



NSF's National Optical-Infrared
Astronomy Research Laboratory

NOAO Policy for Target-of-Opportunity Observing Programs in NOAO-Scheduled Time On Telescopes at CTIO and KPNO

Purpose: NOAO is committed to executing a limited number of highly ranked Target of Opportunity proposals. The Time Allocation Committees have judged the successful ToO proposals to be uniquely valuable in advancing the science, and have ranked them consistently with pre-empting a regularly scheduled proposal. We expect the cooperation of scheduled observers in accommodating such interruptions, and at the same time, are committed to making the potential obligation and task as clear as possible.

Policies and Practices:

- Scheduled observers shall be provided with a handout at the beginning of their runs, with a description of ToO policy and Web address containing the details of the current Semester's ToO program (along with other information at the discretion of the site). The detailed information will include:
 - The total number of times an approved ToO program may interrupt scheduled observing in any given interval.
 - The maximum duration of an individual interruption.
 - Details of the observational strategy, including required calibrations.
- Each site shall make clear to proposers, staff, and observers the process by which ToO PI's can trigger an observation, and what local approval is required (if any).
- A ToO observing program accrues time on the basis of total time taken away from the scheduled observer. That time is counted from the time that the scheduled observers deviate from their observing program to begin the ToO observations to the time at which they resume their own program.
- ToO observations will be carried out by the scheduled observer, or by the Observing Assistant in cases of remote observing or that the OA is more experienced with the mode of the ToO observation.
- If one ToO request is already under way, another may *not* interrupt it until the first has completed.
- The ToO proposal must specify explicitly circumstances under which the scheduled observer must immediately terminate an observation and begin the ToO coverage. The amount of scheduled program time lost to this interrupt will be debited from the ToO time allotment. Under these extraordinary circumstances, the observer should not pause to obtain confirmation of the authorization, but begin the requested observations immediately, and then seek to obtain confirmation at a time which does not impact the ToO observations.

- If a scheduled observing run is compromised by a ToO interrupt, the PI may appeal to the site director or the NOAO Director for discretionary time compensation for the time lost. The award of this compensation will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will not automatically be granted.
- NOAO does not require that ToO PI's guarantee that scheduled observers whose programs are interrupted by a ToO request automatically be offered authorship of any publications which derive from the observations, whether or not the scheduled observer made those observations. Nevertheless, NOAO does expect that appropriate credit be given to those observers, whether by co-authorship or simple acknowledgement.
- As far as is possible, ToO PI's, scheduled observers, and site-based staff should work together to maximize the effectiveness of the interrupt. It is the ToO program PI's responsibility to ensure that his or her team is as familiar as possible with the instrumentation to be used but scheduled observers and site staff should be aware that ToO investigators may not be as familiar with it as they are and should be prepared to advise as requested.
- Scheduled observers are also expected to collect the calibration data needed to properly process the ToO data. If further sky time is required for this purpose, the time will also be accounted to the ToO allocation. ToO PI's may request further assistance from the observers besides the actual interrupt observations, to which the observers may respond at their discretion (e.g., basic reduction and data transfer).
- ToO program astronomers may not make further use of computers that compromise on-site observing and/or data processing while other observations are taking place.
- The ToO PI must inform the site director of the execution of a ToO interrupt and the amount of time spent pursuing it, so that the sites may keep accurate track of the time remaining in each ToO program. Each site may impose additional reporting requirements on the ToO and scheduled observers, as they deem necessary.
- Unresolvable conflicts and issues not directly addressed by this policy may be referred the next day to the support scientist, telescope scientist, site director, or NOAO Director.
- Site-specific policy pages are available for [SOAR](#), [CTIO](#), and [KPNO](#).

We thank observers for their understanding and cooperation in maximizing the scientific results for their own and for the ToO programs.



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