science as an engine of economic development
 - ii. Building capacity for scientific research
 - iii. Supporting exchange visits for young scientists to increase the scientific skill base
 - iv. Engaging in collaborative activities with the South African scientific diaspora
- 5.4 To encourage the development of novel approaches to problems of national and international significance by:
- i. Fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between young scientists
 - ii. Holding topical workshops
 - iii. Encouraging Government, research foundations and other philanthropic organisations to channel resources into identified projects
- 5.5 Any other goals that concern young scientists, which the General Assembly decides to promote.

ARTICLE 6

Membership

- 6.1 SAYAS comprises members who have the right to vote and exercise all of their rights within SAYAS.
- 6.2 Members of SAYAS shall be elected for one term of five years¹.
- 6.3 The number of members to be elected each year shall be ten (10).
- 6.4 SAYAS shall consist of fifty (50) members (except during 2015, when there will be 60 SAYAS members, due to the original number of 20 founding members).
- 6.5 SAYAS members have the right to resign their membership in SAYAS. That vacancy may be filled in the next round of nominations.

ARTICLE 7

Membership Governance

- 7.1 Nominations for membership shall be made by all members of the scientific community in South Africa through an open call for nomination. The overriding aim will be to ensure that all meritorious candidates have an opportunity to be nominated. Self-nominations shall also be considered, provided that the nomination is endorsed by the nominee's institution.
- 7.2 Criteria for nomination include all of the following:
- i. Possession of a Doctoral degree in any field of scientific enquiry, where science is defined broadly as encompassing natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, medical sciences and engineering
 - ii. Evidence of scientific excellence through an established publications record, and receipt of honours and awards;
 - iii. Evidence of activities demonstrating service to society;
 - iv. Willingness to volunteer their time and effort to SAYAS activities.

¹ This relatively short membership will ensure that SAYAS members remain early career scientists and will reduce the risk that it will be harder to incentivise worn out participants to take part in SAYAS' activities after too many years of active membership.

- v. Typically under the age of 40 years and within 7 years from receipt of Doctoral degree at the time of nomination. Nomination of candidates who deviate from this expected profile requires additional motivation.

7.3 Selection of candidates²

- i. Short-listing of nominated candidates and final selection of candidates shall be conducted by a Selection Committee appointed by the Executive Committee in close collaboration with ASSAf.
- ii. The over-riding criteria for selection shall be scientific excellence and commitment to service according to points 7.2(ii), 7.2(iii), and 7.2(iv) above.
- iii. Within the bounds established by point 7.3(ii), the selection committee shall seek to maximise breadth of region, discipline, race, gender, and other underrepresented groups.

ARTICLE 8

General Assembly

- 8.1. The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body of SAYAS; the General Assembly shall be empowered, subject to the provisions of this constitution, to make decisions on all matters affecting SAYAS.
- 8.2. The General Assembly is composed of all SAYAS members.
- 8.3. The General Assembly is entitled:
 - i. to amend the constitution of SAYAS by two-thirds majority of the Members in a vote;
 - ii. to set up rules and regulations for the different bodies and officers of SAYAS;
 - iii. to elect the Executive Committee and Co-Chairs;
 - iv. to terminate membership of individual members by two-thirds majority of the Members in a vote if a member seriously damages the interests of SAYAS;
 - v. to take any other decision required to promote the goals of the SAYAS, according to its constitution;
 - vi. to exercise any other right arising from the law or the Constitution;
- 8.4. The General Assembly shall convene at least once every calendar year (hereinafter: The General Meeting) at a location and time set by the Executive Committee. The notice shall be sent at least three months before the meeting³.
- 8.5. The Executive Committee may call for a Special General Meeting of the General Assembly and it shall do so at the request of one-third of the Executive Committee members. The Executive Committee may decide that the Special General Meeting shall convene virtually, in any way that will assure the integrity of the voting process.
- 8.6. Any proposal to be discussed in the General Meeting submitted by a member and forwarded in writing to the Co-Chairs at least fifteen days before the meeting must be put on the agenda of the meeting. The Executive Committee may put on the agenda additional proposals at any time.

² Since the number of members is limited to a specified number, there is no need to restrict the number of selected nominees. The selection committee only has to make sure that after nomination, the number of members does not exceed the specified number.

³ Since membership lasts only 5 years at most, an annual meeting is required to assure that a group atmosphere is created and that members will know each other well enough to be able to initiate projects and cooperate in promoting them.

- 8.7. The General Assembly may take formal decisions only if at least one-third of its members participate in the General Meeting. Unless explicitly provided otherwise in the constitution, the General Assembly shall decide by a majority vote, abstentions not considered a vote.
- 8.8. The resolutions of the General Assembly shall be recorded in minutes which shall be distributed to the members soon after the meeting.
- 8.9. SAYAS Co-Chairs preside over the General Meetings.

