



National Centre for Radio Astrophysics
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Announcement of Opportunity: Cycle 36

(April 2019 – September 2019)

Observations with the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)

Khodad, India

Proposal Deadline : Tuesday, January 15, 2019, 17:00 IST

The National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) invites proposals for observations with the GMRT for Observation Cycle 36 (April 2019 to September 2019). The deadline for receiving these proposals is 17:00 IST (UTC+5.5 hrs), Tuesday, January 15, 2019. The proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the GMRT Time Allocation Committee (GTAC), which will make recommendations for allocation of observing time for each proposal.

Status of the GMRT : Over the last few years, the GMRT has been going through a major upgrade (which is now nearly complete) that required additional day time slots. In order to meet these requirements, while maintaining smooth running of approved science observations, the upgrade activities were scheduled during day times of week days and science observations are scheduled during night times and through the week-ends. With the tapering down of the upgrade activities gradually from Cycle 33 onwards, more and more day time slots have become available. The distribution of the observing slots over the entire duration of Cycle 36 is shown in the dummy schedule at <http://www.ncra.tifr.res.in/ncra/gmrt/gtac>. As can be noted, there are fewer time slots available for scheduling in the LST range of 04 to 12 hrs, and we request users to bear this in mind when preparing their observing proposals. The observatory will strive to maintain the target of 26 working antennas for every GTAC approved observation. Some of the existing observing modes of the legacy system and flexibilities of observing settings may be partially affected by the changes due to the upgrade.

Cycle 36 will see the release of the almost final version of the upgraded GMRT (uGMRT) to users. Observations with the full array of 30 antennas will be possible for 4 bands of the uGMRT : 120-240 MHz (Band-2), 250-500 MHz (Band-3), 550-850 MHz (Band-4) and 1000-1460 MHz (Band-5), in regular release mode. All the uGMRT observations will be with a 30-antenna back-end with a choice of 100, 200 or 400 MHz processing bandwidth for the correlator, with the default choice of 2048 channels, as well as the corresponding IA/PA beamformer outputs for pulsar observations. However, some advanced modes will only be available on a shared risk basis, meaning that (a) these advanced features and modes may not be fully tested and guaranteed for performing as per the specs, and the user shares the risk of failure and/or under performance of these modes of the system, and should be ready to use these on an "as is, where is" basis for their observations; (b) as a corollary of the above, no make-up time will be allotted for under-performance of the system in these modes.

From GTAC Cycle 36 onwards, proposals can only use the GMRT Wideband Backend (GWB) (that serves the upgraded GMRT) as the primary back-end. The choice of having legacy GMRT Software Backend (GSB) as the primary backend does not exist. Proposers who wish to use only the GSB can do by specifying it as the secondary backend in the designated text box. However such GSB-only proposals would still have to give the specifications for the default GWB setup. Also, the control and monitor system will be upgraded to new Tango based GMRT Control (TGC) system due to which the structure and syntax of the observing files will be somewhat different from the legacy GMRT Online system.

Current technical details about the legacy and upgraded GMRT, available frequency bands and usable bandwidths, system parameters, modes in regular release and shared risk categories, and expected performance information can be found in the GMRT Specifications and Status document at <http://www.ncra.tifr.res.in/ncra/gmrt/gtac>.

Proposal submission and processing : Proposals are to be submitted online via the NCRA Archive and Proposal Management System (NAPS), available at <https://naps.ncra.tifr.res.in>, which provides password authenticated, web browser based interface for proposal submission. Note that the proposal may be submitted only by the PI, but all co-Is also need to be registered users of the system. All PIs and co-Is since Cycle 15 are registered users. **From Cycle 36 onwards, proposers will be required to submit 2 additional documents alongwith the usual scientific justification document : a technical justification document, and the output from the GMRT Exposure Time Calculator (ETC), which can be found at <http://www.ncra.tifr.res.in/etc>.** For any unresolvable problems with the NAPS interface, please contact the help desk at proposal@ncra.tifr.res.in.

Proposals will be processed by the GTAC with external refereeing as needed and the proposers intimated of the time allocation. The GTAC may seek inputs from the GMRT Observatory on matters relating to the technical justification of the proposals. Proposals requiring more than 100 hours of observing time will be treated as “large proposals”. They will be reviewed in a manner appropriate for each one of them and, if necessary, the time allocation will be split over several cycles. Target of Opportunity (ToO) proposals can also be submitted for the regular cycle, which will be reviewed by the GTAC in the usual manner, but any time allotted will be scheduled dynamically, as and when the specified trigger conditions are met. The exact procedure for triggering a ToO observations will be informed to the PIs of ToO proposals. Upto 5% of the total available time in a given cycle can be allotted to such GTAC ToO proposals. The policy document relating to GTAC ToO proposals can be found at <http://www.ncra.tifr.res.in/ncra/gmrt/gtac>.

In addition to regular GTAC proposals, users can also avail of Director’s Discretionary Time (DDT) facility, as relevant. DDT time is meant for special uses, such as (i) pilot observations / feasibility studies which might lead to future GTAC proposals; (ii) urgent confirmatory observations; (iii) ToO observations, primarily intended for short-lived or time-dependent astronomical phenomena. DDT time allocations are subject to availability of time and convincing scientific goals, and are cleared by the Centre Director, NCRA. Requests for these should also be submitted via NAPS, using the option for DDT proposals. DDT proposals can be submitted at any time of the year.

Scheduling and observing : After a proposal has been allotted time and scheduled, queries related to the observing schedule should be sent to gmrtschedule@ncra.tifr.res.in, and to gmrtoptions@ncra.tifr.res.in for other aspects of the observations. Queries regarding travel logistics can be addressed to Secretary for Operations (secr-ops@ncra.tifr.res.in). DDT and ToO observations will be scheduled in the empty “white” slots in the GMRT schedule, without affecting the scheduled GTAC observations, as far as possible. The GMRT supports absentee observing for the standard interferometric mode with the existing legacy system, as well as with the regular, full release interferometric modes of the uGMRT system. Users who would like to avail of this facility should prepare and send their set up configuration, command files and source list at least 10 days before their observations to gmrtoptions@ncra.tifr.res.in. A set of tools available to users for help with their observations can be found at <http://www.gmrt.ncra.tifr.res.in/~astrosupp>. There is a possibility of downtime due to power outages, wind (particularly during May-August), ionospheric activity, RFI etc. There is some limited scope for making up for time lost due to the above. In case of such requirements, users should send an email requesting compensatory telescope time and giving details of the problems to gmrtoptions@ncra.tifr.res.in. Post observations, the interferometric mode data will be made available for download from NAPS, after an interval of one day. NCRA continues to encourage first time users to be present for observations and spend a few days of extra time to become familiar with the recommended observing/editing/calibration procedures.

Data Release : Data from all standard observations with the GMRT will be made public 18 months after the date of observation. For all ToO / DDT observations, the corresponding period is 3 months. The status and details of all the observations since 2002 can be obtained from <https://naps.ncra.tifr.res.in/goa>.

**Centre Director
NCRA-TIFR**