

# **NORDIC OPTICAL TELESCOPE**

**Office of the Director**



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## **Call for *Letters of Interest* to propose a coordinated programme for the Educational Use of the Nordic Optical Telescope**

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### **Background**

Recent years have seen a sharply increased interest in using the Nordic Optical Telescope (NOT) on La Palma as a venue for educational activities of three main types:

1. On-site training courses in observational astrophysics at undergraduate to PhD levels, held every 1 to ~3 years by individual Nordic universities, PhD schools, or groups supported by NORDFORSK. Some are designed for students from a single university; most accept a few other Nordic students as well, and some are also open to students from the Baltic area.
2. Similar courses, but located at a Nordic/Baltic institute and using NOT in remote mode.
3. 6-12-month on-site training visits by MSc or PhD students. Candidates are selected after a call for applications; and most students have so far been recruited from Nordic universities.

These activities are reaching a level where more effective planning and coordination are needed. We hereby invite *Letters of Interest* from people interested in helping to organise the educational activities at NOT in the future, with the aim to conclude more definite agreements later.

The following lists the elements of a comprehensive training programme as discussed at the strategy meeting in November 2006. We emphasize that, at this stage, we do *not* expect to receive fully developed proposals for all items, let alone any firm commitments to implement the proposals, just an indication of interest in becoming involved in the planning of the programme.

### **Elements of a comprehensive programme**

We need to evaluate the pros and cons of on-site and remote use of the telescope in training at various levels and the best use of each for specific courses. An optimum format for the on-site courses should be defined from experience with similar courses already held by various Nordic universities, so that we make optimum Nordic use of existing course material, procedures, and other developments, and of the available observing time, and can avoid conflicts of schedule. We should also have a realistic estimate of the annual need for observing time for these activities, and for any further development of the services from NOT. Additional scientific supervision is required if the on-site student programme is to be expanded as recommended in earlier planning documents, and we need to get an estimate of how to achieve this.

## Invitation

Groups at Nordic universities interested in proposing a coordinated educational programme in optical/infrared astronomy at NOT are hereby invited to submit *Letters of Intent* to inform the NOT Council and Director of their interest. In the next stage, one or more groups will be invited to make a full proposal for such a programme. All constructive suggestions are very welcome, but only a low level of effort is expected at this stage.

The tasks potentially included in the programme are outlined in the section above. *Letters of Interest* addressing only the coursework, or only the on-site student programme, or both, will be considered. Proposals for new, innovative uses of NOT in education are also welcome. The target audience is university students at the undergraduate to PhD levels, possibly including a limited number of postdocs. Plans or suggestions for coordination/synergy/integration with similar initiatives in Solar or submm radio astronomy are also very welcome.

*Letters of Interest* should be no more than 2-3 pages. They should identify the proposing group and person in charge of the proposal, and briefly address some or all of the following points:

- The content and necessary staffing of on-site courses, based on previous experience with NOT and including preparatory and follow-up activities;
- The content of other observational courses, including the use of NOT in remote mode;
- The number of students that could be accommodated on each type of course, and how the effectiveness of each type of course can be evaluated;
- The amount and scheduling of observing time needed each year for the programme;
- The scope of an expanded on-site student programme and steps that may ensure proper supervision and hands-on access for the students.
- How to ensure full Nordic participation in the programme;
- Technical and human contributions from NOT that would be needed or valuable;
- Estimated overall cost of the programme, and potential sources of funding;
- An estimated starting date for the programme.

The *Letters of Interest* should be sent to the NOT Director at the address given in the letterhead, if possible by **April 25, 2007**. We re-emphasize that no large efforts are expected before we know who the interested parties are and how the further steps can be organised.

The *Letters of Interest* will be reviewed by the NOT Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), and proposers will then be contacted to initiate further discussions. Questions are welcome at any stage and should be addressed to the NOT Director or to your STC representative.

Looking forward to hearing from you, and with best regards,

Johannes Andersen  
Director, NOTSA