Report on the virtual CTAC-meeting May 6 2020

Summary

The 2020B common call for OPTICON TNA opened in early February 2020 and closed at 23:59 on March 1 2020. The call was published here:
http://www.astro-opticon.org/h2020/tna/call/call-2020b.html.

47 proposals were submitted, all of them were evaluated and ranked. The number of proposals was similar to the previous semester (43 proposals) but considerably less than in the last call in spring 2019 (75 proposals). The oversubscription in terms of money was high, about a factor of 3.8 for the typical 250 kEuro per semester budget. This trend has been seen in the last 5-6 semesters. A proposal requests telescope time for about 20200,- Euro on average.

Contrary to previous calls, the demand was more homogeneously spread across the telescopes. As a consequence only the AAT and the TNG were strongly overbooked by a factor of 2.5 and 2.9, respectively. In addition, the demand for the CAHA22, CFHT, INT and NOT telescopes was up to 40 % higher than nights which the TNA could accommodate.

Time could be allocated for 15/47 proposals. Given the many highly competitive proposals this semester, several proposals were very close to each other around the cutoff. In the end, personal votes by all CTAC members were required to select proposals around the cutoff to be approved.

As in the previous round, the CTAC made sure that the ratio of the approved and non-approved proposals for CEE and non-CEE countries was comparable without compromising the quality of the accepted proposals.

Details

The CTAC-meeting to discuss the proposals for the semester 2020B was held online, hosted from Edinburgh. After two semesters with 6 members, the CTAC was now complete with 7 members and consisted of Despina Hatzidimitriou (Athens), Renata Minkevičiūtė (Vilnius), Annelies Mortier (Cambridge), Hélène Roussel (Paris), Victor Bejar (Tenerife), Massimo Turatto (Padova) and Jochen Heidt (Heidelberg, Chair). OPTICON Project Scientist John Davies (UKATC, Edinburgh) was in attendance to advise on technical issues and record the meeting outcomes but did not participate in the scientific discussions.

In view of the COVID-19 crisis, one of the concerns was that some approved programs may not be doable. This could be because the observer can not travel to perform the observations as visitor mode was requested and/or since some observatories do not offer service mode. John Davies clarified in advance with the PIs of the proposals and the observatories in question that approved programs can be performed in service mode if required.

Given the modest amount of applications, the evaluation of the proposals was smooth. Table 1 illustrates the demand for each of the telescopes.

As in previous calls, the distribution of the proposals between the astrophysical topics was skewed towards exoplanet, stars and stellar populations and time domain science, which is also somewhat reflected in the high demand for the AAT and the TNG telescopes

Telescope	Num_{prop}	$\text{Night}_{\text{requested}}$	$\text{Night}_{\text{offered}}$	Oversub
CAHA35	7	8.5	10	
CAHA22	4	11	10	1.1
Rem	1	60h	300h	
AAT	6	25	10	2.5
OHP19	2	7.5	10	
OHP12	1	10	10	
TNG	9	28.5	10	2.9
LCO	4	190h	400h	
NOT	4	13.5	10	1.4
LT	5	49h	50h	
INT	2	10	7	1.4
Arist	3	11.5	20	
CFHT	5	5	4	1.3
TCS	1	7	14	
TBL	1	2	7	

Table 1: Statistics on the number of proposals and nights/hours requested versus offered per telescope. Some (particularly TDA ones) requested more than one telescope. This is reflected in the statistics.

Topic	N_{prop}
Solar system	-/4
Exoplanet	2/11
Stars+stell. pop	7/14
Circumst. med	1/1
Time domain	4/9
Low-z Universe	1/3
High-z Universe	-/5

Table 2: Distribution of applications among categories. The number of approved vs submitted applications are shown. Exoplanet, stars + stellar population and TDA proposals dominate.

as they offer instruments suitable for exoplanet and stellar research. Table 2 shows the distribution of the proposals among categories.

The number of approved proposals (15/47 = 32%) roughly reflects the oversubscription for the nominal 250 kEuro budget. Contrary to previous semesters, the proposals in the stars and stellar population category were very successful with 50% of them being approved (with five of them being submitted the first time), while the number of successful exoplanet proposals was unusually low.

Proposals were submitted with PIs from 16 different countries, of these proposals from 9/16 countries were approved. As usual, the UK was most active (and successful) with 5/12 proposals been time granted. The CTAC continued to specifically motivate astronomers from CEE countries to apply, but with 9/47 (19%) proposals their interest is still frustratingly low.

With a ratio of 2/9 (22%) for approved/rejected proposals from CEE (both from Poland) and 13/38 (34%) for approved/rejected proposals from non-CEE countries their share was

not too different.

What to expect for 2021A

• No major changes are foreseen for the 2021A semester except that it will run within the new OPTICON-Radionet Pilot contract - under the assumption that the application will be approved. Substantial changes may be present for 2021B semester as the project develops.

• The CTAC will face changes in case of a 2021A call. Hélène Roussel (Paris) and Jochen Heidt (Heidelberg) will leave the CTAC. Successors for both of them will be acquired well before the new CfP for the 2021A semester. Annelies Mortier (Cambridge) has been appointed as the new chairperson.

Feedback to all proposers will now be prepared and distributed in the next few days. The next call will open by early August 2020 and the next CTAC meeting will be held most likely in Athens by the beginning of November 2020.

Jochen Heidt Heidelberg, May 26, 2020