

POLICY FOR GUARANTEED TIME OBSERVATIONS (GTO)

(Ref. Appendix 2 of Document ESO/Cou-996 rev. dated 15.12.2004)

A) GT Observations during regular Instrument Operations

Rewarding Consortia for providing hardware or software that enhance the ESO scientific capabilities and competitiveness is central to the VLT/VLTI strategy. It allows to involve resources and expertises that are spread across the community and to focus them on projects which are beneficial for the whole community.

In any given Observing Period GTO observations will not exceed 10% of the global VLT/VLTI time.

At least two months prior to the issue of a Call for Proposals the GTO PI will submit to ESO the complete GTO plan and will indicate specifically which part is proposed for the semester which is the subject of the Call. After review by the ESO Directorate and approval by the Director General, at the time of the Call for Proposals the GTO plan for the semester will be made publicly accessible via the ESO Web site to avoid the submission of other proposals that would duplicate GT observations. Protection against duplications will be enforced only on a semester-by-semester basis. In the case of GTO surveys or focused projects taking a large fraction of the GTO time, i.e. Large GTO Programmes, the whole observing plan may be made public at once, while the GTO teams will be invited to make public the resulting science products as early as possible.

In their proposal, the GTO Teams will provide the specific list of targets, or the field coordinates and size to be explored. In both cases instrument set ups and integration times will be specified. The total observing time for all targets shall strictly match the GTO time allocated in the given Period.

Like for any other observation, GT Observations are protected against duplications. OPC will reject proposals that will clearly duplicate GT Observations. However, GT observers do not have exclusive rights over the targets they intend to observe or over the science they intend to investigate. OPC can recommend observations of the same targets with different instrument set-ups or of different targets of the same nature proposed by non-GTO scientists.

GT observations are restricted to the use of instrument modes which have been or will be offered to the community.

The GTO Teams are subject to the same regulations of non-GTO Teams concerning the changes of observations with respect to the DG approved plan.

B) GT Observations prior to an Instrument being offered for general use

ESO policy is to allow and facilitate the scientific exploitation of a new VLT/VLTI instrument as early as possible, provided this is compatible with the activities necessary to bring the instrument to full efficiency and stable operability.

Within this framework, GTO Teams may request to advance part of their GT observations prior to the instrument being offered to the general users. The Team will not be entitled to bad weather or instrument failure compensations. Only possible losses due to failures of VLT/VLTI telescopes or instrument components provided by ESO can be compensated. The plan for such observations will be timely posted on the ESO Web site.