

Dear Colleagues,

Following decisions made at the recent SALT Board meeting (25-27 May 2011), we are pleased to announce a forthcoming call for SALT observing proposals for the period 1 Sep 2011 to 28 Feb 2012 (2011 Semester 2), which will open on 30 June 2011.

While commissioning is still continuing with SALT and its first-light instruments, progress is good and we are confident that by the time the Semester 2 observations will begin that the major instrument modes for both RSS and SALTICAM will have been successfully commissioned and their performances will be well characterized. This is an ongoing process and as we obtain information on performance characteristics, these will be posted on the SALT website.

The following is a summary of the SALT Board decisions in regard to the forthcoming proposal call for 2011 Semester 2:

1. This proposal call is for both SALTICAM and RSS on a "best efforts" basis (i.e. no guarantees regarding performance or completion). Depending on the progress with commissioning, some instrument modes may not yet be fully characterized before the proposal submission deadline (15 July).

2. Observing time for this call will be charged to all SALT partners, who will have observing allocations in proportion to their shareholding.

3. We expect that RSS Long Slit spectroscopy (LS) to be fully commissioned by the time of the call (30 June) and significant progress to have been made on Fabry-Perot imaging spectroscopy (FP) and Multi Object Spectroscopy (MOS). However, some of the RSS instrument modes (nod & shuffle, polarimetry, high speed) will only be commissioned later and possibly extending into Semester 2.

4. For SALTICAM proposals, we expect all instrument modes to be available, although probably not all will be fully characterized by the time of the call.

5. SALTICAM science commissioning and verification is on-going. While there are some existing proposals selected for this purpose, we are happy to consider ad hoc SALTICAM proposals at any time, if they exercise particular instrument capabilities not covered by existing accepted commissioning proposals. New commissioning proposals (which are not charged) should be focussed on delivering a quick definitive result that aids the commissioning. All such observations will be expected to be completed before the beginning of Semester 2. Contact the undersigned or the instrument PI, Darragh O'Donoghue (dod@salt.ac.za), in this regard.

6. The call for 2011 Semester 2 (1 Sep - 28 Feb) observing proposals opens on 30 JUNE 2011.

The Phase I proposal tool will then be available for PIs to complete and submit proposals. Note that the Phase I proposals will contain mainly information for the Time Assignment Committees (TACs) and no details on the instrument set up or observing details need to be completed at this time. The Phase I tool will allow users to enter the basic proposal information (e.g. names, affiliations, conditions, targets, instruments, time requested). In addition several text inputs are required, which includes:

- a. scientific rationale (<1000 words; optional for some TACs)
- b. immediate objectives (<250 words; mainly to assist the SALT

Astronomer)

c. technical justification (<500 words)

While the Phase I proposal tool will not be available for release until 30 June (following thorough testing), those interested in submitting a proposal can complete the text components (as PDFs) at any time and include them in the final submission later.

7. The deadline for Phase I submission is 15 JULY 2011 (i.e. 2 weeks from the proposal call).

Following submission, the proposals will be forwarded to the respective partner TACs, together with summary and statistical information (e.g. total times requested, conditions requested, target distributions).

8. The TACs will complete their assessments and assign time to the proposals by 7 AUGUST 2011.

This information is sent back to SALT Astronomy Operations and PIs will be informed of their time allocations.

9. The Phase II proposal process begins following the TAC decisions. PIs will then use the Phase II proposal tool to define in detail the required instrument configurations, and observing details (observing blocks, etc), for their observations.

10. The Phase II proposals should to be submitted by 31 AUGUST 2011 for observations to be scheduled for Semester 2 which begins in September.

11. For this first ever semester of charged science time, it is requested that PIs consider keeping their proposals simple and less ambitious.

All of the above and supporting information will be posted shortly on the SALT website observing pages.

Kind regards,

David Buckley
SALT Science Director.