



# Time Allocation Committee for Calar Alto

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These statutes are posted on the TAC web page:

<http://www.caha.es/CAHA/TAC>



## Role of the committee

The time allocation committee (TAC) for Calar Alto evaluates German, Spanish and international applications (except OPTICON proposals, see below) for observing time on Calar Alto on behalf of Centro Astronómico Hispano Alemán (CAHA). For a given proposal it assigns a rating and recommends a number of nights to be allocated. The committee might also recommend a change to another Calar Alto telescope, different instrument or observing mode (visitor/service). Based on the distribution of these ratings and the number of available nights a cut-off line is defined for each telescope. Considering these recommendations the director of CAHA decides on the allocation of telescope time. In doing so he follows the recommendations of the committee except in well justified exceptional cases. Final approval has to be given by the two members of the executive committee, who represent IAA and MPIA.

Open time at Calar Alto Observatory is calculated from the length of the semester minus time for maintenance (technical time or TT, none or few nights per semester depending on the needs), instrument guaranteed time (IGT, pay-back time as defined in the specific Memorandum of Understanding for each instrument, if any), director's discretionary time (DDT, 5%) and director's guaranteed time (DGT). In addition, the CAHA Executive Committee might establish Legacy programs, the mechanism to select them and the total amount of time granted to them. Finally, some nights might be offered to OPTICON. This will be decided by the CAHA, MPIA and IAA directors each semester.

MPIA and IAA have the right to define guaranteed time projects (GTO). For each partner, these projects should not exceed 1/6 of the available time. According to a decision of the extraordinary Calar Alto Executive Committee in May 2009, the guaranteed time projects are treated as service-A programs. Accordingly, Calar Alto reserves an additional amount of time (with similar lunation phase and RA distribution covering than the GTO programs) serving as buffer time for GTO programs. The buffer time will be used to compensate for eventual weather and technical losses affecting the GTO programs. If the buffer time is not required to complete the GTO programs, it may be used to execute or to complete open time proposals. In general, 26 GTO nights and 26 explicitly scheduled buffer nights are allocated each semester to both MPIA and IAA programs.

The TAC will be informed by the directors of MPIA and IAA about these programs by the time of the meeting. To inform the TAC about the projects to be carried out in guaranteed time the teams submit regular applications (with a status report, if guaranteed time has already been used) also by the time of the TAC meeting.

## Applications

### Right to apply

Applications for observing time on Calar Alto may be submitted to CAHA by affiliates to German institutes (*i.e.* member institutes of the Rat Deutscher Sternwarten), to Spanish institutes, and to any other different institution from any country (European proposals should



go through OPTICON). Proposals received are assigned to one of the groups Germany (MPIA, RDS) and SPAIN, or “other”. The institutional affiliation of the principle investigator (P.I.) is used to assign the proposals to these groups.

## Types of applications

### Non-TAC proposals:

- GTO** German (MPIA) and Spanish guaranteed time projects, as described above, The applications should go to customized committees, which depend on MPIA and IAA. They are not reviewed by the TAC.
- Legacy** Large programs (several hundred observing nights) designed to have a significant impact. The specific calls will be the responsibility of the CAHA Executive Committee.
- IGT** Instrument guaranteed time (pay-back time as defined in the specific Memorandum of Understanding for each instrument). A proposal has to be submitted but not reviewed by the TAC.
- Instrumental** Commissioning time for new instrumentation. This is considered as director’s discretionary time but the TAC is to be informed via the application about the details of the commissioning.
- DDT** Director’s discretionary time (DDT). Time reserved for observations requiring short periods of observing time on short notice or to complete an approved project. Allocations are done by the director of Calar Alto.
- See: [http://www.caha.es/CAHA/DDT\\_ToO/index\\_ddt.html](http://www.caha.es/CAHA/DDT_ToO/index_ddt.html)

### TAC proposals:

- Normal** Planned duration of project up to 2 semesters, requesting less than 10 nights per semester.
- Long/Large** Expected duration longer than 2 semesters or requesting a minimum of 10 nights in a single semester. These applications require a logistics page in the application to be filled in. For repeated submissions, the logistics page must contain a status report. The original science justification should be maintained for reference (see template for details).
- PhD thesis** Logistic page required. Repeated submissions hold the prospect of further time allocation, if the logistics are satisfactory.
- Target of Opportunity (ToO)** [http://www.caha.es/CAHA/DDT\\_ToO/index\\_too.html](http://www.caha.es/CAHA/DDT_ToO/index_too.html)  
If approved, observations may be triggered for the duration of one semester. At the end of this period a report has to be submitted to the committee. The number of events to be triggered per semester may be restricted by the committee.



