

ESO Users Committee Mid-term Teleconference

Minutes by M. Rejkuba (30 November 2015)

Date/Time: 27 November 2015, 14:00-15:00

Present:

For ESO: Andreas Kaufer (Director of Operations), Michael Sterzik (Data Management and Operations Division Head), Marina Rejkuba (User Support Department Head), Martino Romaniello (Back-end Operations Department Head), Ferdinando Patat (Observing Programmes Office Head)

For the UC: Stefano Covino (IT, Chair), Maria-Rosa Cioni, (DE, co-chair), Philippe Delorme (FR), Maria Rosa Zapatero Osorio (ES), Hans Kjeldsen (DK), Eija Laurikainen (FI)

The agenda with the following topics was adopted without changes:

- News from ESO operations
- Progress on the UC39 recommendations
- Feedback from the Telescope Allocation and Data Management working group chairs
- Feedback on the OPC member selection procedure
- Special topic for the 2016 UC meeting

(1) News from ESO

- NACO intervention and recovery is ongoing. The functioning of the filter wheels and other motors has been recovered, but the recovery of the detector is not yet final. The on-sky-commissioning is scheduled in the second week of December.
- VISIR upgrade has been successfully completed. The instrument is back in operations. The issues with sensitivity, mainly due to detector characteristics, were solved in large part by adapting carefully the operations as well as revising the calibration plan.
- GRAVITY commissioning is progressing very well. First fringes were achieved and pending continued progress with the commissioning, the plan is to offer the instrument to the community in the ESO Period 98 Call for Proposals.
- USD run a 2nd SM Questionnaire campaign in September 2015. With this campaign we are shifting the SM Questionnaire to fall in order to avoid overlap with the UC users' questionnaire. The results of the campaign are published on the Phase 2 web pages.

- The Rainbows workshop was organized in Garching in the first week of October. It provided an overview of science results from ESO Public Surveys and Large Programmes. A report will be published in the ESO Messenger.
- In the SciOps 2015 workshop, organized jointly between ESO and ESA in November, Science Data Management and Archive aspects were discussed.
- In the December issue of the Messenger there will be also an article on the VLT Science Return by M. Sterzik et al.

(2) Progress on UC39 Recommendations

UC39.R.01: to continue providing video tutorials and cookbooks for all pipelines explaining the essential steps in the reductions so that beginners can easily accomplish the basic data reduction of any ESO instrument.

We have started looking at documentation about pipelines and plan to homogenize it by expanding the Reflex tutorials into “Data reduction tutorials” (essentially this would then encompass the cookbooks). The plan would be to have these Data reduction tutorials as the primary step-by-step guide for data reduction. In case of more complex needs to tune the parameters the users should turn to pipeline user manuals that will keep being the main reference document for each pipeline. This is a large effort and will have to be done gradually due to limited manpower.

UC39.R.02: to keep manuals for all the instruments/pipelines and for the different modes of operations up-to-date and as complete as possible especially at times approaching proposal submission deadlines.

This is part of the regular review of manuals, and special attention was paid to this aspect. At the same time, we highly encourage also the user community to point us to specific issues since we may not necessarily catch all the details for every single manual.

In the case of La Silla, manual updates do not appear necessary, because instruments have not changed much. In fact most of the Visitors report that they are happy with manuals. If there are specific comments, they should be pointed out (e.g. in the End of Mission Reports).

UC39.R.04: to focus on making all user services available on MacOS.

ESO aims to have all user services platform independent as much as possible. The pipelines run on MacOS and their installation can be done via MacPorts. P2PP, and other observing tools (KARMA, Unified GuideCAM tool) are also all written in Java and thus platform independent. The only tools that are not supported on MacOS are those from older instruments (FIMS on FORS2, FPOSS on FLAMES and VMMPS on VIMOS). The effort of porting these tools to MacOS needs to be compared with the effort to provide the tools for new (upcoming) instruments. The new instruments have priority.

UC39.R.06: that the following aspects concerning the Phase-1 are considered:

- **Allow for upload of figures larger than 1MB and in format other than pdf only,**

- including .jpg and .png formats
- **Allow for an automatic notification of proposal submission for every co-I on a proposal**
- **Allow for separating multiple observations by any amount of time, e.g. for HARPS, the time-critical macro does not allow to specify time intervals shorter than 3 nights**
- **Allow for re-submission of proposals until the deadline**

These items are addressed in the new Phase 1 submission system. The Phase 1 project proposal will be submitted at the end of 2015 and then the development starts. The UC will be involved when a prototype is developed. That will still require some time, and will not be ready by the 2016 UC meeting yet.

UC39.R.07: that the following aspects of visitor mode observations are considered:

- **inform the astronomers that sandwiches can be requested when working on a night shift at the residencia**

This is already (or will be soon) implemented.

