



**Royal
Astronomical
Society**

Letter from the President

Dear Colleague,

Whether you are just starting or continuing your journey as a graduate student, I would like to take a moment to introduce you to the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) community. We are the leading UK learned society representing astronomy and geophysics with upwards of 4,200 members (known as 'Fellows'). The RAS is run for, and by, astronomers and geophysicists and there are many benefits of membership.

The RAS is the professional body for British astronomers and geophysicists. It speaks for the professions, and also exists to promote cooperation between its members. We publish two internationally leading journals (Monthly Notices and Geophysical Journal International), and we have fairly recently launched a new open-access and peer reviewed journal entitled RAS Techniques and Instruments (RASTI). The RAS also publishes Astronomy and Geophysics (known as A&G) and Fellows receive copies of A&G every other month as well as being provided with online access.

The Society organises meetings from October through to May on the second Friday of each month, usually held at its headquarters in Burlington House in London. We hope you will be able to attend at least some of these in person, and meet other members. These meetings are hybrid, so that even if you cannot attend in person you will also be able to attend virtually on the WEB. There are two types of meeting held each month: 1) Specialist discussion meetings (one in astronomy and one in geophysics) are run by RAS Fellows and consist of a specialist programme of expert presenters in a variety of focused areas. The RAS enables international keynote speakers to be invited to these meetings, and postgraduate students often make their first presentation in their specialist area at these meetings. 2) Highlights meetings, where speakers cover important topics of current and general interest, are also held on the same day. You can keep an eye on topics covered at all our meetings by checking the calendar on [our website](#). It's worth asking your supervisor if they can provide the fare for you to attend in person, to allow you all the benefits of in-person discussion and networking.

The annual National Astronomy Meeting (NAM) and British Geophysical Association (BGA) meeting, the latter run jointly with the Geological Society, allow you to hear leading scientists from around Britain and the world. At the same time the meetings give you an opportunity to meet other students and postdocs working in your own and allied areas from across the UK. In certain disciplines, for example, solar physics and solar terrestrial physics, specialist groups function with the support of the Society and also provide excellent networking opportunities.

The Early Career Network (ECN), established in 2020, has gone from strength to strength and is continuing its excellent work. The network is run by, and represents the views of, Early Career RAS Fellows; currently chaired by Jack Reid. The ECN focuses on a number of areas including building a network of peers, facilitating mentoring opportunities, discussing career options, and development of skills such as writing funding applications. June 2022's Issue of Astronomy and Geophysics featured an Early Career Special, showcasing the work of the ECN and other exceptional Early Career Researchers.

The ECN had a strong presence at NAM 2022 in Warwick University, running two collaborative sessions and a lunch. The 2023 NAM is in Cardiff, again with an ambitious ECN programme. The ECN committee may be reached at ecn@ras.ac.uk. Fellows of the RAS can apply to join the committee and get involved, so if you're new to the Society please do consider being part of the team.

The RAS provides 3-year research fellowships (RAS Research Fellowships and the Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship) as well as conference/travel grants. Both are ways in which the Society might further help you in your early career (see the separate document for more examples of how these have helped early career scientists).

Educational and Public Outreach activities are an important aspect of the Society's role and are supported by Burlington House staff; funds for these are available through our grants scheme.

The Society's library is open to all Fellows and holds a remarkable collection of books and manuscripts and all Fellows have use of the Fellow's room in Burlington House when they are in London.

Lastly, the Society plays its part in maintaining the national position in global science, supporting (financially and otherwise) international activities through the various Scientific Unions of which the RAS is the sole or joint UK agent (International Astronomical Union, International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics and the International Radio Science Union, URSI).

Science funding is usually under stress and we continue to be affected by an uncertain international and economic situation. The RAS needs the support of the entire community to lobby government if we are to secure the financial resources to train the next generation of scientists, support their research and retain access for them to world-class facilities. We would like to engage with our whole community in this endeavour, and we would like you to join us and the Early Career Network in making sure that every voice is heard from our scientific community.

So, please consider joining us as an RAS Fellow. All you need to do is visit our website to complete an [online application form](#) and ask an existing member to sign the reference section – probably your supervisor (or see our website for information on your [RAS Point of Contact](#)). Full-time students are charged just £5 for the first year and fees thereafter are heavily discounted (currently £30 pa).

We would love to have you join our community of like-minded Fellows, to take part in all that we have on offer, and to get involved to help shape the future of your Society!

Best wishes,

Mike Edmunds

Jack Reid

President, Royal Astronomical Society

Chair, RAS Early Career Network