



European Organisation
for Astronomical
Research in the
Southern Hemisphere

Organisation Européenne
pour des Recherches
Astronomiques
dans l'Hémisphère Austral

Europäische Organisation
für astronomische
Forschung in der
südlichen Hemisphäre

Director General

Garching, 30 November 2007
ODG0201-07/isk

Dr Richard McMahon
Institute for Astronomy
Madingley Road
CAMBRIDGE CB3 0HA
GREAT BRITAIN

Richard,
Dear Dr McMahon,

The last step of the long process of evaluation of proposals for ESO Public Surveys with VISTA – the senior review of the Survey Management Plans (SMPs) by a high level panel of ESO scientists and representatives of the Public Survey Panel (PSP) – has been completed. Thus, following the recommendations of the OPC, the PSP, and the Senior Panel, I am pleased to inform you that I am prepared to grant to you and your team the time requested to complete the VHS survey.

While current planning indicates that the six ESO public surveys with VISTA recommended by the PSP should be completed in about five years, this estimate is still quite uncertain. Therefore, in addition to the planned yearly progress reviews, a major review will be conducted after five years where the continuation of the surveys still on-going will be evaluated.

General Conditions

1. Raw data

The raw data shall be public worldwide immediately after passing quality control tests at ESO. Given practical limitations on the ability of the archive to distribute large volumes of data, it seems to me that the risks of other groups being able to scoop the science goals of the survey are very small, and we may consider imposing further restrictions on the maximum amount of data downloadable on-line to make this even less likely.

2. Delivery of data products to the ESO archive

- a. Six months after receiving the complete (on a tile-by-tile basis) data and the associated calibrations, the corresponding data products should be delivered to the ESO archive.
 - i. Instrumentally corrected, stacked (as appropriate) frames in all the relevant bands of the survey, with photometric and astrometric calibrations in the headers.

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- ii. Confidence maps.
- iii. Aperture-matched object catalogues with multi-band photometric, astrometric, and morphological measures.

These data should be calibrated using standard night-by-night calibration procedures and therefore we impose no requirements on the global uniformity of these calibrations.

- b. Major data releases with uniform photometric and astrometric calibrations should be made at least once per year, with the first delivery expected no later than 18 months after beginning of the observations.
- c. A final release with a global photometric and astrometric calibration should be made upon completion of the survey. It will be highly desirable if high-level science products (such as shapelets, photometric redshifts, etc.) were delivered at some point to the ESO archive in order to enhance the legacy value of the data.

3. The ESO Survey Team (EST)

The ESO Survey Team (EST) is prepared to assist you throughout the execution of your survey, and the EST leader will be your main contact person at ESO for all matters related to the survey. Also, you should be prepared to assist the EST in the preparation of their yearly progress reports to the OPC. Please consider the EST as your partner at ESO. Their main interest is to get your survey done in the shortest possible time, and with full compliance with your technical requirements as detailed in the PSP proposal and the SMP.

The current schedule for VISTA shows delivery complete on Oct 9th, 2008, pending additional confirmation. The implications on the data taking for the VISTA public surveys are that observations will hopefully start in Period 82. You will be contacted by the EST for the Phase 2 submission, in due course.

Please return one signed copy of this letter signalling your agreement with the terms and condition detailed above.

Looking forward to a fruitful collaboration during all stages of this enterprise,

Tim de Zeeuw
ESO Director General

Richard McMahon
PI VHS Survey