**Repetition** Proposal submitted again due to observing time lost (weather, technical problems), or following rejection by the committee.

**Servicemode** The observing mode (visitor, service or partly service) is specified by the applicant.

Service observations are, except in special cases, carried out flexibly during service blocks. In order to compensate for loss due to bad weather or technical failures, a certain amount of buffer nights might be allocated by the TAC. If it turns out in the course of the semester, that the buffer time is not sufficient, the best ranked proposals shall be finished preferentially.

## Committee

### Assignment of committee members

The two international TAC members are jointly nominated by the parties of the CAHA agreement. The two German members are proposed by MPG and the two Spanish members by CSIC. The CAHA managing director is ex officio a member of the TAC. One substitute is nominated for the Spanish and one for the German community by CSIC and MPG, respectively. In assigning committee members special care should be taken to ensure a broad range in expertise. If necessary substitutes are called upon based on their expertise.

The committee members elect one member as the TAC chairperson.

### Term of office

Referees are appointed for a period of two years. A term of at most four years is possible.

### Responsibilities

- Evaluation of proposals, to maximize the scientific return from Calar Alto on an international level
- In the interest of the evaluation process the recommendations should reach the TAC secretary in complete form and at the deadlines agreed upon in the committee

#### Special tasks

##### Chairperson

- Chairing the meetings of the committee
- Feedback to applicants, if they ask for details of the evaluation process
- Contact for directorate and TAC secretary

##### TAC secretary (non-voting)

- Preparation of application information (to be posted about 6 weeks before the deadline on the web)
- Assignment of referees to the proposals
- Putting together the documents for the referees (applications, statistics)
- Preparation of the TAC meeting
- Writing letters to the applicants on the outcome of the evaluation
- Minutes of the TAC meeting



## TAC members

A list of the current TAC members can be found here:

<http://www.caha.es/CAHA/TAC>

## Meeting

Meetings are held at MPIA (Heidelberg), at IAA (Granada) or on Calar Alto, according to the schedule agreed upon by the committee. Meeting travel costs for all members of the programme committee will be covered by CAHA.

## Confidentiality

Content of proposals and their discussion in the TAC meeting are strictly confidential. The comments, provided in written form by each referee with his/her rating (see below), as discussed and approved during the meeting are communicated to the applicant by the TAC secretary. Following an inquiry by the PI only the chairperson is authorized to give further details about the discussion of an application. Names of referees assigned to a proposal are to be treated as confidential.

## Conflicts of interest

Proposals are evaluated by the committee strictly on the basis of their scientific merit. The committee takes special care that this evaluation is free from personal factors, which might occur, if it is in the interest of a referee to accept or reject a given proposal. To guarantee the interests of the applicants it is proceeded as follows:

In assigning proposals to a referee the TAC secretary in a preventive way takes care to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Should a referee nevertheless see a conflict with a proposal assigned to him/her, he/she should let the secretary know immediately after he received the proposals, that he/she is unable to evaluate this application. The proposal is then re-assigned. Before discussing a given application in the meeting the chairperson asks those committee members, who have a conflict of interest, to identify themselves. The possible conflict is then discussed in the committee. If a conflict is identified, the referee affected is asked to either leave the room or refrain from the discussing and ranking of this proposal.