ARTICLE 9

Co-Chairs

- 9.1. The General Assembly shall elect two Co-Chairs, to be as representative as reasonably possible of the spread of disciplines, as well as gender and race.
- 9.2. The Co-Chairs shall preside over the meetings of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee with a partition of tasks to be agreed by them.
- 9.3. In case of unresolved disagreement between the Co-Chairs, the Co-Chairs shall refer the matter to the Executive Committee.
- 9.4. The Co-Chairs represent SAYAS on a day-to-day basis, and supervise the function of the administrative staff.
- 9.5. If a Co-Chair resigns before the end of his/her term or is otherwise unable to continue as Co-Chair, the Executive Committee shall appoint one of its members as acting Co-Chair for the remainder of the term of the original Co-Chair.

ARTICLE 10

Executive Committee

- 10.1 Subject to the provisions of the constitution and the decisions of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee shall take such initiatives and actions as are necessary for the achievement of the objectives of SAYAS.
- 10.2 The Executive Committee shall be composed of the two Co-Chairs and three (3) additional members elected by the General Assembly. The Executive Committee shall, as far as reasonably possible, be representative of the Social Sciences and Humanities⁴ and Natural Sciences⁵, as well as gender and race.
- 10.3 The Executive Committee is in charge of developing the strategic direction of SAYAS, and shall hold overall responsibility for the programs and activities of SAYAS.
- 10.4 The Executive Committee may exercise full powers with regard to the management and administration of SAYAS except with regard to the powers specifically vested in the General Assembly.
- 10.5 The Executive Committee shall, in particular, be responsible for
 - i. Setting the time and venue for the meetings of the General Assembly
 - ii. Preparing the agenda of the meetings of the General Assembly
 - iii. Implementing the decisions taken by the General Assembly
 - iv. Securing funding for the programmes and activities of SAYAS
 - v. Approving programmes and activities, as well as their budgets
 - vi. Ensuring that actual spending is in accordance with these budgets

⁴ For the purposes of this Constitution, the Social Sciences and Humanities shall be deemed to include the arts, humanities, social sciences, law, and economics.

⁵ For the purposes of this Constitution, the Natural Sciences shall be deemed to include mathematical sciences, agricultural sciences, health sciences, and engineering.

- vii. Issuing statements in the name of SAYAS
- 10.6. The Executive Committee may set up such standing or *ad hoc* committees and may nominate a secretary, a treasurer and other officers as it deems necessary for the discharge of its tasks and responsibilities
- 10.7. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for fund-raising, managing accounts and budgets, and shall provide annual fiscal reports to the General Assembly.
- 10.8. The Executive Committee shall decide by a majority vote, abstentions not being considered a vote. In the interval between meetings a vote may be taken by email, conference call or other virtual means. In a vote by email a non-reply shall be considered an abstention.
- 10.9. The resolutions of the Executive Committee shall be recorded in a minute and made available for the inspection by the members of SAYAS if required.

ARTICLE 11

Procedures for electing the Co-Chairs and the Executive Committee

- 11.1 Election to the positions of Co-Chairs and Executive Committee shall take place during each regular General Meeting by a secret ballot⁶.
Election of Co-chairs
- 11.2 Co-Chairs and the other members of the Executive Committee are elected for a term of office that expires at the end of the first regular General Meeting following the meeting in which they were elected. They may be re-elected.
- 11.3 The General Assembly shall elect two members to serve as Co-Chairs, to be as representative as reasonably possible of the spread of disciplines, as well as gender and race.
- 11.4 The first candidate to receive a majority of votes from each specified group -- namely, Social Sciences / Humanities and Natural Sciences – where abstentions are not considered a vote, shall be elected Co-Chairs. In the event that no candidate receives such a majority in the first ballot a run-off ballot shall be held between the two candidates from that group receiving the most votes in the first ballot.
Election of Executive Committee
- 11.5 After electing the Co-Chairs, the Executive Committee shall be elected, with each participating member of the General Assembly voting for up to the specified number of candidates for the Executive Committee.
- 11.6 Three members from each designated group receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. The additional positions shall be filled by the members receiving the highest number of votes among the remaining candidates.
- 11.7 In case two or more candidates receive the same number of votes and only one or some of them may be elected, these candidates shall stand for election separately for the open positions.
- 11.8 Members with a particular focus, or that can add strategic value to the operations of the Executive Committee, may be co-opted for specific periods by the Co-chairs to the Executive Committee.
- 11.9 The General Assembly may set up more detailed election regulations.

⁶ Though the election takes place annually, it is fair to assume that Co-Chairs and Members of EC will be often re-elected to assure consistency (unless the General Assembly is unsatisfied with them). There is no limitation on the number of times a Co-Chair or member of the EC is elected during the 5-year period.

ARTICLE 12

Alumni

12.1. Former members of SAYAS are Alumni.

12.2. The General Assembly shall determine the roles and privileges of the Alumni.

ARTICLE 13

Reference Group

13.1. The General Assembly may appoint a reference group as deemed necessary.

ARTICLE 14

Language

14.1. The operational language of SAYAS will be English.