Report on the virtual CTAC meeting Nov 4/5 2020

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Cambridge, 9 November 2020

Summary

The 2021A common call for OPTICON TNA opened in early August 2020 and closed at 23:59 on 31 August 2020. The call was published here: `http://www.astro-opticon.org/h2020/tna/call/call-2021a.html`. Sixty (60) proposals were submitted. This was higher than the previous two semesters (43 and 47 for 2020A and 2020B respectively). Three (3) proposals were not discussed as they had adapted the provided template. The remaining fifty-seven (57) were all evaluated, discussed, and ranked.

The oversubscription in terms of money was high, about a factor of 4.2. This pressure factor is in line with the trend seen in previous semesters. The budget was slightly higher than normally, having 325 kEuro rather than the typical 250 kEuro. A proposal requests telescope time for about 22900,- Euro on average, higher than the previous semester.

The demand for telescopes was not evenly spread, but not wildly different than previous semesters. There were no proposals for Aris, but all other telescopes were requested. Six (6) telescopes were overbooked, of which the NOT the strongest with a factor of 3.1. CFHT, AAT, TNG, LT, and LCO were overbooked with factors between 1.4 and 2.2.

Time could be allocated for 16/60 proposals. Given the many highly competitive proposals this semester, several proposals were very close to each other around the cutoff. Some personal votes were taken by CTAC members in order to select an extra proposal around the cutoff.

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

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the CTAC-meeting to discuss the proposals for the semester 2021A was held online, hosted from Edinburgh. The CTAC was complete with 7 members and consisted of Despina Hatzidimitriou (Athens), Renata Minkevičiūtė (Vilnius), Roser Pello (Marseille), Victor Béjar (Tenerife), Kari Nilsson (Turku), Massimo Turatto (Padova), and Annelies Mortier (Cambridge, 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.

Three proposals were disqualified prior to the meeting as they had adapted the template rules. All other proposals were discussed, per topic and numerically (based on submission code) within a topic. Overall, the evaluation of the proposals was smooth.

Table 1 illustrates the demand for each of the telescopes. Six telescopes were overbooked. However, all proposals ranked in the top third received the appropriate telescope time. Out of all requested telescopes, observation time was awarded to use NOT, LCO, CFHT, AAT, CAHA35, and LT.

Telescope	N_{prop}	Requested time	Available time	Oversubscription
NOT	17	30.8n	10n	3.1
SALT	5	25.4n	50n	
OHP	1	8n	10n	
CFHT	8	6.8n	4n	1.6
AAT	7	25.5n	15n	1.7
TCS	1	7n	14n	
TNG	11	22.4n	10n	2.2
LT	6	72h	50h	1.4
LCO	12	729.5h	400h	1.8
REM	3	81h	300h	
CAHA35	7	6.9n	10n	
CAHA22	1	6n	10n	
Aris	0	0n	20n	

Table 1: Statistics on the number of proposals and requested/available time per telescope. Note that some proposals asked for more than one telescope.

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, as seen in Table 2. This is somewhat reflected in the skewed distribution of requested telescopes as some are more suited to study these topics.

Topic	N_{prop}	$N_{success}$	Success rate
Solar System	1	0	0%
Exoplanets	20	5	25%
Stars and stellar population	12	1	8.3%
CSM and star formation	5	0	0%
Low-z Universe	3	2	66.7%
High-z Universe	2	2	100%
Time Domain Astronomy	17	6	35.3%

Table 2: Statistics on the number of proposals requested/offered per science topic.

The number of approved proposals (16/60 = 26.7%) roughly reflects the oversubscription in terms of the budget of 325 kEuro. The proposals in the low- and high-z Universe were extremely successful with 80% of them being approved overall. Within the most popular topics (exoplanets, stars, time domain), success rates varied between 8.3% and 35.3%. This is different than last time, but this is low-number statistics.

Proposals were submitted with PIs from 15 different countries, of which 8 countries were successful in getting time. As per usual, the UK was most active, with 22 submitted proposals, which is higher than previous semesters. UK proposals had a success rate of 27.3%, perfectly in line with the general success rate. The CTAC continued to specifically motivate astronomers from CEE countries to apply, resulting in 14 submitted proposals (23%), slightly higher than previous years, but still low overall. Proposals from CEE countries unfortunately only had a success rate of 14.3% (2/14) with both approved proposals from Poland, while the non-CEE proposal succes rate was 30.4%.

What to expect for 2021B

As the new OPTICON-Radionet Pilot contract will be in play, substantial changes may be present for the 2021B semester. These discussions have not yet been held.

No members are expected to leave the CTAC.

Feedback to all proposers is being prepared and will be distributed in the next few days. The next call will open by early February 2021. The location for the next CTAC meeting (early May 2021) will be discussed in January 2021 when there is hopefully more clarity on the pandemic situation.