A referee will not evaluate a proposal, leave the room during its discussion and not participate in its ranking, if he/she is

- PI or Col on this proposal
- married to the PI of the proposal (or has similar close ties)

Conflicts, the impact of which should be judged by the referee himself and which should be evaluated in agreement with the committee, are, if a referee

- has himself submitted a proposal with very similar scientific aim
- is a close collaborator of one of the applicants
- is affiliated with the same institute department as one of the applicants



As the committee is rather small, sometimes the expertise of a committee member might be needed despite a potential conflict of interests. In such cases the committee takes into account its reservations for the final ranking.

## **Minutes of the meeting**

The minutes cover the general discussion with the CAHA and MPIA/IAA directors at the beginning of the meeting but not the detailed discussions of the applications. As a substitute for the latter a list is added to the minutes which contains the final rating, the recommended nights and the comments communicated by the referees to the applicants as well as the allocated time.

The minutes are also distributed to the substitutes and those members who could not attend the meeting as well as to the directorate of MPIA and IAA.

An observing schedule and a subset of the table of applications, which shows the names and affiliations of successful applicants, the title of their application and the observing period is sent to DFG for those applications, in which it is indicated that travel costs will be claimed from there.

The astronomy group on Calar Alto receives a CDROM with the PDF files of the successful applications as well as an EXCEL-Table restricted to the successful applications including their final rating (no names of referees, no comments from referees).

## **Evaluation of proposals**

### **Subdivision of proposals**

The total field of astronomy is divided into 7 categories:

- A cosmology, intergalactic medium, clusters of galaxies, galaxies
- B active galactic nuclei
- C interstellar medium, star formation, structure of the milky way
- D massive / hot stars
- E low mass / cool stars
- F solar system
- G instrumentation

Each referee gives his/her priority of these categories to the TAC secretary. These priorities are – if possible – taken into account in assigning the main referees for each application. Potential conflicts of interest (see above) are to be avoided as far as possible.

### **Rating of the proposals**

Each proposal is assigned to two main referees, who assign a rating and recommend a number of nights for these proposals. Both main referees are completely equal in their rights.

All proposals are sent to all referees in printed form (if desired) and put on a dedicated web page in PDF format, from where they can be downloaded. The referees are encouraged to read all proposals. For those applications assigned to a given referee, an ASCII file is created with one form for each application assigned to him/her. The referee enters a grade between 1 and 5, being 1 the best one. In order to ensure a comparable ranking between all referees, the mean grade of the proposals of each referee should be 2.5. So-called “k.o.-questions” address the principle feasibility of an application: If one referee gives a k.o., automatically the lowest grade of 5 is assigned to this proposal. The form contains the number of requested



nights, but the referee may change this number if he does not consider it appropriate. The referee enters his (preliminary) comments to the applicants. They are discussed in the committee and modified accordingly if necessary by the referee after the meeting.

The forms, once filled out, are mailed back to the TAC secretary before the deadline agreed upon (typically a few days before the meeting). The ratings of the two main referees are then averaged for a preliminary rating, based upon which a first cut-off line is defined. This information is provided back to the referees as fast as possible (if possible well before the meeting).

The final ranking (rating, number of nights recommended, comments) is discussed for each application and is approved by the committee as a whole. Especially the comments for rejected proposals have to be coordinated between the two referees at the end of the meeting.

### **Feedback to the applicant**

Letters to the applicants contain the final ranking by the committee as well as the comments from both referees.

### **Service observations**

Service mode is now routinely available for a certain fraction of the observing time. In the application one of the modes "no service", "partly service" or "service" has to be chosen by the applicant (see template). The TAC and the Calar Alto director may decide to override the mode preferred by the applicant if necessary.

Information concerning the execution of service observations has to be provided to Calar Alto staff via a form on the web by the P.I..

The scheduled type of the observations is indicated in the letter to the applicant.



## Abbreviations used

CAHA	Centro Astronomico Hispano Aleman (Calar Alto)
CSIC	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Science Foundation)
IAA	Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía (Granada)
MPG	Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (Max Planck Society)
MPIA	Max-Planck-Institut für Astronomie (Heidelberg)
RDS	Rat deutscher Sternwarten (Council of German Observatories)
ToO	Target of Opportunity
GTO	Guaranteed time observations for MPIA and Spain
IGT	Instrument guaranteed time
DDT	Director's discretionary time
TAC	Time assigning committee