

Operational Guidelines for the Gemini Observatory 2016-2021

Approved by the Board on June 12, 2015

The following guidelines are provided to inform Observatory, STAC and Board decisions through the next International Agreement, 2016-2021. Their aim is to help the Observatory build upon its existing strengths, strengthen the partnership, and increase scientific productivity, as we prepare for a potentially very different landscape of international facilities and partner interests in the years beyond 2021.

1. Gemini will be guided by its mission statement, to advance our knowledge of the Universe by providing the international Gemini Community with forefront access to the entire sky.
2. Gemini will serve its scientific user community considered as a single entity regardless of nationality, and be mindful of its broad and diverse nature.
3. Gemini will strive to be the best observatory in the world for the execution of flexible, innovative, and efficient science programs that exploit superior image quality and broad spectroscopic capabilities on arcminute-scale fields.
4. The effectiveness of the Observatory will be measured with a variety of metrics, but primarily by program oversubscription and number of publications appearing in refereed journals.
5. Gemini will continue to offer flexible proposal opportunities and observing modes, while aiming to maximize scientific productivity and minimizing unscheduled downtime.
6. Future facility instrumentation development and implementation will be driven by the scientific needs and aspirations of the Gemini community, as conveyed by the STAC, through an open process that encourages collaboration and creativity within the partnership.
7. High throughput, operational efficiency and cost effectiveness will be emphasized for all new facility instruments.
8. Gemini will encourage visitor instruments, to address the need for capabilities beyond those provided by the facility instruments.
9. No more than four facility-class instruments, plus an adaptive optics facility, will be supported at a time on either telescope. Within that constraint, existing, scientifically productive instruments and other capabilities will be maintained and upgraded to ensure they remain available and competitive.
10. Data support and archiving are recognized as important. Teams building future facility instruments will be expected to include a software team that will deliver data reduction tools.
11. Gemini will continue to operate as “two telescopes, one observatory”, to minimize costs and maximize versatility. However, the only fundamental requirement on time allocation will be that the total time allocated be in proportion to partner shares, as measured on an annual basis or longer. Balance between sites, lunar phase, transparency, image quality, and instrumentation may vary in response to the scientific interests of the partners.
12. Gemini will welcome an expanded partnership, with the aim of increasing its scientific impact through increased diversity and capability for innovation.