

Report on the 11th GTC Users Committee Meeting

Held in La Laguna, at IAC's headquarters.
February 10th and 11th, 2015

1 Context and general remarks

The GTC users committee (GUC; members listed at the end) was informed of the work carried out to operate, maintain, and develop the telescope and its instrumentation. A full report on these actions has been produced directly by GTC and it is attached to the GUC report.

We are pleased to hear that several issues raised in the past reports have been addressed and fixed up during this semester. In particular,

- We welcome the announcement that GTC Large Programs, advocated by GUC, will be offered in semester 2015B.
- We congratulate GTC for having had the opportunity of hiring new technical personnel, as required to maintain the telescope fully operational.
- We are glad to hearing that, finally, EMIR is expected to be on site by the end of 2015.
- We are also glad that the long-lasting problem with the shutter of the dome will be fixed this summer.
- We welcome back the University of Florida as a full GTC partner.
- We recognize the progress made in making the GTC raw data publicly available.

On top of these positive advances, we also find a few negative issues, namely,

- We identify a significant flaw already pointed out in previous reports but not properly addressed this semester, namely, the lack of a balanced comprehensive instrumental plan. This difficulty is again included among the recommendations, items # 1, 2, and 7.
- The GUC remains worried by the drastic cut off of MEGARA guaranteed time, which represents a serious discouragement for the so-far highly motivated team building the instrument, as well as for future instrumentation teams.
- The present status of the OSIRIS-MOS reduction pipeline is very unsatisfactory. It is not fully operational and, consequently, it has not been accepted by GTC yet. This long lasting problem must be solved as soon as possible (see item #3).

2 Input from the community

GUC has collected feedback from users that can be summarized as follows:

- Difficulties to access the current instrumentation plan for GTC have been reported.
- The pipeline to reduce OSIRIS-MOS is urgently needed. It must include wavelength calibration, extraction, and flux calibration. The lack of a pipeline for this mode is currently hampering the scientific productivity of the groups that obtained MOS data.
- The decommissioning of Canaricam may have occurred too early, before its unique capabilities have been properly exploited by the community.
- The oversubscription quoted for GTC is often unrealistically low, and this is of concern because it may be recklessly used as an indication lacking community support.

3 Recommendations

1. To make publicly accessible the current instrumentation plan for GTC. It should include the GTC Adaptive Optics (AO) system needed for FRIDA, now being developed and constructed at IAC.
2. The instrumentation plan for GTC presented during the 9th GUC meeting was found to be incomplete. Clarifications were given during the 10th meeting, but we clearly found them insufficient. We think that the GTC community will greatly benefit from having a reliable instrumentation plan, where the time line for the different instruments is clear, the risks are properly spelled out, and a credible contingency plan is proposed. Therefore, we insist in what was said in the 9th report, namely,
 2. *We appreciate GTC efforts to revise the original instrumentation plans according to the present situation. However, we find the new instrumentation plan too vague to be reliable. We encourage GTC to complete the current plan including available resources, studying risks, and providing alternatives in case the planned instrumentation fails to reach GTC in due time.*
 5. *GUC understands that the instrumentation plan should detail plans for the commissioning of the different focal stations. This should include not only the foreseen schedule for the commissioning, but also the specific characteristics and supplies that each station will have within that schedule. This is crucial not only for the development and usage of the instruments that are currently foreseen, but also for possible visitor instruments.*

3. OSIRIS MOS mode will not reach its full potentials until the MOS reduction pipeline is fully operational. As in the last GUC meetings, we were informed that the official pipeline is almost ready. If it is not delivered and accepted in a few months, GTC should seek for effective alternative solutions. For example, organize a call to the community to make the existing private pipelines publicly available, offering incentives like observing time and help to support the pipelines.
4. According to the current plans, GTC will be without a visible camera for three years (from semester 17B to 20B), when OSIRIS will be moved out of the Nasmyth focus and waits to be installed in the Cassegrain focus. Ways to find a replacement during this period should be explored (e.g., through visitor instruments). In more general terms, OSIRIS is the workhorse instrument of GTC, and as long as it is still having this role (e.g., as judged from the demand from the community through CAT proposals), it should not be removed from the telescope.
5. Oversubscription factors are misleading low in telescopes operated in queue mode, where the accepted proposals largely exceeds the true available observing time. We suggest to be extremely clear on the actual meaning when these factors are cited in public pages, e.g.,
<http://www.iac.es/cat/media/nocturno/factores.sobrepeticion>
6. The arrival of HORS to GTC is imminent. It should have a exposure time calculator publicly available as soon as possible, together with a webpage explaining its technical details, including observing modes, efficiency, etc.
7. EMIR uses the detector originally assigned to FRIDA, but the replacement detector for FRIDA has not been found yet. We urge GTC to find it, and to develop a contingency plan in case the three engineering grade detectors offered by the manufacturer do not meet the specifications. (To be included in the instrumental plan of GTC; see item# 2.)
8. Some RAs are particularly oversubscribed. We encourage GTC to make the histogram of requested RAs publicly available. It will help preparing observing proposals that avoid the critical RAs.
9. EMIR is expected to be on GTC site by the end of 2015, displacing Canaricam, which will not be offered for observing in semester 2015B. In case that these plans are substantially delayed, we encourage GCT to maintain Canaricam on site and, eventually, offer it in subsequent semesters.
10. The report on whether a DDT (IAC's Director Discretionary Time) proposal will receive observing time is currently signed by the president of CAT (Spanish time allocation committee). We recommend the report to be signed by the IAC's Director, which is the person responsible for the decision.

11. Create and maintain a historical archive with the materials provided to the GUC members during the past GUC meetings. It would allow a convenient access to the documentation needed for cross-checking. It would be password protected so that the access is only granted to the current GUC members.
12. This issue also remains from past recommendations: *We suggest to add a search box to the webpage of GTC. It will speed up finding specific contents.*

GUC Members

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Nicolas Lodieu	Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias
Anthony Gonzalez	University of Florida (did not attend this meeting)