

May 27, 2020

IAU Office of Astronomy for Education

Call for IAU Office of Astronomy Education Centres and IAU Office of Astronomy for Education Nodes

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) is the worldwide organisation of professional astronomers and a key component of its activities is the use of astronomy in furthering education — both in astronomy itself and in the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) in general. To this end, the IAU recently created the Office of Astronomy for Education (OAE), a joint venture with the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Heidelberg, Germany. The [OAE is based at Haus der Astronomie](#) in Heidelberg.

The OAE's mission is to support and coordinate astronomy education by astronomy researchers and educators, aimed at primary or secondary schools worldwide. The OAE will organise an international network of astronomy education stakeholders, organise groups of scientists to collaborate on creating certain educational resources, facilitate and undertake a systematic evaluation of existing resources, and work towards establishing international standards of quality control and evaluation in astronomy education. Additional information can be found on the [OAE's temporary website](#).

The IAU Office of Astronomy for Education (OAE) will establish an international network of OAE Centres and OAE Nodes to collaborate in OAE's mission to support astronomy education worldwide, and the use of astronomy for teaching about science, technology and mathematics in primary and secondary schools. To this end, the OAE invites interested institutions to submit a proposal for hosting an OAE Centre or an OAE Node.

This opportunity is for institutions who are willing to **invest considerable resources and establish long-term structures in support of the OAE mission**. It is emphatically *not* a prerequisite for collaborating with the OAE – there are alternative opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, and we are grateful to institutions that inform us of their willingness to collaborate even while not applying to host an OAE Centre or OAE Node.

OAE Centres and OAE Nodes have an **international scope**. They are part of an international peer network in the service of the OAE mission to leverage astronomy for education. The OAE as a whole will pursue numerous international projects in support of that goal, and suitable OAE Centres/Nodes will take the lead for some of those projects or sub-projects. We value the specific expertise to be found at each OAE Centre/Node, and want the international astronomy education community to benefit from what you bring to the table. In addition to participating in the OAE world-wide activities, OAE Centres/Nodes are also expected to help with the outreach to education communities linked to them by proximity (regional events, including suitable neighbouring countries) or language (for those OAE Centres/Nodes in countries with at least one language that is widely spoken elsewhere).

Applicants for OAE Centres/Nodes are encouraged to showcase the specific expertise they can offer, and define specific areas of OAE work they would be interested in having as a focus of their particular OAE Centre/Node. Both OAE Centres and OAE Nodes should be hosted by institutions with substantial previous experience in programmes of astronomy education.

The difference between OAE Centres and OAE Nodes is in scope as well as in the amount of resources committed by the host institution, which in turn provides boundary conditions for how active an OAE Centre or OAE Node can be. An OAE Centre will work similarly to the OAE itself, providing resources for fulfilling different elements the OAE mission as the need arises, and collaborating in a number of different OAE projects at a time. OAE Nodes will typically be more limited in scope, e.g. by choosing a particular part of the OAE mission that the OAE Node, with its existing staff, is particularly well-suited for supporting.

A prototypical OAE Centre should have ≥ 2 FTE science/education staff, ≥ 0.5 FTE administrative support staff, travel funding that allows staff to travel to several international meetings per year (including the IAU General Assembly, held every 3 years), an appropriate budget for web activities, software, hardware, and educational materials, and funding for a yearly Regional School for Astronomy Education (funding for both the event costs and travel/accommodation costs of the participating teachers). If possible, OAE Centres should make a financial contribution to the joint OAE website, on which all the OAE Centres and OAE Nodes will be represented. A sample budget for an OAE Centre can be found in the Background Information section, below.

An OAE Node should commit to investing significant resources, such as science/education staff, administrative support staff, travel funding or event funding, to supporting the OAE mission.

Proposals to host an OAE Centre or OAE Node (PDF, not exceeding 6 pages of A4) should be sent to oea@hda-hd.de, and should provide the following information:

- Cover page
 - Host institution (name, type of organization, location, country)
 - Name of the authorized person to follow up on the contacts with the IAU OAE
 - The legal entity who will sign the hosting agreement with the IAU OAE
 - Executive summary
- Host Institution Description
 - Description of astronomy education activities of the institution over the past 5 years, including information about the types of activities and target groups
 - Short biographical sketches of key personnel to be involved in the OAE Node or OAE Centre
- Proposed contributions to the OAE
 - Which are the parts of the OAE mission where you are particularly well-positioned to contribute?
 - What possible areas of specialization do you envision for the proposed OAE Node or OAE Centre?
 - Which specific role could your proposed Node or Centre play in helping with the OAE's dissemination activities (by geographic region, language, or both)
- Resources
 - In-kind contributions of the host institution, or external partners, to the proposed OAE Node or Centre, per year
 - Budgetary contributions of the host institution, or external funders, to the proposed OAE Node or Centre, per year
 - Please list the scope of the commitment: For how many years has the funding/have the in-kind contributions be secured?

The deadline for this first call for OAE Nodes/OAE Centres is

June 10, 2020

We encourage you to apply for additional funding for your OAE Node or OAE Centre from suitable funding agencies or foundations. If you apply for such external funding, and if the external funding institution requires feedback on the feasibility of your proposal, we offer to evaluate a draft version of your proposal beforehand, and provide an official evaluation for use with that external funding institution.

Please send your proposals to oea@astro4edu.org – and if you have additional questions about the requirements or the procedure, please do not hesitate to contact us!

For additional information about various aspects of the OAE, please visit our provisional web pages at <http://www.haus-der-astronomie.de/OAE>

The next call for OAE Nodes/OAE Centres will be published in 2021.

Background information: Sample budget of an OAE Centre

FTE refer to “Full Time Equivalent”. A single person working full time corresponds to 1 FTE. One person working for an OAE Centre half of their time, plus another person working for the OAE Centre $\frac{1}{4}$ of their time, corresponds to a total of 0.75 FTE.

As a specific example for the funding of an OAE Centre (based on an actual proposal that has reached us from a European country): 3 FTE science/education staff, 2.5 FTE administration/support (including web support), budget of: software/hardware 5,000 EUR; Regional School for Education 25,000 EUR; Educational Materials 20,000 EUR; Small Grant Program 25,000 EUR; travel budget 10,000 EUR.

As a specific example for a small OAE node, consider: 1 FTE science/education staff, part-time support by an existing secretary, designated office space within the host institution, and a travel budget of EUR 1500 for attending 1-2 OAE meetings per year.