

Dear SALT user,

As previously stated, the current SALT observing semester (2011 Semester 2, with programs prefixed "2011-3") is being extended by 2 months, to 30 April 2012. This is in order to try to complete as many programs as we can, particularly higher priority proposals which are doable. Difficulties in commissioning of MOS have meant that none of the accepted MOS programs have been able to be completed yet. We are hoping to soon be able to move this forward following addressing some technical issues and we will therefore focus on MOS programs once we are confident that we can execute the programs. Regrettably all polarimetric proposals are currently inactive due to the polarizing beamsplitter being out of action and this means we are not accepting any new polarimetric proposals. Should the repair be effected before the end of the forthcoming semester (31 Oct), then we will contact the respective PIs regarding potential re-activation of their accepted polarimetric programs.

We realize that for some programs existing targets may not be visible in the 2 month extension period, so we invite PIs of such programs to *update their target info at the earliest convenience (and certainly before the end of Feb) *, in consultation with their Liaison SALT Astronomer (who will need to "unfinalize" the programs to allow changes and resubmission).

We are currently assessing the performance for the semester and have identified some programs which are seemingly very difficult to do, for a number of reasons. Liaison SAs have already been in contact with PIs for some of these programs, and we will be doing so for the remainder over the coming weeks. In many cases it is simply that the requirements of the programs are too demanding in terms of image quality, limiting magnitude or S/N ratio requirements. This reflects the fact that as-built performance numbers were not available at the last proposal round and the expected performance numbers for a variety of parameters were overly optimistic at that time. We have attempted to rectify this situation for the current call with the aforementioned information update document (<http://www.salt.ac.za/fileadmin/files/observing/2012-1Phase1.pdf>) and also revision of the simulation tools.

It is therefore recommended that for those existing 2011 Semester 2 programs (with prefix 2011-3, commissioning proposals having the 2011-2 prefix) identified as difficult or impossible to attempt, that PIs take this new information and consider amending their Phase 2 proposals accordingly. Further information and assistance will be provided by us, but should happen primarily through the Liaison SAs.

As usual, any questions can be addressed to the SALT helpdesk (salthelp@sao.ac.za), but please bear in mind that if many such requests start coming in at the eleventh hour, we may simply not have the resources to deal with them.

In addition, for those PIs who have received SALT data for their programs, it would be very useful to send some feedback to the respective Liaison SAs. This can be anything from the form of a short report (ideal) to just a sentence or two. In particular we are keen to hear about the quality of the data compared to what was expected. At the end of this semester (30 April) we will need to compile the total semester statistics as well as summarizing performance of all programs in terms of completion (i.e. how many hours observed compared to allocated) and data quality, which will be reported to the SALT Board. Your assistance in this will be greatly appreciated.

Regards,
David Buckley
SALT Science Director & Astronomy Operations Manager