- **offer the possibility to meet an ESO astronomer in Santiago prior to observations at La Silla**

This is not yet in place. Typically astronomers who work in Chile have their duty station at the observatory, while the time in Santiago is reserved for other science (and few functional) projects. However, some internal discussions about possible shifts of some duties to Santiago have started. It is likely that some support may become available in 2016, but this will be on the best effort basis (no guarantee) due to limitations in manpower.

UC39.R.08: to look into ways of increasing flexibility in La Silla observing runs to decrease amount of time spent not observing (e.g. private transportation).

Adding Tuesday and Thursday would not be that much more expensive, but weekends would add substantial cost (must pay additional drivers). Would the two extra days (Tue and Thu) be enough or would the visitors be willing to pay for the extra cost?

UC39.R.09: to set up the Time Allocating WG as soon as possible, define the terms of reference and select members that also include UC representatives.

Done. The UC representative on the Time Allocating WG is Damien Ségransan.

UC39.R.10: to continue involving the UC in the future work concerning ESO2020 and the anticipated bi-annual revision of the ESO scientific prioritisation report on the matters that directly affect the users (e.g. operations, archive services, and data products delivery) by inviting UC members to the respective working groups / scientific prioritisation panel.

The UC has been invited to participate in the Data Management Working Group. The UC representative is Maria-Rosa Cioni.

UC39.R.12: to ensure that the UC meetings reflect the broad range of ESO facilities and user community (e.g. ALMA).

This is reflected in the proposed topic for the UC meeting 2016 (see the last point of the agenda).

UC39.R.13: to encourage ESO to further investigate how remote observing may impact and benefit users in the future, e.g. for observations at La Silla.

We plan to further explore options for remote observing (in particular for LSO) learning from the experience and tools used in the Remote Access Facilities in Garching and Santiago. This study will start in 2016.

UC39.R.14: to continue and strengthen the effort on the science archive facilities (SAF), as archival research is becoming an increasingly important mode of astronomical research. Specifically UC recommends to focus on the following items:

- the documentation on processing steps and information on data that are excluded from processing,
- the implementation of a visualization tool to allow users to check the availability of data and permit them to decide if and what to download for further analysis
- the content validation, e.g. appropriate calibrations even if they go beyond the calibration plan should be applied
- the simplification of the querying interface allowing for different levels of querying and more flexibility
- the post processing and the production of added value data products, e.g. stacking and catalogues. ESO may offer support to users who would work with archival data. In particular, recognising useful data and in evaluating the priority projects that would have a large scientific impact.

These services are being critically reviewed and a project to address them will start in early 2016. So far ESO has been concentrating on the content of the Archive. We have reached a point that the content is growing well and we then plan to turn our attention to improving the services.

UC39.R.15: to supports student's engagement with ESO, both by promoting/organizing archival workshops, and also allowing students as well as researchers with a limited observing experience to observe on ESO facilities especially in cases where they, financially supported by their host institutes, are associated to projects that originate from large and survey programs executed in service mode.

ESO is organizing in May 2015 a NEON Data Reduction workshop for KMOS and X-SHOOTER that is aimed for students and young postdocs and will include some training on the preparation of observations as well as archival searches.

(3) Feedback from the Telescope Allocation and Data Management working group chairs

Ferdinando Patat reported on the Telescope Allocation Working Group (WG) providing the complete list of its members, including the representatives from the UC (Damien Ségransan) and the STC (Almudena Alonso Herrero). The terms of reference were decided and tasks distributed to the WG members. The final report will be delivered to the Director for Science by mid 2016.

Martino Romaniello reported on the Data Management Working Group listing the WG membership. The UC representative is Maria-Rosa Cioni. The kick-off meeting will be in January with a report expected for the October 2016 STC.

(4) Feedback on the OPC member selection procedure

Ferdinando Patat thanked the UC on the very good quality and quantity of the OPC nominees. He will present a report on the recruitment status at the next UC meeting, possibly making a call for a new round of nominations, depending on the situation at that point in time.

(5) Special topic for the 2016 UC meeting

ESO proposed to have a special topic on APEX. APEX will be reviewed in January and the STC will be presented the outcome of the review and the recommendations. At the same time as it would be useful to have a report on the ESO users' experience with 10 years of APEX science operation and its use by the community. Those present approved this.

The UC asked to include a discussion on Visitor Mode compensation in case there is technical time loss during the run, as well as the science impact of the DDT channel. The VM compensation can be brought up in a general discussion at the meeting, while the scientific impact of the DDT time will be included in a presentation at the next UC meeting. Some information may already appear in the December Messenger issue.

The next UC meeting will take place at ESO Headquarters in Garching on April 18 and 19 of 2016.